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The Visual Novel: Fictional Space and Print After 1900

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THE VISUAL NOVEL: FICTIONAL SPACE AND PRINT AFTER 1900

A Dissertation

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requirements for the degree of
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Abstract

My dissertation, *The Visual Novel: Fictional Space and Print After 1900*, examines how and why the novel has assimilated visual mediums—film, art, and the digital—into the genre as a means of adapting to the proliferation of mass media and technology. This project connects a history of the novel (genre) with a history of the book (the genre’s physical form), thereby theorizing and narrating a history of the visual novel. I demonstrate that through fictional space, a critical term used by narratologists and textual studies scholars, visual writing emerges as a hybridized mode of creative composition where we can see most vividly the relationship between author, text, and reader. Characterized by the use of eccentric typography, nonstandard design, and experimental layout, the visual novel relies on *text as image* by defamiliarizing readerly expectations of print, type, and page space by assimilating composition techniques from the visual arts such as montage and collage. I argue that the visual novel’s multimodality expands definitions of “novel” and “narrative” through a discussion of British and American writers—A. S. Byatt, John Dos Passos, Steven Hall, and James Joyce, as well as contemporary small press editions of works by Laurence Sterne and Oscar Wilde. At times when screen culture advances print’s obsolescence, both historically and more recently, visual writing makes print predominant in the media ecology once again by drawing upon the very technologies that threaten it, and my dissertation responds to this recurrent milieu by arguing that these novelists utilize self-reflexive techniques to create works that actualize print’s potential and the novel’s flexibility.
Introduction: Print, Art, and the Novel

We badly need a new way of thinking about novels that acknowledges their technological reality. We have to learn how to look at fiction as lines of print on a page and we have to ask whether it is always the best arrangement to have a solid block of print from one margin to the other running down the page from top to bottom, except for an occasional paragraph indentation. — Ronald Sukenick, “The New Tradition in Fiction”

Take a book, and you will find it offering, opening itself. It is this openness of the book which I find so moving. A book is not shut in by its contours, is not walled-up as in a fortress. It asks nothing better than to exist outside itself, or to let you exist in it. In short, the extraordinary fact in the case of the book is the falling away of barriers between you and it. You are inside of it; it is inside of you; there is no longer either outside or inside. — George Poulet, “Criticism and the Experience of Interiority”

In certain arts, such as painting, where the object is set before is in space, we speak of contemplation as the ideal relationship between the perceiver and the work. But it would be spurious to designate our mode of participation in a fictional narrative as contemplative. There is nothing, strictly speaking, to contemplate. Certainly we do not contemplate the words on the page, for, as already suggested, they disappear into their meaning. Fiction, in the final analysis, presents us with strictly verbal information, and in spite of the popular saying, no amount of words will ever add up to a picture. — Edward Marcotte, “The Space of the Novel”

In Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray, the painter Basil Hallward tells his dear friend Lord Henry Wotton the following: “I sometimes think, Harry, that there are only two eras of importance in the world’s history. The first is the appearance of a new medium for art, and the second is the appearance of a new personality for art also” (Wilde, Norton 13). Basil proceeds this assertion with a much closer interrogation of the second aspect, specifically in relation to how his discovery of Dorian Gray, the novel’s title character, transforms his philosophy of New Hedonism and influences his approach to painting and the painting of Dorian’s portrait. My focus, however, will be on the first assertion. I am particularly interested in what happens to old
medians, specifically print, when the emergence of new technologies of new methods of creating art happen to transform the predominant forms of cultural and creative production. Bookmaking and written language have played pivotal roles in world history. Consider Ronald J. Deibert’s claim in *Parchment, Printing, and Hypermedia* that “the invention of writing coincides with the development of the first civilization […], the development of the alphabet and spread of literature *ca* 700 B. C. in ancient Greece coincides with the onset of Greek Enlightenment, [and] the development of movable type and the spread of printing in Western Europe coincides with the Renaissance and early Modernity” (2). The novel, as a particular genre within literature and one form that the book can take, emerged after the development of Gutenberg’s printing press, and for that reason, Mikhail Bakhtin argues that “Of all the major genres only the novel is younger than writing and the book: it alone is organically receptive to new forms of mute perception, that is, to reading” (3). Readership is important, as Franco Moretti cites in “The Novel: History and Theory,” since the doubling of readers that occurred in the eighteenth century directly contributed to the increasing consumption and production of novels ever since. For Moretti, what sets apart the novel as a genre of literature is the integration of long, complex prose that takes the form of a sequential story, often expanding open different types of adventures as a mode for narrative (“Novel” 113, 115). This penchant of adventure is one he directly relates to the prodigious length of the novel genre compared to literature’s previous forms, but Bakhtin, though speaking towards a more theoretical side of the novel, can be cited to support Moretti’s claim: “The novel, after all, has no canon of its own. It is, by its very nature, not canonic. It is plasticity itself. It is a genre that is ever questioning, ever examining itself and subjecting its established forms for review” (Bakhtin 39). Both the novel and the book
continually develop in reaction to readerships, emerging printing technologies, and cultural
trends; likewise, print, the medium of the novel and the book, also reacts to the emergence of
other mediums such as film and the digital. This project unites these separate claims to connect a
history of the novel (genre) with a history of the book (the genre’s physical form) by examining
how the print medium is transformed by the appearance of new mediums for art, thus focusing
more closely on Basil’s first claim.

Wolfgang Iser’s claim that “a literary text can only produce a response when read”
initiated an ongoing tradition of critical work on the phenomenology of reading which each of
the above epigraphs addresses. Ronald Sukenick both described and questions how pages are
read, while George Poulet describes the experience of the self while reading, and Edward
Marcotte addresses the relationship between the textual and the visual in fiction. They each draw
upon familiar descriptions about reading and aesthetic response, which underlines the textual,
physical, and spatial elements associated with the act of reading. These epigraphs also mark out
the key relationships that I interrogate in this dissertation: the interaction of the visual and the
textual particularly how it appears in relation to fictional space and changed the novel created by
other media. Teena Carnegie, discussing how teachers instruct students with respect to reading
narratives, concurs with Poulet, suggesting, “we realize that the most seductive and persuasive
element is the literary text itself, especially those works which captivate the reader so completely
that the physical text seems to vanish” (81). A reader grasps the book, cracks the spine, turns the
pages, scans lines. Likewise, these same elements are said to be true of the novel, which engages
the reader by seeming to transport him or her physically to the world evoked in the language and
images provided by the text. The physical object of the book is the catalyst for this experience.
Carnegie’s study of typography in the novel suggests that the reading process in part runs smoothly because readers can overlook “conventions and communicative significance of graphic presentation” (82). In other words, readers can both understand and be transported away by a novel because they follow a form and structure readily agreed to by the conventions of print and written language and do not have to attend to functions of typography, spacing, or visual rhetoric intentionally utilized by publishers and authors. Books have chapters, pages, covers, paragraph breaks, punctuation marks setting off dialogue, which allow readers to comprehend the language contained within the work because they signal to the reader what is part of the narrative and what is not. But what might critics learn when we pay closer attention to those under-examined features of design, form, and textual structures that make up novels? In other words, what happens when a reader “acknowledges [fiction’s] technological reality,” in the words of Sukenick, rather than limiting one’s attention to its plot or character development? Gérard Genette’s *Paratexts* suggests that these features mark the history of the book as it is “punctuated by the stages of a technological evolution” and that they create the boundaries of narrative (14). It will be my goal to explore in this study how those elements of visual design and traditions of the visual arts are incorporated into texts by authors as a way of forging a unique mode of writing, which I shall call the visual novel.

The project that follows will argue that novels that integrate the visual into their design, form, and textual structures play with the conventions of fiction, and that in doing so they articulate the significance of the page in the novel and the physical object of the book in the reading experience. I focus on the novel because of its consistent relationship to the visual, plastic arts not only in its typography but also its connections to painting, sculpture, architecture,
and photography. Genre critics Mikhail Bakhtin, Thomas O. Beebee, and John Frow have also consistently remarked on the novel’s assimilation of the visual. Using their work as a point of departure, I propose the concept of the visual novel as a way of describing works that have a tendency to be generically unstable and to utilize graphic designs and visuals in such as way as to create novels that are neither wholly textual nor wholly visual. Although others have addressed the novel before in these terms, the concept of the visual novel emerges from looking at the relationship between the novel (text to be read sequentially) and the graphic novel (art to be read sequentially) because the visual novel is one that is generated by an author’s usage of text to become art.¹ As the epigraphs above suggest, the novel is an object that stimulates the senses. The visual novel, thus, experiments with design and form in such a way as to push the boundaries of how the genre of novel is defined. An author’s ability to manipulate the technology of printing creates atypical works that use typography in different ways to show an affinity between the author and the artist. The visual novel is a work that incorporates aesthetic techniques as a way of foregrounding the phenomenology of reading and aesthetic response by heightening the relationship between the text and the reader. By “aesthetic techniques,” I mean more specifically devices and modes of composition commonly found in the plastic arts.² As W.

¹ Graphic novels do not necessarily need to incorporate elements of written text; thus, they provide a contrast to the traditional novel which relies solely on written language.

² For example, pointillism, made famous by both Georges Seurat and Paul Signac, is a technique in which small dots are made with various colors in order to create the pattern on a canvas. Critical work in modernist studies has examined the relationship between aesthetic techniques and literary production—most often focusing on works by James Joyce, Virginia Woolf, Ford Maddox Ford, and Joseph Conrad—specifically in relation to impressionism and post-impressionism. For more on the relationship between aesthetic techniques and literary writing see *Literary Impressionism and Modernist Aesthetics* by Jesse Matz (2004), *Impressionable Subject: Gender, Interiority, and Modernist Fiction in England* by Tamar Katz (2000), and “The Cubist Novel: Toward Defining the Genre” by Panthea Reid Broughton (1981).
J. T. Mitchell writes, “There is a whole class of terms in our critical lexicon formed by emigrations back and forth between literature and the visual arts: imitation, representation, expression, and style are four that spring immediately to mind, but a case could be made for concepts such as perspective, background and foreground, the picturesque, local color, and so forth” (548). Indeed, the relationship between the textual and visual has had a long complex history. This history is not the focus of my project though I will draw upon it in my analysis to illuminate how authors continue to exploit the two mediums for their construction of fiction.

Given that the visual novel, as I have described it, does not as such emerge from a specific literary circle but from a particular aesthetic that exists during various periods and in many traditions, the novels that I examine in this dissertation are created by authors deeply invested in the book as object and in a reconsideration of fictional space as the vehicle for pushing the boundaries of the novelistic genre. James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1918-1920, 1922), John Dos Passos’s *The U. S. A. Trilogy* (1930, 1932, 1936), A. S. Byatt’s *Babel Tower* (1996) and *The Biographer’s Tale* (2000), Steven Hall’s *The Raw Shark Texts* (2008), Laurence Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-1767, 2010), and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890, 1891, 2004) are self-reflexive novels that emerge from various narrative traditions and literary periods, and most importantly for this study, these novels use aesthetic

3 Here, I would like to evoke the work done by Murray Krieger in *Ekphrasis: The Illusion of the Natural Sign*, in which he traces back the concept of representation in both visual and textual form as far back as Platonic dialogue. As a description of a visual work of art, *ekphrasis* is a centuries-old rhetorical device that links the visual and the textual. Recent work on book history also documents this tradition: *Design and Distribution of Late Medieval Manuscripts in England*, ed. Margaret Connolly and Linne R. Mooney (2008); *Illustrating the Past in Early Modern England: The Representation of History in Printed Books* by James A Knapp (2003); and *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909-1923* by Johanna Drucker (1997).
techniques as a means to bridge gaps in narrative, to focus attention on what is indescribable or
difficult to narrate, or to push the boundaries of how narrative is transmitted. Being neither
strictly textual or strictly visual works, the novels I have chosen to study show how
experimentation with setting and spatial form challenges notions inherent to fiction—such as
narrative, character, place, and theme. These novels are visual novels. These novelists
demonstrate that, when authors and readers alike pay attention to the object in the readers’ hands,
they can expand the perceptions of the novel as a multimedia and multimodal genre, a genre that
adapts concepts and techniques from visual mediums to transform the predominantly textual. The
meeting point between the visual and textual is a junction with which each of these writers
actively engages throughout both their fiction and non-fiction. By making readers interrogate the
very nature of art, photography, sculpture, and architecture in relationship to the novel, their
novels question how the two media work together both to transform the reading experience and
to expand the definition of the novel.

I will use the vehicle of fictional space—an under-examined, yet fundamental aspect of
narrative—to explore the relationship between the visual and the textual and elaborate upon the
concept of the visual novel. This concept of fictional space comprises real, physical, and
imaginative aspects that are intimately connected to concept of the visual. Though the textual and
the visual have been linked for centuries, examining closely how the two are transformed by the
digital, televisual age through the object of the book, and more specifically the novel, will add to
the critical understandings of fictional space. Certainly some correlation may be perceived, and
yet the two media are divided from one another, even in their relationship as “sister” arts.
Recalling Marcotte’s epigraph, I question his assumption that readers “do not contemplate the
words on the page,” even more so in an age when novels printed today use text and words to be much more than “their meaning” but reinforce the text’s existence as an aesthetic object—as both words on a page and the concepts that these words evoke. When novelists use techniques from the visual arts to create narrative, or draw upon visual rhetoric and design, they are demonstrating how spatial form and page space can be used to transform fiction and how the visual allows for a reconsideration of the limits of narrative—by which I mean what can be told, how narrative is transmitted, or what can be considered part of the book.

Visual artists commonly manipulate color, scale, position, point of view, and material, among other features to create their works of art, and when novelists do the same within textual space they achieve an “aesthetic of bookishness”—a phrase that I borrow from Jessica Pressman (465). Responding to the fashionable tendency to talk about the death of the book, Pressman notes several contemporary novels that “exploit the power of the print page in ways that draw attention to the book as a multimedia format, one informed by and connected to digital technologies. They define the book as an aesthetic form whose power has been purposely employed by literature for centuries and will continue to be far into the digital age” (465). Part of what exemplifies this aesthetics of bookishness is “the fetishized focus on textuality and the book-bound reading object.” Pressman aptly notes that this aesthetics is not a new response to books produced in the digital age, claiming that this aesthetic dates at least as far back as Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (466). Ultimately, novels that represent this aesthetic are

4 Pressman’s claim seems extremely prescient given the choice of Visual Editions, a new upstart, London-based publishing company, to print a new re-designed version of *Tristram Shandy* as its first book. *Creative Review* claims the work was “ripe for a visual re-imagining,” and the printers edition of the work exemplified the spirit of the visual novel and an “aesthetics of bookishness” ([http://www.visual-editions.com/our-books/tristram-shandy](http://www.visual-editions.com/our-books/tristram-shandy)).
ones that self-reflexively draw attention to the object of the book, which is often done through a play with the visual design and form of narratives that “acknowledges their technological reality.” Through the manipulation of fictional space, such novels accomplish a heightened sense of textuality because a major thematic component of the narrative becomes an experiment with spatial form and how texts are both written and read. I will elaborate upon the relationship of these distinct elements—visual design and form, fictional space, and spatial form—since they not only contribute to the act of reading and the examination of space in literature but also because they are elements through which narratives are experienced by readers.

By selecting novels primarily published within the past twenty years, I am choosing to focus on novels that came into existence after the defining moments of metafiction, postmodernism, and the heyday of critical theory. My interest here is in exploring novels that have been under-examined so far, to some extent because of their contemporaneous standing, and thus their non-canonical status. In the case of Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Dos Passos’s *The U. S. A. Trilogy*, I intend to provide a discussion of the visual novel during the modernist period to show how these works sparked textual experimentation in the latter part of the century, and while Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* and Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* are not contemporary text, I foreground recent editions of these two novels to demonstrate how they are reimagined and redistributed in the present moment because of innovations in digital publication software programs. In regards to each of the novels I have adopted to study, I would argue that their links to the digital and virtual, for the purposes of my discussion, contribute to a literary history in formation. As novels published and consumed in a televisual age, they exemplify what I am attempting to articulate in the concept of the visual novel. These novels exemplify generic
instability through the utilization of graphic design and visual art in such a way to create a type of writing that evokes the plastic or visual arts within the text by using written language. As an artifact in the tradition of metafiction, the visual novel can be described, in part, as a particular mode of writing that experiments with page space in such a way as to question the role of the visual in a novel’s construction. In this context, I use metafiction as defined in the work of Patricia Waugh as texts that display “a celebration of the power of the creative imagination together with an uncertainty about the validity of its representations; an extreme self-consciousness about language, literary form, and the act of writing fictions; a pervasive insecurity about the relationship of fiction to reality; a parodic, playful, excessive or deceptively naïve style of writing” (2). Waugh’s emphasis on “representation” and “literary form” attests to the fact that metafiction is already finely attuned to an “aesthetics of bookishness.” In part, my decision to focus on contemporary fiction is in part inspired by Pressman’s assertion that the “aesthetics of bookishness” deployed by these authors is “not merely another form of postmodern reflexivity in which the author toys with the reader in a layered process of simulacra” (466). Rather, works emerging today in a televisual and digital age are being produced by authors immersed in visual, interactive realities. In creating texts that fall between the poles of textual works and graphic novels, these authors use techniques from visual art in order to bring the novel into a contemporary age by forcing readers to (inter-)actively co-create works through reading. Moreover, their manipulations of spatial form are not due to a sense of fidelity to an ironic or postmodern sensibility but rather emerge from a fictional aesthetic that questions the composition of fiction, no longer something that has to be made of discrete texts and paragraph breaks.
With an ever-increasing divide between literary fiction and genre fiction, these novelists are producing works that demand attention and challenge readers to expand their accepted understanding of narrative and textuality. Their novels contain very sophisticated themes and structures transmitted through aesthetic techniques. For instance, they use practices such as collage, mosaic, and hypergraphy—or the rearrangement of textual space to create an artistic image—to transform how narrative is represented on the printed page. These works engage the reader by incorporating them as co-creators of the novel, which is a common trait found in many metafictional and self-reflexive novels. Thus, the experience and process of reading is itself something these authors foreground as a thematic in their novels. In other words, each of these novels feature characters that use readings as a means of creating identity, and the act of reading becomes a vehicle in which the author transmits narrative in the novel. By highlighting the act of reading, these authors bring a different dimension to the novels they are creating because, through the use of visual elements and manipulation of the novel’s design, they are suggesting that the form of the novel—features that often overlooked or not typically experimented with—can directly change the reading experience and the object (the book) produced from it. While I will be commenting on the reading experience throughout this study, I should note that the primary focus of my examination will be on the object of the book or the act of reading involved in deciphering these novels rather than on a phenomenology of reception or a phenomenology of reading.

The “Zone of Contact” Between the Novel and the Visual

To think of fiction, and more particularly of the novel, as a living organism is to adopt a particular strain of thought prevalent in genre criticism that acknowledges biological
classification systems, models of evolution, and species dynamics as metaphors for approaching the study of genre. The convention of these metaphors in genre criticism and theory stems from the various ways of defining genre, and a reliance on them shows a certain affinity between the scientific and the literary. As John Frow claims, “genre is, amongst other things, a matter of discrimination and taxonomy: of organizing things into recognizable classes” (51). But genre is more than just a classification system. Thomas O. Beebee expands upon “four stages of generic criticism” in his work *The Ideology of Genre* (1994): “genre as rules, genre as species, genre as patterns of textual features, and genre as reader conventions—[which] correspond to the four positions in the great debate about the location of textual meaning: in authorial intention, in the work’s historical or literary context, in the text itself, or in the reader” (3). Although Beebee notes the multiple levels of genre’s definition, which Frow expands in *Genre* (2005), even he uses “species” as a nod to the more scientific connotations found in much of genre criticism and theory. Frow utilizes this scientific terminology and underlines its usefulness:

> It has been above all the model of the biological species, building on the organic connotations of the concepts of ‘kind’ and ‘genre’, that has been used to bring the authority of a scientific discourse to genre theory. Ferdinand Brunetière’s *Evolution of Genres in Literary History* (1890) is the key text here, but the structural model of the relations of a species to the taxonomic levels above and beneath it, and of internal uniformity and closure of the species, permeates the whole field. (52)

Adopting this lens provided by genre theory and criticism allows one to see how genre itself is subject to change based on any number of factors—reader, author, text, socio-historical context

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—and that, as one particular example of genre, the novel is itself subject to a certain evolutionary change. My own interest in embracing this metaphor for genre stems from my curiosity in the novel’s assimilation of other mediums—in particular the visual—as a means of experimenting with narrative and fictional space. If the novelistic genre is subject to change over time, then the concept of the visual novel articulate one particular strain of change that utilizes the relationship between reader and text and aesthetic response as forging new boundaries for defining the novel. In thinking about the visual novel as one mode or subgenre of the novel, it will be significant to see what genre critics have said about the novel’s interaction with the visual and how the visual novel fits into literary history.

Mikhail Bakhtin straightforwardly pronounces the immaturity of the novel: “the novel is the sole genre that continues to develop, that is as yet uncompleted” (3). He continues several sentences later, “the generic skeleton of the novel is far from having hardened, and we cannot foresee all its plastic possibilities” (3). Even Bakhtin draws upon an organic image—“skeleton”—as a way of talking about genre. Nevertheless, it may be somewhat difficult to believe Bakhtin’s claims in “Epic and Novel: Towards a Methodology for the Study of the Novel” (1970), considering that the “novel” itself has been around for several centuries. How can it be still developing? And how can it not have achieved some sort of concrete form? Bakhtin provides some preliminary answers worth considering. One answer relies on the temporal: “It is the only genre that was born and nourished in a new era of world history and therefore it is deeply akin to that era, whereas the other major genres entered that era as already fixed forms, as an inheritance, and only now are they adapting themselves—some better, some worse—to the new conditions of their existence” (Bakhtin 4). A second answer accounts for the novel’s ability
to assimilate other forms: “The novel parodies other genres (precisely in their role as genres); it exposes the conventionality of their forms and their language; it squeezes out some genres and incorporates others into its own peculiar structure, reformulating and re-accentuating them” (Bakhtin 5). The middle ground between these two solutions is the thesis of much of his essay—that the contemporary, historical moment is one that re-defines and expands the limits of what is considered part of the novel and what narratives the novel can contain and that the novel’s engagement with other mediums is constitutive to the novel form. It is the novel’s very engagement with contemporary moments that fascinates Bakhtin and demonstrates the genre’s “novelty” (19-23).

Franco Moretti, specifically in *Graphs, Maps, Trees* (2005), also accounts for the evolution of narrative genres by using new methods of charting change and development or what he dubs “a trio of artificial constructs” (1). His definition of “genre” responds brilliantly to Bakhtin’s assertions about the novel as a form that continues to develop: “Now, ‘temporary structure’ is also a good definition for—genres: morphological arrangements that *last* in time, but always only for *some* time. Janus-like creatures, with one face turned to history and the other to form, genres are thus the true protagonists of this middle layer of literary history—this more ‘rational’ layer where flow and form meet” (Moretti 14). For Moretti, the novel must always be situated in a moment in time because genre itself is a “temporary” quality. It is subject to change, assimilation, and different populations of consumers. Though Moretti’s work enhances the first answer (the temporal one) provided by Bakhtin, it does little to respond to the second answer regarding the novelistic genre’s assimilation of other forms. The closest he comes to accounting for the novel’s encounter with extra-literary forms comes in the chapter “Maps” when he
discusses the village narrative’s inclusion of literary maps: “Sufficient unto itself: this is why
village stories organize themselves in circular patterns: a circle is a simple, ‘natural’ form, which
maximizes the proximity of each point to the centre of the ‘little world’, while simultaneously
sealing it off from the vast universe that lies outside the perimeter” (Moretti 44). This inclusion is
significant because Moretti demonstrates how the form of the story itself evolves to mimic the
extra-literary device featured in the work—the map. Moretti, like Bakhtin, shows how the novel
adapts a visual art form into its structure.

These encounters with other literary devices and genres, however, mark a foundational
element to defining the novel. Bakhtin sees the novel “defined by what could be called the rule
of genre inclusiveness: the novel can include, ingest, devour other genres and still retain its status
as a novel,” as Michael Holquist asserts most succinctly in his introduction to the essay (Bakhtin
xxxii). Bakhtin calls this the “zone of contact” (33). The novel’s “special relationship with extra-
literary genres” molds its very nature (33). Through the “substantial use of letters, diaries,
confessions,” and forms of rhetoric (Bakhtin 33), the novel continues to develop. Bakhtin sees
these “zones of contact” as the shifting boundaries used to demarcate the novel, and it is in this
way that the novel serves as an example of a literary form that assimilates other genres and
devices as a means of “gauging the lofty and still distant destinies of literature’s future
unfolding” (33). The encounters that Bakhtin remarks upon are, in fact, all textual; indeed, early
novelists made much use of the object-ness of the book and of textuality by claiming that works
were found or discovered rather than as works than authored. Moretti, building upon Bakhtin’s claims, shows how the novel’s assimilation of a visual device likewise changes the novel. It is my intention, however, to open up a new “zone of contact” that Bakhtin neglected and that Moretti only manages to hint exists—the visual novel.

In order to further define this term, I shall turn to A. S. Byatt, or more specifically her character Frederica Potter in *Babel Tower*, to show how the novel exists in the “zone of contact” between the textual and the visual. She notes,

A novel is made of a long thread of language, like knitting, thicker and thinner in patches. It is made in the head and has to be remade in the head by whoever reads it, who will always remake it differently. […] A novel is also made of ideas that connect all the people like another layer of interwoven knittings—*Women in Love* is also a novel about decadence, about love of death, about thanatos as opposed to eros. The ideas are made out of language but that is not all they are. The novel is made of visual images—the lanterns, the moon, the white flowers—which you might think were like painted images, but they are not for they have to be unseen visible images to be powerful. They are made out of language but that is not all they are. We must imagine the broken moon, and she takes her power from all our imaginings and their sameness and their difference. She is trying to make the painters and sculptors see how a novel is a work of art and is not a painting. She is trying to understand something herself. (Byatt, *BT* 215)

The novel is simultaneously textual and visual. It is made of language but creates images and scenes, in much the same way that visual art does. Frederica articulates in this passage how the novel is visual. I see Byatt beginning to open up room for the concept of the visual novel when Frederica realizes that a reader’s perception—“all our imaginings”—generates the novel. What

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6 For instance, a work like Daniel Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), which uses journal entries and letters, make its “novel-ness” through a play with generic instability. As an early novel, Defoe incorporated extra-literary genres as a way of forging the burgeoning genre of the novel. Readers are meant to believe that the work was found in a trunk and then reprinted, rather than authored by Defoe. Another example is Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), which uses a combination of letters and first-person narrative to make up her novel.
Byatt does not specifically articulate in this passage but the visual novel accounts for is how the book exists as an object that the reader holds in his/her hands; it is through the senses of vision and touch that the reader comes to understand the totality of the reading experience. To think of the novel as “a work of art” is already to assume some affinity between the textual and plastic arts. The novel’s pages are visually comprehended and these textual features—words, images, sentences, chapters, paratexts—in turn evoke a world of images—plots, characters, settings, themes—that make up the novel itself. The visual novel accounts for an “aesthetics of bookishness” and “acknowledges [the book’s] technological reality” that exists in works; thus, the visual novel becomes the “zone of contact” for visual art and the textual.

The textual and the visual are two ways through which culture documents itself and creates a record of its own reality and its creative imagination. Works such as Medieval manuscripts, in which texts were often adorned with elaborate scripts, calligraphy, and small paintings, show how books have always played with the interaction between the visual and the textual. Moving more closely to the contemporary moment, periodicals have also afforded critics a unique vantage for showing how the textual and the visual intermingle, and periodical studies have emerged in the last decade as a burgeoning field intent on thinking of print culture in new ways, ways that incorporate the visual and art in seemingly textual objects like the periodical.7 Examining the novel more specifically, let us consider Sterne’s Tristram Shandy, in particular Chapter 40 of Volume VI in which the narrator presents the reader with six distinct lines each representing a type of digressive narrative plot featured in the novel [Figure 1]. Sterne uses the

I am now beginning to get fairly into my work; and by the help of a vegetable diet, with a few of the cold seeds, I make no doubt but I shall be able to go on with my uncle Toby’s story, and my own, in a tolerable straight line. Now,

These were the four lines I moved in through my first, second, third, and fourth volumes.—In the fifth volume I have been very good,—the precise line I have described in it being this:

By which it appears, that except at the curve, marked A, where I took a trip to Navarre,—and the indented curve B, which is the short airing when I was there with the Lady Baussiere and her page,—I have not taken the least frisk of a digression, till John de la Casse’s devils led me the round you see marked D.—for as for c c c c c they are nothing but parentheses, and the common ins and

Figure 1. Scan from Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759-1767, 1980). In Volume VI Chapter XL, Tristram comments on the digressive nature of his plot. Sterne inclusions of this graphic presentation of plot lines is one of several unique plays with fictional space and print culture include in *Tristram Shandy*. This scan is taken from the Norton Critical Edition.
image of the line not only as a textual device situated on the page but also as a fictional device to allow for the narrator to comment on the plot of the novel thus far. An “aesthetic of bookishness” is created here in the marriage between the textual and the visual deployed by Sterne, showing that, even in the novel’s highly debated origins, the novel has relied upon playful typography and visual images—those evoked words and those actually included on the page—as a way of creating and commenting upon narrative. These “zones of contact” force the reader to negotiate between the two mediums of the visual and the textual in order to experience the text as an object that cannot be divorced from its visual features or its textual ones.

By marrying the two mediums and illuminating these “zones of contact” in the novel, authors explore the limits of the novel, fictionality, and textual representation. Through the inclusion of visual elements, and also the use of aesthetic techniques to construct narrative, authors question representation. No longer should novels be understood as words on a page with paragraph breaks, page gutters, and dialogue. In “acknowledging their technological reality” through a play with design and form, the visual novel demands that its readers re-learn how to read by paying closer attention to how it is constructed. Being attuned to the novel’s construction and to the physical makeup of the book itself ultimately leads to the role that fictional space plays in narrative. Fictional space, one of the meeting points between the textual and the visual, plays a crucial role in the interaction of the mediums within narrative.

“Inside the Pages of a Book”: Space(s) in Fiction

The term “space” carries with it a vast number of connotations that are hard to disentangle from the geographical and situational, especially as Gabriel Zoran claims that “space” is often used “to mean specifically the spatial aspects of the reconstructed world” (309).
Moreover as Zoran aptly notes, these connotations are present and all the much more complicated when we attach the adjective “fictional” to space. Fictional space is a concept that is connected to the geographical, and yet the concept is much more. It is a critical term that has received a full range of attention for decades, and yet the concept itself remains unyielding because of the sheer variety of theoretical and critical approaches to the term’s deployment in criticism. As Mieke Bal writes in *Narratology*, “Few concepts deriving from the theory of narrative texts are so self-evident and have yet remained so vague as the concept of space” (133-134). The ubiquitous use of the term “space” in part leads to both its ease and difficulty in being used as a critical term; thus, the tricky component then of discussing fictional space is tracing a coherent lineage of its usage in literary criticism. Ultimately, it is my contention that the study of fictional space has seemingly gone hand-in-hand with studies of the visual arts in literary critical works, which means that any study of fictional space has also been tangentially, if not altogether, concerned with aspects of the visual within narrative.

I believe that the writer and the visual artist, who are traditionally divided by the concept of temporality in their art, are connected through spatiality, and in examining the fictional space in these novels, I intend to show how these writers ride the dividing line between writer and visual artist—and thus create works that also exist in some medium between the purely textual and the purely visual. As Henry James writes,

> The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it *does* compete with life. When it ceases to compete as the canvas of the painter competes, it will have arrived at a very strange pass. It is not expected of the picture that it will make itself humble in order to be forgiven; and the analogy between the art of the painter and the art of the novelist is, so far as I am able to see, complete. Their inspiration is the same, their process (allowing for the different quality of the vehicle) is the same, their success is the same. They may learn from each other,
they may explain and sustain each other. Their cause is the same, and the honour of one is the honour of another. Peculiarities of manner, of execution, that correspond on either side, exist in each of them and contribute to their development. (Partial 378)

James connects the two—the artist and the writer—in much the same way Bakhtin writes about when he theorizes his “zone of contact” in which the novel often ingests other genres to expand its limits. James links the canvas and the page by showing that both “compete” for the attention of viewers. Today, critics would say that the two exist in a complex media ecology, both transformed by the other while simultaneously competing with other media. But James sees a mutually beneficial, or perhaps reciprocal relationship between this two art forms: “they may learn from each other, as he write. Consider also James’s preface for The Portrait of a Lady, which introduced the concept of “houses in fiction” in order to theorize the different styles of literary composition while also foregrounding the importance of visual perception:

The house of fiction has in short not one window, but a million […] These apertures, of dissimilar shape and size, hang so, all together, over the human scene that we might have expected of them a greater sameness of report than we find. They are but windows at the best, mere holes in a dead wall, disconnected, perched aloft; they are not hinged doors opening straight upon life. But they have this mark of their own that at each of them stands a figure with a pair of eyes, or at least with a field-glass, which forms, again and again, for observation, a unique instrument, insuring to the person making use of it an impression distinct from every other. He and his neighbours are watching the same show, but one seeing more where the other sees less, one seeing black where the other sees white, one seeing big where the other sees small, one seeing coarse where the other sees fine. And so on, and so on […] The spreading field, the human scene, is the “choice of subject;” the pierced aperture, either broad or balconied or slit-like and low-browed, is the “literary form;” but they are, singly or together, as nothing without the posted presence of the watcher—without, in other words, the consciousness of the artist. Tell me what the artist is, and I will tell you of what he has BEEN conscious. (James, Portrait)
Here, James links the artist and the author again. The “figure with a pair of eyes” who captures
the “human scene” is the artist-author-character who narrates and creates the act of narration.
The plenitude of literary forms of narration is comparable to the various types of windows that
overlook the narrative situation. James demonstrates how authors have theorized both the
connection between the visual arts and written language in addition to the importance of viewing
and the visual for the act of narration, which directly relates to the concept of fictional space.

Carl D. Malmgren proposes a theory of fictional space that is by far the most
comprehensive and adequate for the critical community. He arrives at this definition by asking:
“And just what is it that fiction does?” (Malmgren 28). His answer, though lengthy, creates the
initial boundaries that mark the three distinct aspects of fictional space that emerge in criticism:

At an elementary level, [fiction] proposes and inscribes a “world” somewhere
within our everyday world. This proposed world is not empirical, but imaginal
and projectional; that is, the proposed world is not “solid”—it does not have
“length,” “width,” or “height”—rather, it is a process. This process is initiated by
a culture-specific author, enacted in a real-ized text, and re-created by a response-
ible reader. (Malmgren 28-29)

Fiction not only has a setting—something real and sometimes imagined—it creates this world by
using a real, physical text composed of written language that is in turn used to recreate the world
within the mind of the reader. It is in no surprise then that three particular strands of fictional
space emerge in Malmgren’s theory of fictional space: material space, setting, and narrative
space. While setting is the most examined aspect of fictional space, current criticism is

8 These descriptors are, however, not the only adjectives attached to the term “space” in relation
to fiction used in Malmgren’s work. His survey of literary criticism and narratology analyzes the
various subgroups of space that makes up these three main components of fictional space within
material space (page, iconic, alphabetic, typograhical, compositional, textual, lexical, paraspace,
form), setting (contextual, discursive, situated, story, inhabited), and narrative space (imaginal,
geometric, virtual, genidentic, and narrational).
beginning to take into account the material space of the page and the narrative space, given the
self-reflexive writing styles in the novel; thus we have the emergence of a concept like
Pressman’s “aesthetics of bookishness,” which is many ways combines these three distinct
notions inherent to the concept of fictional space.

In order to illustrate these concepts, I would like to consider briefly a scene from
Elizabeth Bowen’s *The Heat of the Day* (1948), a modernist novel that, while published some 40
years prior to the works I will consider, gives readers what we now recognize as a metafictional
moment:

Ten minutes after [Stella] sat down at her desk, Robert rang up: they agreed to
lunch together. The restaurant at which they met most often was this morning, he
was sorry to tell her, closed—the street roped off: some non-sense about a time-
bomb. They would have to try how they liked it somewhere else. To the place he
suggested, she, it happened, had never been: its name, from being familiar in so
many of her friends’ many stories, had come to seem to be over the borderline of
fiction—so much so that, making her way thither, she felt herself to be going to a
rendezvous inside the pages of a book. And was, indeed, Robert himself
fictitious? She looked back, on her way to the restaurant, at their short unweighty
past. (106)

The restaurant (setting) where the couple intends to meet is closed, which in turn makes Stella
feel like she is “inside the pages of a book” (material/narrative). Readers are also aware that the
reason the restaurant is closed is because the German bombings of London; thus, the setting
represents more than just London (geography) to include the backdrop of the World War II
(historical/contextual). This brief metafictional moment that Bowen knits into the narrative
reminds readers that they are in fact holding a book (material) in their hands. The reader is
presented this scene through the character of Stella which is recreated in the mind through his/
her comprehension of Bowen’s novel (narrative). Stella, immersed in her own world, recreates
the world of the restaurant in her head for the reader, much like the reader is forced to recreate all
of this world in his or her own mind.

When considering the act of reading and its ability to transport the reader, many critics
start at the very origin of reading: the text. Thus, for example, Georges Poulet not only recalls a
story—Mallarme’s unfinished “Igitur”—which focuses on an open book, but also his essay
reinforces the object-ness of books: “Made of paper and ink, they lie where they are put until the
moment someone shows an interest in them” (Poulet 41). He endows them with a life of their
own by comparing them to animals and then talking about their own sentience, their desires and
ability to “wait” in order to be read (41). While Poulet writes about how reading books
transforms his selfhood as a reader, he returns continually to the object in his hand: the material
space of fiction. When thinking about the book as an object, Malmgren writes, “A text displaces
so much physical space, consists of so many pages, which in turn are filled up with sentences,
which are composed of words that occupy their grammatically prescribed places” (25). He is
elaborating on the materiality of the text, and there are two important aspects of page space: the
text and the paratext. Gerard Genette writes, “A literary work consists, entirely or essentially, of
a text, defined (very minimally) as more of less a long sequence that are more or less endowed
with significance. But this text is rarely presented in an unadorned state, unreinforced and
unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions, such as the authors name, a
title, a preface, illustrations” (1). Text is the medium that the author uses to create his or her art.
It is through its placement on the page and arrangement within a book that the material space is
created. As Carnegie writes in her study of typography, “Here, the text acts as a container which
carries the message to the reader” (83).
Material space is indubitably mixed up with the study of the visual. The acknowledgement of this reality stems from the fact that it is the format and design of the book that most clearly comprises the material space of fiction. On a basic level, as Gabriel Zoran writes, “The spatial dimension of the text may be conceived of as its graphic existence. There are texts […] in which graphic space is exploited and activated as an inseparable part of the general structuring of the text” (Zoran 310-311). Of course, these texts—most often poems as Zoran suggests—in which “graphic space is exploited” are created when authors most clearly give life to a work of fiction. Keith Smith, a book artist and photographer, discusses this aspect of playing with the formatting of a text and acknowledges that “it can open the process of writing for the writer to include a possibility of visual layout assisting what is said, as opposed to typing a running manuscript” (ix). Malmgren’s theory of fictional space details four specific types of material page space that interact in order to create what I have dubbed textual space—the alphabetical, lexical, paginal, and compositional (45-51). These self-evident four degrees of textual space arise from paragraphing and sentence structure and syntax. These textual spaces deal with, literally, how the ink is laid out on the page. Whether in the guise of words, images, coherent paragraphs, or manipulated sections of texts, page space is the canvas of the book; it is the background on which the text is printed.

The study of typography and graphic design falls in the liminal space between literary studies and communication studies, or so argues Carnegie. She writes, “the novel, like all texts, uses typography to enhance the process by which it achieves its purpose” (Carnegie 85). The “special case” of the novel carries with it “artistic and aesthetic concerns” because text takes on a visual dimension, not only as something that is perceived visually, but as an element in textual
construction in which text and image become one. Here, an “aesthetics of bookishness” is all the more relevant because novels that experiment with typographical design merge the concepts of texts and image, and the material space of the page is the aspect of fiction commonly and consistently altered by writers as a way of harnessing the visual within fiction. Two primary examples from contemporary American literature demonstrate the relevance for considering how typography influences the reading and interpretative processes. Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* (1970) is printed in what readers would easily recognize as the standard typography and layout for the novel. However, in the primer that precedes the diegesis of the narrative, Morrison cleverly exploits how layout and typography can transform a story by moving from a traditionally punctuated text to one far more experimentally presented one [Figure 2]. The loss of grammatical structure that is created by the increasing of kerning on the page and the removal of punctuation presents a sinister text that foretells the story of Pecola Breedlove’s tragic abuse at the hands of her father. Instead of “See Father. He is big and strong. Father, will you play with Jane?,” which is a description and an interrogative, the transformed text reads “seefatherheisbigandstrongfatherwillyouplaywithjane.” This mashing together of text foreshadows how Morrison deconstructs the narrative of the white nuclear family through Pecola’s rape. A radically different example is Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* (2000) in which the typography and design of the text is used to signal the different layers of the novel as well as attempt to represent the supernatural house in the narrative’s ever-changing structure [Figure 3]. To create this feature of *House of Leaves*, Danielewski presents each of the narrative layers in distinct sizes and fonts, and his utilization of experimental layout and white space in the
Here is the house. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, Father, Dick, and Jane live in the green-and-white house. They are very happy. See Jane. She has a red dress. She wants to play. Who will play with Jane? See the cat. It goes meow-meow. Come and play. Come play with Jane. The kitten will not play. See Mother. Mother is very nice. Mother, will you play with Jane? Mother laughs. Laugh, Mother, laugh. See Father. He is big and strong. Father, will you play with Jane? Father is smiling. Smile, Father, smile. See the dog. Bowwow goes the dog. Do you want to play with Jane? See the dog run. Run, dog, run. Look, look. Here comes a friend. The friend will play with Jane. They will play a good game. Play, Jane, play.

*The Bluest Eye*

Here is the house it is green and white it has a red door it is very pretty here is the family mother father dick and jane live in the green-and-white house they are very happy see jane she has a red dress she wants to play who will play with jane see the cat it goes meow-meow come and play come play with jane the kitten will not play see mother mother is very nice mother will you play with jane mother laughs laugh mother laugh see father he is big and strong father will you play with jane father is smiling smile father smile see the dog bowwow goes the dog do you want to play do you want to play with jane see the dog run dog run look look here comes a friend the friend will play with jane they will play a good game play jane play

Figure 2. The primer from Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye* (1970). This textually experimental epigraph to Morrison’s novel foreshadows the novel’s deconstruction of childhood innocence and the concept of family.
Figure 3. A scan from Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* (2000). This page is representative of the more unique typographical experimentation in *House of Leaves*. Note the different choice of font and size to signal changes in narrative layers.
novel suggests that every element of page space plays an important role—from the margins to the seams that hold together the book.

What is and is not part of the text, of course, relates back to the concept of material space. This distinction is most clearly illustrated in the split between text and paratext. Genette opens *Paratexts* by defining the limits of the book, which is essential since the very notion of paratext hinges on this idea; the paratext is the “threshold” or “group of practices” associated with the culture of printing that demarcate the boundaries of what is and what is not part of the text. Paratexts are the publishing “productions” that Genette mentions, and the text is made up of the words that carry with them a whole matrix of meaning and representation. Paratextual elements are related to material space because they are in part what create the frames and limits of a book. The cover, intertitles, and footnotes—each of these features mark the beginning or end of narrative and text space. They also identify the limits of interpretation. How does one read a novel without a title, or as Genette poignantly asks, “[H]ow would we read Joyce’s *Ulysses* if it were not entitled *Ulysses*?” (2). Likewise, scholarly editions of works that feature extensive footnotes or background material in the text help to shape it; these paratextual features become the contour of the book. Paratextual elements delimit texts in such a way that they highlight spatially what is narrative and what is not narrative—or even how various layers of a work continue in creating the narrative world. For example, in a work like Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*, the paratextual element of the footnote is utilized to heighten the layering of the text (even the footnotes have footnotes). By creating a work that is given to readers through the reading experience of a character from another layer of the work, Danielewski shows how authors and editors can use paratextual elements to create a boundary within the text and thus
direct or alter the reading of a work or even a work’s material design. Also, as a work that originally started as an online blog and website, *House of Leaves* demonstrates how digital reading and screen culture can influence print and the novel. Its experimental design mimes to some respects a digitized, network, which challenges the regularity with which print novels are formatted. To negotiate these borders of fiction, paratextual elements—to a certain extent—become spaces of textual play, or thresholds of interpretation, as Genette claims. Where these elements are situated materially in a text establishes the spatial limits of that text.

If there are limits to material space, what about the space created by these words, sentences, and pages? All accounts of fictional space discuss the concept of setting in some respect. The most common criticism of setting revolves around the idea of how real a world is when it is recreated in fiction. Does this world created by an author within a novel represent a facet of reality, or is it a virtual world that in some ways exists in relation to our own? This question is important because world-building is an essential aspect of setting, which is in turn fundamental to narrative. Setting’s link to the visual is clearly defined by Seymour Chatman who demonstrates that the setting is a crucial spatial component to a work:

Characters exist and move in a space which exists abstractly at the deep narrative level, that is, prior to any kind of materialization […]. Abstract narrative space contains, in clear polarity, a figure and a ground. Just as we can distinguish, in a painted portrait, the person from the background against which he or she is posed, so we can distinguish the setting in a story. The setting “sets the character off” in the usual figurative sense of the expression; it is the place and collection of objects “against which” his actions and passions appropriately emerge. (138-139)

Setting is a type of fictional space exactly because of the fact that is often is a place, context, discourse, etc. that allows for characters to develop and plot to occur. But setting is not simply a structural aid in the world-building of fiction. Edward Marcotte even goes as far as to claim that
setting is one of the most underexamined aspects of literary criticism and that “when it does happen to come under discussion it is almost always considered from a functional standpoint. Setting is seen as supportive of the main action in that it foreshadows, sets the mood, or aids in establishing the credibility of the protagonists by underscoring their feelings, their psychology” (263). Though his claim emerges in an essay first published in 1974, Marcotte is not far from the mark in claiming that our understanding of setting has yet to be as rigorously developed as our understanding of fictional devices like focalization, narrative time, or plot.

Perhaps part of the complexity of setting is that the concept itself is a nexus of various types of space—fictional, real, geographical, discursive, etc. An author creates setting by harnessing his or her historical and physical world to his or her creative imagination. As David James writes, “Every novel has to be set somewhere. All fictional worlds surely depend upon some indication of locality, named or anonymous. Moreover, characters’ decisions and their pivotal consequences are often intensified by the demands and opportunities of where they take place” (3). The world or setting that is represented is, nonetheless, shaped and altered by the author’s imagination—its relationship to the real world, the geographical and physical layout, and its adherence to scientific principles—and then also by the reader. As David James attests in his study, *Contemporary British Fiction and the Artistry of Space*, the complexity of spatial representation is to some extent why setting has been thus far neglected as a critical avenue for entering a text, despite the spatial turn in cultural studies. “Scrutinizing ‘the function of space’” is difficult for any critic because it involves disentangling the complexity of “the reader’s emotional interaction with narrative textuality” (James 7). In other words, setting is much more than just a simple real-world backdrop (the geography or landscape) utilized as a medium for
action in a narrative. For an author, creating a setting is more than simply reflecting on the world that he or she inhabits; it is also the various discourses of lived and historical experiences that are evoked in language. Indeed, the gamut of representative space, real geographies, and imagined worlds that make up a text in part rely on our knowledge of lived landscapes. Setting, much like the material space, becomes a vehicle in which an author calls upon the reader to create narrative.

Part of reading is being absorbed into the fictional world created by the author, and as James asserts, “beginning a novel, we might indeed expect the writer initially to assume the role of a tour guide, acquainting us with the quintessence of where they take place” (James 3). That is in part because each book has its own set of geographical and fictional boundaries. Location has the “enormous power to shape the character and intellect” of the characters within a narrative and the reader, suggests Douglas Mao in his work, *Fateful Beauty* (3). This power exists because, while settings may always change, they call upon readers’ “cultural knowledge and real world experience” allowing for an understanding of setting to go beyond a simple geographical component. Setting consists of equal parts of geography and cultural discourse; thus, our comprehension of setting must go beyond simply thinking of setting as “where a story takes place” and instead must include knowledge about cultures and historical contexts. As Marie-Laure Ryan suggest, setting is the “socio-historico-geographical environment in which the action takes place,” which means that fictional space is also partially created by the reader’s imagination and entrance into the narrative because a reader’s knowledge of the “socio-historico-geographical environment” will shape his or her reading of a work (Ryan 422). Setting, then, is the world, characters, and social discourses that are evoked by the author. Where a narrative
takes place is just as contested and complex a territory as the material limits of a text and paratext that make up a book.

With the previous two types of fictional space, readers are presented with spatial aspects that have in some respect a real, physical quality. For instance, the material space of the book is contained in the object held in the hands of the reader; whereas setting—by calling upon our knowledge of the geographical and historical world—relies upon the accepted laws that govern the physical world (either to create a mimetic world for characters to exist in or overtly to challenge and manipulate as a way of further fictional world building). The third type of space most commonly discussed—what I call narrative space—is an ephemeral and empirical situation that is generated in the place between author, text, and reader, namely how the narrator narrates a scene and the space crafted by this act of naming. Mieke Bal discusses this concept in her definition of space, which she sees “sandwiched between that of focalization, of which the representation of space constitutes in a way a very specialized case, and that of place, a category of fabula elements” (134). In other words, for Bal, space exists between characters and setting, and she often turns to the term “frame” as a way of discussing space. In some way, Bal is contending that the spatial element of fiction occurs simply because there is a narrative: “the story consists of arrangement and qualification; the ways the fabula is presented. Due to this process, places are linked to certain points of perceptions. These places seen in relation to their perception constitute the story’s space” (136, emphasis mine). The spatial element of the story emerges through the very existence of a narrative act. Malmgren assents to this idea as well: “The second major component of a fictional space pertains to the necessary existence of a speaker within fiction, a speaker who may be either foregrounded or backgrounded, who may
either advertise his or her presence or attempt to erase any evidence of his or her existence” (39). Again, Malmgren maintains that some component of fictional space wrists because of the presence of a speaker, just as Ball claims in her discussion of space. Utilizing these assertions by Bal and Malmgren, I decided to place the adjective “narrative” in front of space for this reason and because it in part stands in for the aspect of a fictional work’s space which arises through narrative.

But this does not fully describe narrative space. What about the act of reading? David James answers this question in his discussion of setting: “How we conceptualize novelistic locations, then, seems inextricable from how we conceive reading itself as a voyage punctuated by discovery and qualification” (James 24). Reading a novel is, as described by James, an experience of “voyaging” into space—a space that is between the textual and fictional. Narrative space then must somehow account for the act of reading, and Malmgren does this through his notion of “paraspace.” “Readers have certain expectations about the nature and functions of narratives in general, they have a more specific horizon of expectations about narrative fiction in particular, and they perform certain operations upon fictional texts to insure the fulfillment of those expectations” (Malmgren 51, emphasis mine). Paraspace, then, “consists not so much in areas of signification as in processes or activities that the text elicits from the reader” (52). Texts want to be held, to be read, to be interpreted. Paraspace is analogous to paratexts; paratextual elements which make up the conditional aspects of the book that are integrated into a work because of publishing and bookmaking parallel how paraspace allows for the act of narration and reading to occur. In a sense, paraspace is an element of narrative space because it exists as a contingency of the presence of narrative itself.
The act of reading plays an important role because as suggested above it is through the act of reading that narrative space is created. But an equally significant question in relation to this project is the chosen medium for fiction: text. In a digital and televisual age, it is relevant to ask: why should authors still write narratives to be published in print? The primacy of the printed page as the medium of publication may be changing, but it is far from obsolete. The significance of fictional space in narrative is made clear in the act of reading, and fictional space has always had a deep connection to the visual. The novels that I have chosen to discuss rely on the manipulation of fictional space by manipulating the book’s “technological reality” and thus foregrounding the role that fictional space (and more specifically narrative and material space) plays in the creation of the textual/reading experience. These texts are as much narrative endeavors as they are aesthetic achievements. The genius of works like *Tristram Shandy*, *Ulysses*, and *The Raw Shark Texts* is not that they communicate universal stories to a reader; rather it is because they manipulate textual space in such a way to create novels that, in a moment when many believe that the status of print culture and the book are endangered, these works of fiction rely on fictional space as a vehicle for experimenting with narrative and the book as object. They each forefront the physical layer of the text by evoking a fictional world that is directly controlled by the printed page, thus enabling readers to craft a narrative space to inhabit and transform through the reading experience. Thus, it is no surprise that some contemporary novels have recognized the primacy of the printed page and its relationship to fictional space in order to contribute to the new digitally driven frontiers and boundaries of the novel.
Spatial Form: One Junction at the Textual and the Visual

Interrogating the spatial aspect of a work of fiction in part must happen through a dialogue with comparative aesthetics, a study with strong roots in the 1930s and 1940s but actually going as far back as ancient literary criticism. The self-evident term emerges because of its investigation of the mutual relationship that exists between visual art and literature; the comparison between the two by critics rose to greater prominence in the twentieth century, specifically because of the explosion of visual art forms and literary traditions. In “The Parallelism between Literature and the Arts” (1941), René Wellek writes that “most of our criticism in literature and the arts is still purely emotive: it judges works of art in terms of their emotional effect by exclamations, suggested moods or scenes, and so forth” (50). Though this summation is definitely dated given the emergence of critical theory of the past decades, Wellek’s consistent query: “what are the common and the comparable elements of the arts” can be found in much of the writing of comparative aesthetics (56). In response, and perhaps the best summation, with respect to Wellek’s questions can be found through Helmut Hatzfeld’s “Literary Criticism Through Art and Art Criticism Through Literature,” which lists six parallels between the two sister arts. The first pair are versions of *ekphrasis*, in which Hatzfeld discusses how the two types of art serve as inspiration or source material for another: “the interpretation of literary texts through pictures” (2) and “interpretation of pictures by literature” (5). The second pair deal more specifically with how one medium is able to accomplish some functions, such as character, plot, or representation, better than the other: “literary concepts and motives made evident by art” (Hatzfeld 7) and “artistic concepts and motives made clear by literature” (9). Hatzfeld closes his argument with a final set of parallels: “literary-linguistic forms interpreted by art forms” (13)
and “art forms explained by literary-stylistic expressions” (16). This last pair most clearly hinges upon the concept of “form,” and the theory of spatial form that emerges from the field of comparative aesthetics clearly generates a distinctive relationship between the visual and the textual within literature.

Joseph Frank’s “Spatial Form in Modern Literature” is the foundational essay about the concept of spatial form, in which he arrives at the creation of this term through an analysis of literary modernism and its connections to aesthetic movements. Frank starts by examining aesthetic criticism and the division between spatial arts (such as painting and sculpture) versus temporal arts (such as literature). He writes, “form in the plastic arts, according to Lessing, is necessarily spatial because the visible aspect of objects can be presented juxtaposed in an instant of time” (Frank 7). The presentation is altogether different in literature because it must be read—and thus re-created in the mind—sequentially. The temporal component is actually in part what brings out the “spatial” aspect in writing because the form of a work “issues spontaneously from the organization of art work as it presented itself to perception” (Frank 10). Thus, time plays a highly significant role in the creation of spatial form. Frank reads this concept into literary modernism—specifically the works of Djuna Barnes, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, James Joyce, and Marcel Proust—through the role of the fragment. Essentially, by playing with material space, literary modernists are able to experiment with narrative and also alter they way that a temporal art such as fiction can be presented to a reader. As Frank says rather succinctly about these authors: they “intend the reader to apprehend their work spatially, in a moment of time, rather than as a sequence” (Frank 10).
Spatial form emerges from the crisscrossing of material space and narrative space. When text is presented as something to perceive visually rather than just as the meaning inherent to the signifiers used, an author is playing with the spatial form of a work. By highlighting structure rather than plot or character, an author is forcing a reader to think about how a narrative is constructed on the metatextual level. Returning to the fragment, Frank makes excellent use of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* in his description of the term. He declares, “Joyce breaks up his narrative and transforms the very structure of his novel into an instrument of his aesthetic intention” (19). The result is that the reader must use spatial form as one filter with which to read and/or interpret the work: “As a result, the reader is forced to read *Ulysses* in exactly the same manner as he reads modern poetry, that is, by continually filling fragments together and keeping allusions in mind until, by reflexive reference, he can link them to their complements” (Frank 20). Reading, then, becomes something that is not just linear or sequential because it requires a constant act of “filling fragments” and piecing together the material structure of the text to create narrative. Frank concludes with the idea that the relationship between the two mediums is one that is continuing to develop and thus evolve: “For if the plastic arts from the Renaissance onward attempted to compete with literature by perfecting the means of narrative representation, then contemporary literature is now striving to rival the spatial apprehension of the plastic arts in a moment of time” (61).

Another key critical figure regarding spatial form is W. J. T. Mitchell, author of “Spatial Form in Literature: Toward a General Theory,” further developed the concepts and its potential applications in criticism. As Mitchell argues, spatial form has “unquestionably been central to modern criticism not only of literature but of the fine arts and of language and culture in general”
Mitchell goes so far as to argue that Frank and his conception of spatial form helped connect concepts of spatiality, a concept that “has always lurked in the background of discussions,” to the foreground in literary criticism. To create a more “general” theory of spatial form, Mitchell argues that starting with the material space of a text can open up new pathways to examining narratives: “What is not usually observed is that this sort of inquiry into the physical spatiality of texts [material space] may be related to a host of other spatial dimensions in literature.” And while the term spatial form has received much criticism after the publication of Frank’s essay, Mitchell’s response is important because it suggests that the concept lies at the very core of narrative in regards to being read and being an object of criticism. Spatial form cannot do everything […] But it may help us to see how a theme is embodied, where a narrator stands in relation to his story, what structure of imagery provides the grounds for symbolic meaning. The contradictory nature of the complaints against spatial form, that it unduly concretizes on the one hand while unduly abstracting on the other, reveals the real power of this metaphor to operate at both the experiential level of literature (the work is “realized” in imaginative readings), and at the analytic level (the work is explained and interpreted). (Mitchell 563)

This concept of spatial form that emerges from the field of comparative aesthetics is important in our understanding and questioning of the relationship between the visual and the textual. Frank and Mitchell show that authors who rely on fragmentation and division create narratives that can only be comprehended once read entirely and re-created by the reader. This transformation of narrative—because playing with spatial form alters linear and sequential methods of reading—articulates new ways of constructing texts that exist between the purely textual and the purely visual. Spatial form is important to this project because it is a concept that synthesizes the various types of fictional space described above—material, setting, narrative—specifically
within the context of comparative aesthetics. By reviving the term in this project, I hope to demonstrate its potential utility in literary criticism and show how it can be used to analyze texts outside of the literary modernist period.

**Chapter Outlines**

In my first chapter, I argue that the inclusion of mass media forms into the novel occurred in reaction to the hyperstimulus in modern life. In “The Visible and Invisible Lines of Modernism” I utilize the sociological work of George Simmel and Virginia Woolf to reason that mass media’s transformation of the visual sense was embodied both narratively and materially. With *Ulysses* (1922) and *The U. S. A. Trilogy* (1937), Joyce and Dos Passos composed novels that exist at the intersection of art, fiction, and film; their works are hybridized, encyclopedic, and demanding—voraciously integrating a wide scope of forms, themes and characters. In regards to *Ulysses*, I focus on how deeply Joyce was influenced by early cinema, specifically actuals and documentary shorts, and how this influence is utilized in the style of “Wandering Rocks.” I also analyze how Renaissance imagery of the Virgin Mary in conjunction with erotic shorts are integrated in “Nausicca,” specifically in relation to Bloom’s visual dalliance with Gerty McDowell. With *The U. S. A. Trilogy*, my concern is on Dos Passos’s transmediation of cinema and journalism in the novel, specifically how he takes visual media like film and transposes that using written language and a distinct typographical layout. I predicate that the lines Joyce and Dos Passos experiment with—focalization as perspective, headlines, page space—eschew conventions by presenting text in nonstandard format thereby demonstrating the novel’s flexibility and re-training readers how to read in light of the increasingly prominent screen culture. Their works became the progenitors of textual experimentation, and in the chapters that
follow, I pinpoint the enduring legacy of their innovations: the role of medium, non-standard typography, paratextual and intertextual devices, and design in the printing of novels.

The analysis of A. S. Byatt’s *Babel Tower* and *The Biographer’s Tale* advances a reading of these novels that will show how aesthetic techniques and the visual redraw the boundaries of narrative. With this chapter, “A Novel Art: Collage and Mosaic in A. S. Byatt,” I intend to show how Byatt’s play with focalization and self-reflexive structure relate to the concept of fictional space that also includes the material layout of the novel. I demonstrate how Byatt crafts certain modes, or sub-genres of narrative, to dictate particular settings. The fairy tale, a courtroom drama, a dystopian novel, and a story of modern life compose the four strands of *Babel Tower* that are combined to create the novel. The different settings that make up these narrative strands create a complex, woven frame of narrative storyworlds. These babbling voices, when combined, resemble the DNA and shell imagery that pervades *Babel Tower*, allowing Byatt’s novel to recreate these structures as a form of textual art. The cut-up techniques Byatt employs to structure *Babel Tower* are similar to the collage and mosaic techniques that she utilizes in *The Biographer’s Tale*. Byatt’s self-consciously artistic process of connecting fragments of texts, textual art, and photographs, looks toward the mosaic art form, a visual medium that she translates into a textual medium. My focus in examining *The Biographer’s Tale* will be on Phineas G. Nanson’s reflection on the relationship between biography and mosaic, whereas in *Babel Tower* I will focus my reading on the Frederica Potter strand of the narrative. The subtlety of Byatt’s artistry in manipulating fictional space is best understood as structured and deliberate, which she does on both a grand (*Babel Tower*) and a small (*The Biographer’s Tale*) scale.
In “Paratextuality in Steven Hall’s *The Raw Shark Texts*,” I argue that the published criticism of Hall’s novel fails to consider fully the titular pun and its role in the novel. By taking a more focused look at paratextuality, or the textual devices of the printed work that frame a reader’s interpretation, this chapter contends that the Rorschach test becomes integrated into the novel not just through the novel’s title but also through its transformative play with fictional space—to focus on the Rorschach test is to understand the rich contribution the visual offers the textual. By accentuating paratextuality, *The Raw Shark Texts* (2005) articulates new ways of depicting book features that frequently go unexamined or under analyzed because their invisibility, in some sense, facilitates the reading experience. This chapter argues that Hall imbues print and text with a renewed sense of vitality by using hypergraphy and textual art, while simultaneously refusing to conclude the novel. Hall’s novel, of all those examined in this dissertation, most clearly responds to the charge of print’s obsolescence in the digital age, and I suggest that the print novel’s fate, much like his protagonist’s, is decided by the reader given his use of such a multimodal, open ending.

While mainstream presses continuously reissue canonical works, a trend of small presses redesigning canonical novels has taken root in the current publishing market. These presses specifically “reimagine” novels as works that exist as a collaboration between graphic designers, visual artists, and writers. My dissertation’s final chapter, “Collaborative Bookmaking: The Visual Edition,” seek to address the question of what happens when the creator of a visual novel is not the original writer but, instead, the publisher. In discussing Visual Edition’s *Tristram Shandy* (1759, 2010) and Four Corners’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890, 2009), I maintain that the legacies of modernism addressed in the first chapter return in contemporary book culture.
by arguing that the visual arts integration into the novel always already implies collaboration and hybridity. Through the creation of a niche market for “beautiful writing,” these presses marry the visual and the textual arts using digital and printing technology to reassert print in the media ecology.

_The Visual Novel_ marries together a history of the novel and a history of the book by thinking more explicitly about the connections between genre and form, specifically how the print novel continues to maintain its hold on the creative imagination despite the proliferation of technology and screen culture. My conclusion address this change by answering the following question: does print still matter? Through a survey of texts that have moved from page to screen and back again, I consider how the visual novel will continue to develop as digital technology remains at the forefront of innovation while also considering what future studies of visual writing will have to account for in future critical scholarship of contemporary literature.
Chapter One:  
The Visible and Invisible Lines in Modern Fiction

Conventional turns out to be a cussword. — John Dos Passos, 1919

When actress Simone Mareuil’s eye is held open and then sliced by a razor exposing its inner vitreous humor in Luis Buñuel’s Un Chien Andalou (1929), the film’s viewers become doubly aware of modern life’s violent assault on the senses and, subsequently, its effect on retraining how individuals experience the world through the visual sense [Figure 4]. I read this short sequence as emblematic of the modern age, in both its sociological and literary sense. With its Surrealist style and dream logic, Buñuel and Salvador Dalí embraced the relatively young medium of film as a means to critique, in what Buñuel claims, “artistic sensibility and the reason of the spectator,” though both artists seemed surprised by the film’s success (Buñuel 101). Challenges to sensory perception and logical thought were two characteristics of modern life, and the flexibility afforded by using a relatively new aesthetic medium allowed artists to transform conventions of plot, narrative time, and character in order to exemplify characteristics that may be considered as either modern or experimental. But what of the novel as a medium? How did the assault on the visual fostered by modernity find its way into print culture? This chapter seeks to answer those questions, and in so doing, to establish how the concept of the visual novel emerges in the early twentieth century as a response to the multimodal and hypermedia of modern life.

In the inaugural issue of Modernism/modernity, Lawrence Rainey and Robert von Hallberg invoke “the belief that the artistic movement of modernism produced the most radial and comprehensive changes in western culture since Romanticism” with its “effects” continuing
to “reverberate through all the arts” (1). Their editorial decision neither to define “modernism” nor “modernity” gestures towards an expansive understanding of the concepts that take into account their sociological, scientific, cultural, and aesthetic meanings rather than the standard method of delineating periods by strict temporal points. This foundational point of New Modernist Studies is both adopted and further enhanced by scholars, as illustrated in Douglas Mao and Rebecca L. Walkowitz’s overview of the changing profession in the May 2008 *PMLA*. While Mao and Walkowitz address the trend of “temporal expansion” of modernism, what they note is a new direction in scholarship to locate the origins of modernism in “the development of novel technologies for transmitting information: telegraphy, radio, cinema, and new forms of journalism [which] not only reconfigured culture’s audiences but also helped speed manifestos, works of art, and often artists across national and continental borders” (738, 742). I juxtapose

Figure 4. A still of Luis Buñuel holding open Simone Mareuil’s eye in *Un Chien Andalou* (1929).
this assessment with Ben Singer’s broad historical understanding of modernity as a “sociological concept” that “designates an array of technological and social changes that took shape in the last two centuries: rapid industrialization, urbanization, and population growth; the proliferation of new technologies and transportation; the saturation of advanced capitalism; the explosion of consumer culture; and so on” (72). The emphasis on technology, speed, and transmission in both definitions suggests an understanding of modernity and modernism as characterized by a change in how one experiences the world. Utilizing the term “hyperstimulus”—coined in 1910 by Michael Davis—Singer locates these changes in what he terms a “neurological concept of modernity” that takes into account how both the city and mass media “transformed the texture of experience” (72). As such, Singer’s article both informs and becomes a point of departure for this chapter, which will address how the “novel technologies” to which Singer, Mao, and Walkowitz refer transform how writers incorporate the assault on the visual senses created by modernity into their fiction.

In his 1903 essay “The Metropolis and Mental Life,” German sociologist Georg Simmel observed a phenomenon of metropolitan life in which “the intensification of nervous stimulation [...] from the swift and uninterrupted change of outer and inner stimuli” became focalized through visual assault (410). Simmel continues, “Lasting impressions, impressions which differ only slightly from one another, impressions which take a regular and habitual course and show regular and habitual contrasts—all these use up, so to speak, less consciousness than does the rapid crowding of changing images, the sharp discontinuity in the grasp of a single glance, and the unexpectedness of onrushing impressions” (Simmel 410, emphasis mine). The language that
Simmel uses evokes the visual sense and also actual examples of visual art. Moreover, the repetition of “impression” in this brief passage, and through the essay itself, subconsciously reflects on the style of art with the same name that received increasing popularity at the turn of the century. In the same year as Simmel, Camille Mauclair’s *The French Impressionists* argues that the artistic movement distinguished itself by seizing the “immediate vision” of a scene by “occupying themselves only with the consideration of light, picturesqueness, keen and clever observation, and an antipathy to abstraction.” Both Mauclair and Simmel utilize the language of perception to draw attention to how both an artistic movement and the burgeoning contemporary social reality were effected and seized upon methods of looking and seeing as a means to create art and experience reality. But what of the novel? Modernist writers were deeply effected by this changing reality. Note Virginia Woolf’s command to “look” in “Modern Fiction,” in which she distinguishes the work of “materialist” writers concerned with the surface versus those with inner depth: “Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being ‘like this.’ Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms […]” (Woolf 897-898). Shifting from a preoccupation with the material toward the internal and psychological allowed modernist writers to experiment with not only the standard plots of fiction but also elements such as setting, narrative time, character, and the page. “If he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention,” writes

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1 For example, Simmel uses the following words: “Eindrücke” and “Impressionen” (impressions/Impressionism); “Bilder” (which can be translated as images but also translated as picture, photo, frame, drawing, reflection, and art); and “Blick” (here used as glance but could also substituted by look or gaze).
Woolf, a writer could uncover “the proper stuff of fiction” (899). Though Woolf is clearly addressing the thematic preoccupations of fiction, I argue that the “stuff of fiction” that we cannot overlook, and which the visual novel foregrounds, is the material text itself. By advancing new forms of spacing texts and alternative typography, modernists shifted reader’s impressions of the novel in subtle ways, ultimately emphasizing the role impressions and looking play in the act of reading.

Existing between the completely textual and the wholly visual, this form of the novel emerges in the early twentieth century as print’s relationship to an expansive media ecology changed. The novel’s flexible incorporation of other mediums is one of its defining traits; thus, locating how and where cinema, photography, and print culture become incorporated in fiction has been and continues to be a fruitful purview of New Modernist Studies. I highlight these mediums because their emergence in the modern period illustrates how technology and the mass production of the arts altered the sense of visual perception, which in turn influenced shifts in the novel that focused on an aesthetics of perception or incorporated nontraditional typographical structures within narrative. In particular, the camera became a machine, or even a medium, through which individuals could observe the world, generate art, and meditate on the politics of seeing and sight. On a slightly different note, my reference here to print culture is not necessarily used as an evocation of the printing press as a technology but rather how the proliferation of little magazines, posters, manifestos, catalogs, and advertisements crafted a culture that came to identify itself through these nebulous textual/visual constructs. These emerging visual technologies and visual mediums’ indelible marks on literary modernism are evident in the
fiction that I recognize as forging the emerging foundations of the visual novel: James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1929) and John Dos Passos’s *The U. S. A. Trilogy* (1938).

Joyce and Dos Passos each have dynamic connections to visual culture; their enduring interest in the arts went beyond its integration into their novels. Joyce established the first cinema in Dublin in 1909, and Dos Passos had a career in painting alongside his writing career, often designing his own book jackets. Though fiction was certainly changed by the expansion and development be the culture of early cinema, Woolf suggests a different relationship in which cinema seemed to feed parasitically off of fiction. I make use of Woolf’s observations because she, as a contemporary of Joyce and Dos Passos and a significant contributor to literary modernism as a writer and a publisher, had much to say about its effects on the arts and modern life:

> But the picture-makers seem dissatisfied with such obvious sources of interest as the passage of time and the suggestiveness of reality. [...] They want to be improving, altering, making an art of their own—naturally, for so much seems to be within their scope. So many arts seemed to stand by ready to offer their help. For example, there was literature. All the famous novels of the world, with their well-known characters and their famous scenes, only asked, it seemed, to be put on the films. What could be easier and simpler? The cinema fell upon its prey with immense rapacity, and to the moment largely subsists upon the body of its unfortunate victim. (“Cinema” 269)

Given her preoccupation thematically and narratively with “the passage of time,” Woolf’s criticism of cinema seems apt given the move towards adaptation that she recognizes. However, her critique is equally valid of a work like *Ulysses*, which feeds off of all previously published material. Of course, while methods of perception were in the process of being forever altered by the experiences of theater-going and movie-watching, their impact on the publication of the modern novel was a gradual one, not immediately apparent—though it could be argued literary
and cinematic mediums appear more symbiotic rather than parasitic from the backward-looking perspective of the twenty-first century critic and consumer.

Selecting such works does not come without difficulties, especially given the period’s preoccupation with such emerging realities and the growing critical attention on transmedia aesthetics in the art of the period. I place these novels in conversation with one another because of their attention to acts of seeing and looking that are located within their plots but also transcend this fictional element when expressed through typography. These novels do not feature images or graphics; rather, their formatting, layout, and material spaces suggests evidence of conceiving new methods of printing and dissemination. Thinking about how print itself is a work of art, I turn to Eric Gill, a contemporary of these authors, whose work in typography suggest how the modern period enabled thinking about typography and type as art. His theories moved typography beyond the rigid boundaries of print versus visual art. “They [bookmaker’s] say grandly enough that a book is a thing to be read, implying that a book is not a picture to hang on a nail,” says Gill in regard to the printing of novels specifically (101). His Essay on Typography is a concerted effort to establish printing itself and its products as an art form and not as an industrial, commercial process. Gill goes on to discuss how paper quality, type, number of printings, margin proportions, and weight factor into the aesthetics of the novel. I also factor critical concerns with presentation and publication in relationship to two prominent concepts in this chapter: the fragment as a genre and typography. Narratologists, literary/genetic critics, and textual scholars have drawn numerous connections between the fragment and its relationship to montage in early cinema suggesting that literary modernism’s penchant for the fragment due to
editing in cinema, while others have discussed the relationship between the changing methods of publication and editing due to proliferation of multiple printings of novels.

Given that the connections between these various topics—technology, visual culture, cinema, transmedia, interarts, editions, coterie, small presses—in modern literature are not ones that are altogether new, it is necessary, in order to offer up a sharper analysis of these works, to take into consideration an aspect that has gone overlooked or under-examined. To that extent, the rest of this chapter will pivot on the idea of visible and invisible lines in *Ulysses* and *U. S. A*.

From the horizon to type on a page, lines that are both perceptible and obscure make up the very fabric of daily life. They demarcate the geographic world we live in: for example let us consider the notion of longitude evoked in the title of Dos Passos’s *The 42nd Parallel* (the first volume of the trilogy), the criss-crossing streets of the metropolis, or prominent landmarks featured in Joyce’s Dublin. Lines also factor into critical discussions of art: take for instance the notion of perspective from painting or the lines of poetry and prose. By interrogating the polysemous nature of the word “line,” I will show how novelists use various concepts of lines in their narratives with special attention to how their depiction of these lines ultimately not only reflect on the sense of visual perception but also on the concept of the visual novel. Joyce and Dos Passos refer to works of visual art in their novels, but they do not actually include illustrations or figures in their works. Instead, they rely on the tools of their chosen art, or rather the

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2 While it may seem a bit counter-intuitive to discuss the perception of an object or a line that is invisible, the notion of longitude is a prime example of an invisible line that can be made visible. No such line exists for humans to perceive, yet the line exists on maps and is used daily by individuals attempting to pinpoint precise geographic locations.
technologies of the printing press such as fonts, typography, and page space, to underline the visual dimension of the text.

Experimental typography and textual art was not something altogether new for the moderns, though it did present a challenge for novelists. Johanna Drucker’s foundational work, *The Visible Word: Experimental Typography and Modern Art, 1909-1923*, opens with the premise that modern art emerged at the moment in which “semiotics itself [had] become the object of historical and historiographic inquiry,” having us understand that a closer interdisciplinary attention to language and the word as both signifiers and signifieds could be found in many arts (1). For Drucker, innovations in typography correlated to the “synesthetic investigations” of the modern period. Regarding the works she examines, Drucker writes, “I have eschewed selections of works which incorporate visual images per se and limited my analysis to works which only contain words—albeit, words which form images, are manipulated through their visual form, appear as visual phenomena—but are, still, recognizable producers of linguistic value” (2). I must point out here that Drucker has not directly stated, perhaps deliberately, that the genre of literature she will focus on is poetry, and I do so not to undercut her invaluable contribution to the field, but to point out how my own analysis contributes to a discussion of typography in the novel. Like the visual novel, the concept of visual poetry and poetics has a much longer history though its emergence, or perhaps re-emergence, during the modernist period in the works of Guillaume Apollinaire and then later in Filippo Tomasso Marinetti and Tristan Tzara—all of whom are poets also closely associated with movements in the visual arts such as Futurism and Dadaism. Their experiments with typography on the printed
page and the canvas influenced the re-emergence of concrete and visual poetry in the twentieth century. But what of the novel?

The traces of experimental typography in the novel, especially in modernist works, are overshadowed by the art of poetry. Working with more texts, pages, and words, the novel does not usually lend itself easily to visual-textual experiment. As Roger Fowler details, “Novels are generally more continuous, less punctuated by space; the printed lines reach regularly into the margin, encouraging fast and unbroken reading” (51). Glyn White writes about this very notion in Reading the Graphic Surface, remarking that “because the proportion of texts that alter or reject the graphic conventions of the novel is still small, there has been a strong tendency within criticism to regard such texts as difficult, unreadable and gimmicky, and thus deserving only to be forgotten, ignored or, at best, treated in a way which denies that what happens on the graphic surface might play any role in the their literary/textual interpretation” (2). While White’s supposition is true for the novelists she examines such as B. S. Johnson, Christine Brooke-Rose, and Alistair Gray, it is not the case for modernist novels like Ulysses and U. S. A. which are perhaps the most canonical novels that utilize experimental print and type. The layout and design of the page thus clearly influences how books are created, disseminated, and read. Noting this particular experimental feature in modernist literature, Joseph Frank calls upon aesthetic criticism and the Imagist poetry of Eliot and Pound to show how spatial form was becoming an important component for novelists. I argue that novels that disrupt the traditional printing pattern, especially those in the modern period, are doing so because they are asserting their place in the media ecology of the time. In a world increasingly saturated with visual mediums, they reacted by challenging visual conventions.
The Cinema and Literature

For some moderns, film represented an almost magic-like medium. Take for example Virginia Woolf writing about the cinema: “We are peering over the edge of the cauldron in which fragments of all shapes and savours seem to simmer; now and again some vast form heaves itself up and seems about to haul itself out of the chaos” (“Cinema” 268, emphasis mine). Not only does she evoke the sense of sight here, but she also notes that the medium is created through the variety of “fragments” that make up the “chaos,” the hyperstimulus, of modern life. Her observation is astute because early cinema resembled what a modern audience might think of as documentary record of daily life. The Lumière brothers released short films like Exiting the Factory (1895) and Arrival of the Train at La Ciotat Station (1896), which were filmed with large, stationary cameras that simply recorded the movement of people. Films of this ilk still existed through the 1920s, though their popularity dwindled as narrative entered the medium. As this newfound art became popularized, a demand for story-telling and new ways of seeing pervaded early film, which often exploited or played with the sense of sight as cinema began to reshape and later how we came to perceive the world around us. Take, for instance, early films like Peeping Tom (1901), The Great Train Robbery (1903), or A Trip to the Moon (1902), all of which played with the viewers’ sense of sight or directly referred to the significant role that vision plays in our own human experience. But what of literature?

The camera’s influence on modern literature cannot be overstated. The introduction of such a new form of narrative art presented unique challenges to writers and filmmakers alike, especially those who recognized the power of both mediums. As the desire for narrative in cinema arose, so did the collaborative work between authors and filmmakers, whether that work
was done with both parties actually working together or not. Woolf observed that these “obvious sources of interest as the passage of time and the suggestiveness of reality”—these documentary short films—soon became outnumbered by adaptations and original content. The role adaptation played was significant considering that as films began to increase in duration and include narrative, they turned to some of the most obvious sources for content. Moreover, authors began to champion cinema’s burgeoning status within culture, participating as screenwriters and reviewers among other roles. James Joyce was one such individual. Though he is most known for his work as the innovator of the modernist literary tradition, Joyce also wanted to bring the cinema to Ireland, though the attempt was unsuccessful; the movie theatre he opened closed after three months of operation (McKernan). Cinema’s impact on the novel presented itself through content and form.

While Joseph Frank detailed the impact of spatial form and its influences on modernist fiction and poetry, as detailed in the introduction, it is worth noting that the visual arts to which he refers are specifically art and sculpture. Critics that proceeded him, seizing upon this concept, making a link between cinema and the novel began to speak of “cinematographic form,” most notably Alan Spiegel and Ruth Perlmutter. Spiegel, the first critic to use the term, writes that this type of form arises because of the “development of the visual field,” in particular how characters of a novel or narrators observe setting; it is a “form that presents and portrays rather than comments and explains—in terms of an action that is seen, in terms, that is, of how a literary space is visualized and the attitudes of mind and feeling that lie behind such a
visualization” (230).³ While Spiegel refers here to (spatial) form rendered within a narrative, how the perceiving minds of characters observe the world, he notes that the cinema introduces a meta-level of observation that transforms how that form can critique the material spaces of the novel and literature:

Cinematographic approaches to narrative materials only enter the novel in a consistent and systematic way when it becomes historically and intellectually necessary for the novelist to reify his narrative materials: that is, specifically, not only to see his object, but, at the same time, to see the way that it is seen; to render the meaning of the seen object itself as inseparable from the seer’s position in time and space. (232)

Spiegel’s language here evokes the idea that cinema directly contributes to the novel’s necessity to align itself amongst various mediums. Moreover, cinema’s inclusion in this spectrum allows for the novel to take more seriously the role “narrative materials” play in the act of reading and novel writing. To that extent, I shall examine in *Ulysses* and *The U. S. A. Trilogy* how the spatial, or perhaps more precisely the cinematographic, form of these novels demonstrates how the modernist transformations of perception found their way into material, visual, and typographic manifestations, creating a foundation for the visual novel in modernist fiction.

**Other Media and the Asterisk in Joyce’s *Ulysses***

Undertaking a massive project such as *Ulysses* meant embracing all forms of art; its encyclopedic nature is demonstrated by the myriad of literary subgenres and novel-types included, among which are drama, catalogue, catechism, and monologue to name a few. The novel’s hybrid nature allowed Joyce to draw freely upon the entirety of literary history up to that

³ This description would later be pivotal to Mieke Bal’s theory of space in *Narratology*, and it is no surprise that both Bal and Speigel use the same scenes from Proust and Flaubert to discuss these intimately related concepts.
point, as demonstrated in the “Oxen of the Sun” section, which simulates the evolution of language in narrative form. Through both the subtle and explicit narrative experiments, what would eventually be known as the key elements of modernist literary style, Joyce and his various publishers began to use the page in new ways, though far more subtly than compared to the works of postwar literature that would become the cornerstone texts of what is considered to be typographically experimental literature. My focus will be on “Wandering Rocks” and “Nausicaa” for reasons that seem evident when considering the now-famous Gilbert schemata, named after Stuart Gilbert, Joyce’s friend and one of the novel’s first critics. Each section of the novel is assigned an organ, color, symbol, art, and technique. For “Nausicaa,” painting (art) and the eye (organ) are highlighted, while in “Wandering Rocks” mechanics (art) and the labyrinth (technique) are the focus. Joyce’s use of perspective and narrative voice in these two sections are greatly influenced by montage and early cinema. Indeed, the father of early Soviet cinema and montage, Sergei Eisentstein writes, “What Joyce does with literature is quite close to what we are doing with the new cinematography, and even closer to what we are going to do” (qtd. in Trotter 87).

As is the case with most novels written prior to the digital age, the existence of manuscripts, drafts, galley proofs, and extant copies of works has led to an entire field of critic study—textual, or genetic, criticism—and with Ulysses, the case is no different. Serialized over a period of two years in the Little Review, 1919-1920, with the publication of the thirteenth chapter, “Nausicaa,” Ulysses’s print existence came to quick halt. While several sections appeared in The Egoist, it was not until 1922 with the aid of Sylvia Beach that the novel was published in its entirety in the book format. Ulysses would have several substantial reprintings,
and was even famously pirated by the American printer and publisher Samuel Roth in *Two Worlds Monthly*. John Ryder writes, “The original printings of *Ulysses* by Maurice Darantiere for Sylvia Beach’s Shakespeare & Company (S22) are not typographical masterpieces and the press work of later impressions is nothing less than excruciatingly bad” (111). He continues, “the manuscript posed many typographical problems but he had only himself as literary and visual editor. His publisher was more experienced in bookselling than in publishing” (111). While *Ulysses* has been edited, reprinted, and adapted numerous times since its inception, Joyce’s enduring and experimental work continues to be an object of critical scrutiny. As an text, *Ulysses* represents more than just cultural capitol; *Ulysses* is the novel that has casted a shadow far beyond the modern period, well into the contemporary age, providing a blueprint for both the visual novel and textuality itself.

The Line(s) of Text in “Wandering Rocks”

“Wandering Rocks” is one of the more curious chapters of *Ulysses* for three reasons that I will explore, namely, its typography, its subject, and its relation to early cinema. Here, Joyce presents nineteen separate narratives which, for the first time, take the reader’s attention away from its primary focalizers, Bloom and Stephen. As the tenth episode of the work, the section falls in the middle of the novel’s action and timeline and primarily follows various secondary characters that populate Dublin; thus, it remains slightly removed from the plot and action of the text. These stories provide have a wide range: a long passage about Father John Conmee’s trip to the parish school, a brief dialogue between Bob Cowley and Simon Dedalus about debt, and the movement of a viceregal cavalcade in the city. This chapter offers the bird’s eye view of Dublin allowing the readers to observe the city in motion. As Clive Hart, whose seminal essay on the
chapter from 1974 looms over much of the criticism since, notes, “Since there is very little action in ‘Wandering Rocks,’ Joyce can give his readers time to look around them and observe the setting in which he has placed earlier events” (Hart 186). Hart was the first to note the “documentary reality” that the chapter accomplishes because Joyce’s writing here exceeds “mere mimesis or literary realism” demonstrating that “the consciousness which presents ‘Wandering Rocks’ is in a sense that of Dublin itself, and the spirit is endowed with a distinctive personality” (Norris 21, Hart 189). The documentary nature of “Wandering Rocks” emerges, in part, because rather than create a one-to-one relationship between this section and The Odyssey, Joyce’s source text, Joyce transforms the narrative perspective to include a panoply of focalizers other than use the already established characters of Bloom and Stephen. Consider the following analysis by Richard Brown, in which he discusses what Joyce’s step away from The Odyssey accomplishes in terms of narrative style:

In terms of classical analogy, the assortment of citizens who hold the narrative attention during the nineteen sub-sections of this episode might, perhaps, recall the Argonauts, who did in fact make the voyage through the Wandering Rocks (the citizens have, after all, the argot). But it would make good sense here as at several other point in Ulysses, to think of the true hero, the Jason in this case, as the reader, since at least one of the central features of the episode is the decentering of both Stephen and Bloom (who have hitherto been clearly enough the central protagonists of their respective episodes), in favour of a radically expanded multi-perspectival approach. (58)

But what exactly are the ways that Joyce creates this “multi-perspectival approach” and what does that quality in turn have to do with a concept like the visual novel? In the subsequent analysis, I will emphasize the fragmentary nature of these subsections and perspectives, which itself is but one piece to a highly discordant and stylistically hybrid masterpiece, to demonstrate how Joyce’s inclusion of what many have noted as the “more enigmatic” of the episodes which
was “essentially a desk-clearer, a sudden development to pave the way out of the initial style of
*Ulysses*” (Crowley).

The most distinct typographical feature of “Wandering Rocks” is the asterisk. *Ulysses* has three other chapters—“Aeolus,” “Circe,” and “Ithaca”—that, because of their style, contain line breaks between text, meaning that empty space is inserted between paragraphs or between headings/narrative sections. This page space also exists in “Wandering Rocks,” however, it is marked by the presence of asterisks [Figure 5 & 6]. This distinct visual, typographical clue signal shifts in location and time in the narrative for the reader, and their inclusion has the effect of creating blocks of texts, which resemble the treacherous boulders that jut out from the sea. I do not mean here that the text and words on the page themselves are transformed literally to depict rocks as is done with concrete poetry; rather, it is clear from Joyce’s attention to detail that these fragmented narratives of Dublin life do in some way become boulders—that these blocks of text narrative come to correspond visually to rocky traps in a body of water. These traps are depicted narratively as well. Take for instance the brief story of Almidano Artifoni, Stephen’s voice teacher, who “as he strode past Mr Bloom’s dental windows the sway of his dustcoat brushed rudely from its angle a slender taping cane and swept onwards, having buffeted a thewless body” (*U* 10.1115-1117). Like a ship caught on the rocks, Artifoni is snagged by the cane of a blind beggar and tripped. And while these small marks may seem insignificant, placing more importance on these visual queues that signal change in the narrative allows for a reading of “Wandering Rocks” that compensates for the interplay between the textual and the cinematic. As I analyze below, these typographical marks, while wholly textual, effect the reader’s sense of sight, not only by playing with how the text is situated on the page, but also through Joyce’s
Figure 5. A manuscript page of James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1921, 1978). Note here Joyce’s use of an asterism to divide sections. Presented here is Section 17—Almidano Artifoni’s crash.
Elijah, skiff, light crumpled throwaway, sailed eastward by flanks of ships and trawlers, beyond new Wapping street past Benson’s ferry, and by the three-masted schooner Rosevean from Bridgewater with bricks.

Almidano Artifoni walked past Holles street, past Sewell’s yard. Behind him Cashel Boyle O’Connor Fitzmaurice Tisdall Farrell with stickumbrelladustcoat dangling, shunned the lamp before Wilde’s house and walked along Merrion square. Distantly behind him a

Figure 6. Various printings of the asterisks that proceed section 17—Almidano Artifoni’s crash—in “Wandering Rocks.” From top to bottom: Little Review (1920), Buffalo Typescript V. B. 8a (1921), Placard 27 (1921), Modern Library Edition (1961), and The Corrected Text (1986).
writerly transformation of burgeoning filming techniques such as scene cutting, montage, cutaways, and the close-up, though it should be stated that not all of these are created through the usage of asterisks.

Using the subsection on Blazes Boylan’s trip to Thornton’s fruit stand, I will show how the cinematic, the textual, the typographical interact in “Wandering Rocks.” Early films were short in duration, most lasting less than three minutes, and these subsections of the chapter, with their terse and seemingly inconsequential actions, resemble those short productions, such as the 37 lines that make up the Boylan subsection. “In a Lumière actuality, [...]’the scene unfolds before the camera rather like the behaviour of a micro-organism under the biologist’s microscope or the movement of the stars at the end of the astronomer’s telescope,’” writer David Trotter, quoting Noël Burch (100). Joyce recreates these actualities in each of his subsections by using the consciousness of the city, here standing in for the camera and its capturing of real life, to narrate the events of “Wandering Rocks.” This section also links topically to early films. For instance, the British filmmakers Sagar Mitchell and James Kenyon, deeply influenced by Lumière opened a company under the slogan: “Local Films for Local People” (Toumlin 118). One early film was a single shot actuality of shoppers entitled Blackburn Market on a Saturday Afternoon (1897), thought to be one of the first from the company (Whalley and Worden 35). Trotter notes, “the basic unit (indeed the sole unit) of the actuality is the tableau. Early French catalogues use ‘tableau’ in a sense corresponding more or less to the modern ‘shot,’ and the term has been translated into English as ‘scene’” (100). These tableaus have a “rigorous frontality” because “everything took place in front of the camera until the film ran out” (Trotter 100), and readers can observe these happen textually in a section like Boylan’s shop experience. It opens:
“The blond girl in Thornton’s bedded the wicker basket with rustling fibre. Boylan handed her the bottler swathed in pink tissue paper and a small jar” (U 10.299-301). Joyce presents this information precisely and not through the observations of another character but from the camera-eye of the narrative voice. The tableau/scene continues as Boylan gives orders to the shopgirl.

Several lines later, Joyce writes:

[Boylan] turned suddenly from a chip of strawberries, drew a gold watch from his fob and held it at its chain’s length.
—Can you send them by tram? Now?
A darkbacked figure under Merchant’s arch scanned books on the hawker’s cart.
—Certainly, sir. Is it in the city?
—O, yes, Blazes Boylan said. Ten minutes. (U 10.312-317)

The scene “unfolds” here as it would in a tableau, but the narrative voice interrupts the exchange of dialogue between Boylan and the shopgirl to point out that Bloom, the “darkbacked figure,” is book-shopping. Here, a line of text interrupts dialogue similarly to the way the asterisks occupy the blank spaces between sections.

I emphasize this line as an example because it is important to note that Bloom’s presence here is as a figure connected to books and the reading experience implicitly reminds the reader of their own experience. In fact, subsection ten of “Wandering Rocks” follows Bloom’s perusal of the book stall and his decisions to buy Sweets of Sin. Bloom’s absence/presence, like the asterisks, reminds us of the materiality of texts and novels—the very objects he is mired by in his section. But this line is curious for an altogether more important reason in that the reader sees something that Boylan could not see: Bloom, specifically Bloom as a reader. As Trotter suggests, “Boylan could not have seen the darkbacked figure from the interior of Thornton’s, and there is nothing to suggest that the thought of Bloom crosses his mind. Unlike the parade of
sandwichboardmen along the pavement outside the shop, which he might or might not have taken account of, the apparition of the darkback figure is in no sense for him” (117). Why, then, might this line of text hold such significance? Why does Joyce include it? I argue it is precisely because, by remediating a visual text (actuality) into a textual one (short narrative), Joyce utilizes cinematographic form that the camera/Dublin consciousness enables, thereby rendering in text what the new medium allows us to see, which is far more than a focalized narrator would allow.

But what about what Boylan actually does see in this subsection? Boylan’s ogling of the female assistant at Thornton’s, in a condensed format, displays Joyce’s exploration of the link between the gaze and sexual desire, which will be further explored in the “Nausicaa” chapter.

The last third of the subsection provides ample material for this conclusion:

Blazes Boylan rattled merry money in his trouser’s pocket.
—What’s the damage? he asked.
The blond girl’s slim fingers reckoned the fruits.
Blazes Boylan looked into the cut of her blouse. A young pullet. He took a red carnation from the tall stemglass.
—This for me? he asked gallantly.
The blond girl glanced sideways at him, got up regardless, with his tie a bit crooked, blushing.
—Yes, sir, she said.
Bending archly she reckoned again fat pears and blushing peaches.
Blazes Boylan looked in her blouse with more favour, the stalk of the red flower between his smiling teeth.
—May I say a word to your telephone, missy? he asked roughly. (U 10.324-336)

Between the verbal exchange regarding his purchase, Boylan stares brazenly at the shop assistant’s bosom, which she ignores. While Blazes stares with obvious masculine sexual desire, the nameless blond shop assistant seems to look without agency. This exchange is significant because it illustrates how seeing and looking are being revised throughout the novel. Moreover, this section, in some sense, serves as a prototype for the exchange of gazes that will soon occur
between Bloom and Gerty in “Nausicaa.” Here, Boylan’s sexual desire remains unfulfilled as the
narrative ends with the unanswered question. Indeed, the final line, like an actuality, simply ends
the section, as if the “film ran out.” The asterisks signal to the reader a new change in time and
space.

Asterisks do more than just demarcate these sections of text; they are the visual allusions
to the chapters’ thematic concerns: time, space, and perspective. As far back as 1682, an asterisk
was known as the ‘little star’ (OED), and even further back as the 1382 Wycliffe Bible, the
typographical mark was used as a means to divide units of text. This reference to astronomy that
is denoted by the asterisk is important not only because a vibrant subsection of Joycean criticism
has focused on the relationship between Ulysses and science, but also because one of Bloom’s
hobbies is astronomy. Jeff Drouin has even gone as far as to suggest that the true inspiration from
“Wandering Rocks” is what was called the “New Physics” of the early-twentieth century, a
science pioneered by Albert Einstein (“Early”). Drouin argues that the technique Joyce is really
drawing upon in “Wandering Rocks” is a non-Newtonian time theory of mechanics (“Early”). He
writes that astronomy becomes ‘the frame of reference as both [a] thematic motif and [as]
structural elements. This portrait in motion of Dublin is based on the legend […] a lethal
maritime danger in the Bosphorus described alternatively as planetai, rocks that drift randomly
about the strait, […] the root of the English word planet, and as such serves as the basis for
reading the characters as celestial bodies” (Drouin “Early”). Not once, however, does Drouin
refer to the key typographical feature that also helps to reinforce this critical reading of the
chapter. It is worth noting that in the earliest published version of the chapter in Little Review,
the asterisks are not aligned, known as a dinkus, as was made common in subsequent printings,
but rather form a triangle, a symbol known as an asterism, from the Greek *astēr*, or star. By stressing the intersection between the astronomical and the typographical in the asterisk, I extend a critical thematic reading of Joyce to consider the significant role that typography plays in the reading of the novel, a feature that is more perceptible in poetry and that often goes overlooked because of the nature of reading narrative texts. The interrupting lines, asterisks, and documentary view of Dublin, which characterize “Wandering Rocks” demonstrates the influence of an emerging visual media and science in Joyce’s text.

Exposing “Nausicaa”: Focusing on the Foot in Painting and Early Cinema

While “Nausicaa” is by no means as typographically experimental as other chapters of *Ulysses*, its link to cinema and the modernist modification of the visual sense was all but cemented by the very judicial opinion that emerged from its earliest printing and censorship. The serial publication was promptly halted after readers/censors linked “Nausicaa” to pornography in December 1920, an interpretation of the chapter due to its main narrative: Bloom’s masturbatory excursion on Sandymount Beach while observing Gerty McDowell. Although this criticism did not impede the book’s publication, *Ulysses* did create one of the most famous legal literary cases of the twentieth century, *United States versus One Book Called Ulysses* (1933), in which the Honorable John M. Woolsey ruled that the text was not obscene. According to both the Gilbert and Linatus scheme for *Ulysses*, the technique, or art, being foregrounded in “Nausicaa” is painting, and while Joyce draws upon genres of painting—Renaissance, the odalisque, magazine advertising—he clearly also uses cinema as inspiration in this chapter. Woolsey makes this link explicit in his decision:
Joyce has attempted—it seems to me, with astonishing success—to show how the *screen of consciousness* with its ever-shifting kaleidoscopic impressions carries, as it were on a plastic palimpsest, not only what is in the *focus* of each man’s *observation* of the actual things about him, but also in a penumbra zone residua of past *impressions,* some recent and some drawn up by association from the domain of the subconscious. [...] What he seeks is not unlike the result of a double or, if that is possible, a *multiple exposure on a cinema film* which would give a clear *foreground* with a *background* visible but somewhat blurred and out of *focus* in varying degrees. (ix, emphasis mine)

Woolsey uses the vocabulary of early cinema in his decision, which clearly links the written and visual arts of the modernist period. Maria DiBattista cites Woolsey’s decision as the definitive link between *Ulysses* and cinema: “But Woolsey should also be honored as one of the first, and certainly the shrewdest of *Ulysses*’s early readers, to note how the technique that signaled the novel’s radical modernity [...] found its companionable double not in the lyric or the prose poem [...] but in the art of film” (220-221). Whereas in “Wandering Rocks” Joyce plays with perspective in relation to montage and scene cutting, in “Nausicaa” his attention turns to the cinematic techniques of exposure, focus, and adaptation—aspects of visual perception that were slowly changing in modern life as the technology of the emerging arts transformed how people perceived the world.

In regards to painting, Joyce remediates images of the Madonna and the odalisque through his creation of Gerty, thereby demonstrating that fictional texts often rely upon representations within other mediums and from culture itself to create recognizable characters. Modeling Gerty on the Virgin Mary, as well as other stereotypical figures as the female shopper or the prostitute, Joyce exploits the iconic image of the Marian figure (both the Virgin Mary and Mary Magdalene) foregrounding the connection between Gerty, sexuality, art, and mass media. In fact, Joyce describes Gerty’s own self-conception of her image in relation to art when he
writes that “Gerty’s lips parted swiftly to frame the word but she fought back the sob that rose to
her throat, so slim, so flawless, so beautifully moulded it seemed one an artist might have
dreamed of” (U 13.581-584). In “Nausicaa,” Joyce, Gerty, and Bloom are caught up in the art of
representation—whether it is visual or textual—or as Theresa M. Dipasquale writes about Gerty,
she is one of those “creatures living on the distorted edges of art” (475). Joyce depicts Gerty and
Bloom’s encounter on the Sandymount beach where she sits on the “weedgrown rocks […] on
the quiet church whence there streamed forth at times upon the stillness of the voice of prayer to
her who is in her pure radiance a beacon ever to the stormtossed heart of man, Mary, star of the
sea”—a background not all that dissimilar to Leonardo Da Vinci’s Virgin on the Rocks [Figure 7]
(U 13.5-8).4 The image of the foreground, that of the people, stands out against the dark and
natural setting of the waterfalls which corresponds to the crashing waves and “stormtossed”
beach. Bloom spots Gerty sitting upon the rocks of the beach wearing the traditional garb that
adorns the Virgin Mary’s body, “a neat blouse of electric blue self tinted by dolly eyes” (U
13.150), and Gerty reveals more of this color when kicking the ball “she leaned back and the
garters were blue to match” (U 13.715-716). This image, however, is constructed by more than
just the Marian figure, or as Thomas Karr Richards claims, “Gerty lives on not so much for her
puzzling idiom or for her participation in eccentric events which must be carefully collected and
reconstructed, but because she is an encompassing experiential record of a turn of the century

4 Joyce’s knowledge to these two Da Vinci paintings is unquestionable considering that he was
reading Freud’s psychobiography of the painter while writing Ulysses (Kimball 478). Whether or
not he studied or contemplated the Michelangelo painting is unknown.
Figure 7. Leonardo Da Vinci’s *Virgin on the Rocks* (1483-1486).
Joyce, in a description of Gerty, writes that she is a perfect “specimen of winsome Irish girlhood” (U 13.21). Gerty recalls that she wears the “blouse of electric blue […] because it was expected in the Lady’s Pictorial that blue would be word” (U 13.150-151). Even her physical body is controlled by the common reader: “It was Madame Vera Verity, directress of the Woman Beautiful page of the Princess Novelletes, who had first advised her to try eyebrowline which gave that haunting expression to her eyes, so becoming in leaders of fashion, and she had never regretted it” (U 13.109-113). These instances of mass media controlling Gerty’s image show how Gerty is constructed from an iconography far beyond her own control but not her own consumption.

Beyond Gerty’s iconic blue dress, Joyce constructs this episode to reverberate with references to the Virgin Mary while simultaneously working against the grain of Marian typology by drawing upon the common reader. The background noise that filters out over Sandymount Beach is that of a church service, one that constantly draws Gerty and Bloom’s attention for “they were there gathered together without distinction of social class […] kneeling before the feet of the immaculate, reciting the litany of Our Lady of Loreto, beseeching her to intercede for them, the old familiar words, holy Mary, holy virgin of virgins” (U 13.285-289). This act of worship finds itself relocated on the beach when Gerty begins to imagine the Bloom’s voyeuristic gaze because “His dark eyes fixed themselves on her again, drinking in her every contour, literally worshipping at her shrine” (U 13.563-564). Gerty’s exposed feet in “Nausicaa”

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5 The “common reader” is made up of numerous publications that would be in circulation in the modern period, often transformed in part by consumer demand though not exclusively (Richards 755). It would be composed of little magazines, fictional publications, and even catalogs. Texts that would be included in the common reader include The Lamplighter by Maria Cummins, The Bible, and The Lady’s Pictorial—all of which are featured prominently in “Nausicaa.”
parallel the exposed arms in the Michelangelo’s *Tondo Doni* [Figure 8] or the exposed feet in Da Vinci’s *Virgin on the Rocks* and *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne* [Figure 9] for “when [Gerty] revealed all her graceful beautifully shaped legs like that, supply soft and delicately rounded, and she seemed to hear the panting of [Bloom’s] heart, his hoarse breathing, because she knew too about the passion of men like that, hotblooded” (*U* 13.698-701). The reader’s attention, and Bloom’s, is riveted to Gerty’s exposed body parts reflecting the central concept that the exposure of bare flesh incites desire. As Barry Schlossman surmises, “unlike most women, the Virgin says yes and remains a virgin” (59). Gerty says “yes” to Bloom’s voyeuristic, masculine gaze and remains virginal from their sexualized encounter. In contrast to the image of Mary stands the figure of the odalisque—a female, virgin slave within Ottoman culture that was often a member of the Turkish Sultan’s harem.

While Mary may have been a prime figure for Renaissance painting, in the nineteenth century the figure of the odalisque served as muse for a number of painters, who drew upon the image of the semi-nude reclining woman to proffer up images of the sexualized female body, as can be seen in *Welcome Footsteps* by G. L. Seymour [Figure 10] published in the *Illustrated London News*, a primary text in the common reader. The privacy of the odalisque is emphasized in the fact that the harem is a secret place where the Sultan alone can access the harem. In “Nausicaa,” Joyce (and Bloom) exploit Gerty’s privacy and portray her in her most weak and vulnerable moments: “And yet and yet! That strained look on her face! A gnawing sorrow is there all the time. Her very soul is in her eyes and she would give worlds to be in the privacy of her own familiar chamber where, giving way to tears, she could have a good cry and relieve her pentup feelings though not too much because she knew how to cry nicely before the mirror. You
are lovely, Gerty, it said. The play light of evening falls upon a face infinitely sad and wistful.

Gerty MacDowell yearns in vain” (U 13.188-194). What Gerty and the woman of Seymour’s painting are yearning for, however, remains contextually vague. The woman of this painting, like Gerty, sits alone on a stone and is the object of a hidden man’s gaze. The visual seduction within this painting closely relates to the Bloom-Gerty visual relationship, and the unprotected feet of the woman in Seymour’s painting are waiting to be revealed. Gerty, as a product of the common reader, takes her cue from Seymour’s painting, and these ads from the Illustrated London News enter into the catalogue of the media ecology from which Joyce draws from to create “Nausicaa.” However, like Seymour’s painting, it remains unclear of the role of the male observer. Do these

Figure 8. Michelangelo’s Doni Tondo (1507), or Doni Madonna.
men construct the object they gaze upon, or do Gerty and the woman from Seymour’s painting control the male gaze through their actions and physical presences? Part of this answer can be located in the mechanism of early cinema—the mutoscope, a hand-cranked machine that created moving pictures or short films lasting less than a few minutes.

*Fin de siècle* cinema is saturated with the eroticism of the foot, and the main device that helped to deliver this cultural trope was the mutoscope. Maureen Turim, in an analysis of
Figure 10. G. L. Seymour’s *Welcome Footsteps* (1886) published in *The Illustrated London News*.
representation of feet and shoes in twentieth-century film, claims that within early silent cinema
and short films the foot is featured as a metonymic device to suggest the whole, sexualized body
(58). Turim draws on Georges Bataille’s notion of “the big toe [as] phallic” and numerous films
feature the eroticization and romance of the foot (62). The Gay Shoe Clerk (1903), a mutoscope
classic, functions as a pathway between the Cinderella fairy story and modern life. Finding the
shoe that fits is not the goal of the female shopper in The Gay Shoe Clerk [Figure 11]; rather, she
appears to be shopping for a man and not footwear. Like Gerty, the woman in the film pulls up
her dress and exposes her ankles and garter to titillate both the film’s viewer and the clerk.
Whether or not Joyce knew of The Gay Shoe Clerk specifically is unclear, however, Bloom
suggests that the “films” he watches play with the eroticization of the foot and leg. Bloom thinks,
“A dream of well-filled hose. Where was that? Ah, yes. Mutoscope pictures in Chapel street; for
men only Peeping Tom” (U 13.793-794). While the “hose” of Bloom’s thoughts is ambiguous,
one interpretation is that of pantyhose women wear, and Bloom has certainly condensed the act
of gazing and the sensuality of early film, which eroticizes portions of the female body, because
he masturbates while watching Gerty expose herself—a woman “determined to let them see so
she just lifted her skirt a little but just enough” (U 13.361-362). When Bloom masturbates while
watching Gerty, it recalls the act of the “men only” mutoscope machines where a man would
crank the device in order to continue to see the film. As Katherine Mullin writes, the innovative
mutoscope becomes an “optical toy which destabilized the ideas of youth, femininity and
violated innocence upon which social purity rhetoric depended” because it physically came to
represent pornography and sex work since one must pay to glimpse or visually violate the
sexualized female body (141, 149). The mutoscope thus becomes an object that perverts the
visual sense. Bloom and Gerty both act their part within “Nausicaa” as spectator and object, respectively. Gerty’s self-realization that her sexual and gendered identity is created in part from the media ecology she inhabits allows her to manipulate those who view her, such as kicking the ball and revealing her body for Bloom’s vision. Mullin affirms that this relationship between Gerty and Bloom is similar to the one between the spectator and the subject who is gazed upon. Mullin notes, “Not all spectators were so innocent, and it might safely be assumed that Bloom is the sort of mutoscope customer guilty of hunting for those frames in a sequence which most revealed the actress’ body. Gerty imitates the mutoscope’s unique mechanics of viewing, striking poses which dissect her gradual gestures of disclosure to provide opportunities of uninterrupted scrutiny” (153). Is it thus not a surprise that Joyce’s only reference to the mutoscope comes

Figure 11. Still from Edwin Porter’s The Gay Shoe Clerk (1903).
directly after having fully exposed Gerty and her physical defects (\textit{U} 13.771, 794)? The mutoscope allowed Joyce to experiment fully with the visual arts in “Nausicaa.”

This analysis of the standard typography in “Nausicaa” and its lack of design contrasts the way in which Joyce questions the visual and vision in \textit{Ulysses}. Though barely over 1,300 lines of text, Joyce’s most anthologized section of \textit{Ulysses} exposes readers to the changing nature of the media ecology of the modern period, specifically in relation to how character and identity are formed. Joyce not only forever changed the landscape of literature by forging an experimental work that helped to usher in new, modernist styles and techniques, but \textit{Ulysses} became the definitive work of the twentieth century, even if notoriously so because of its complexity. Both “Nausicaa” and “Wandering Rocks” contribute to the concept of the visual novel by their transformation of how text can be designed and how art and cinema influenced literary production. Joyce created a literary legacy that reached far beyond the cosmopolitan cities of Western Europe; one of the writers deeply influenced by his work was John Dos Passos. While Joyce deftly captures Dublin within pages of \textit{Ulysses} fulfilling his claim that the novel could aid in the recreation of the city, Dos Passos’s realist reportage of the early decades in American life balances a unique combination of experimental typography and modernist vision.

\textbf{The U. S. A. Trilogy and its Democratic Vision}

If Walt Whitman is the democratic poet, Dos Passos can aptly hold the title of the democratic writer given the wide-angled view he creates of America in the \textit{The U. S. A. Trilogy}. As he writes in the prologue to his masterpiece, “But mostly U. S. A. is the speech of the people” (42nd xiv). Spanning centuries and a cast of characters in the hundreds, \textit{U. S. A.} ambitiously criss-crosses a swatch of American life from the inner cities of the industrial North to the
railroads of the West to the European front of World War I, and back to the elaborate workings of postwar economics and the entertainment industry of Hollywood. Dos Passos saw writing as “reportage” and “reports all his characters’ utterances to us in the style of the Statement to the Press” with an obvious nod to the influence of journalism on his work (Doctorow xi). Dos Passos travelled extensively throughout his life juggling various careers and experiencing life on the front lines of war, politics, journalism, art, and literature. Although his legacy may endure because of his writing, his classical training and education in painting enabled Dos Passos to create a prolific amount of works on canvas, with his life as an artist clearly straddling two mediums—the visual and the textual. E. L. Doctorow, in his introduction to the trilogy, remarks on this quality of his writing: “the audacity to write a novel that breathes in the excitement of all the revolutionary art of the early twentieth century—whether Joyce’s compound word stream or [Diego] Rivera’s proletarian murals or D. W. Griffith’s and Sergei Eisenstein’s film montages” (42nd x). Dos Passos and his writing have received periodic critical attention, especially given his transatlantic life and his transmission of hallmark modernist literary and aesthetic techniques. In each volume of the trilogy—The 42nd Parallel (1930), 1919 (1932), and The Big Money (1936)—there are four distinction narrative sections: the Newsreel, the Camera Eye, obituaries/biographies of historical figures, and prose narratives that follow fictional characters. My analysis of the trilogy shall focus on the first three types, thought I do consider all four in the scope of my analysis, because it is in those that Dos Passos experiments with typography most radically demonstrating the influence of the visual arts, or as Michael Spindler claims where the novels “break with constricting convention” and achieve “technical boldness” (391).
When considering the impact of visual arts on his writing, it would be appropriate to start with the Newsreel sections not only because it is the type of section that opens the trilogy but because the Newsreels are most distinctly hybrid of Dos Passos’s creations. Newsreels were the result of the first marriage between journalism and cinema; these short segments were shown before longer films in movie theaters and often combined entertainment and reporting the news, though some even dabbled in the realm of propaganda (Fielding, Véray). Raymond Fielding calls them a “potpourri of motion picture news footage” that as a form of journalism was “often shallow, trivial, and even fraudulent” (Fielding 3). Dos Passos’s Newsreels are a fusion of song lyrics, headlines, and copy text from newspaper articles [Figure 12]. Charles Marz calls them the “noise of history” because they “mark chronological time [...] locate the historical background for the action of the trilogy; they provide its setting; they generate atmosphere; they indicate the passage of time in the world and in the text” (Marz 194). However, Marz warns about following this surface reading of the Newsreels in the trilogy: “even in we could identify the historical source of referent for each of the Newsreel fragments, even if we could ‘plot’ (as ‘conspiratorial’ critics engaged in the ‘burial’ of the text) the chronological progression of the trilogy [...] we would be no closer to explaining the power of U. S. A., no closer to articulating the significant of the Newsreels” (Marz 194). His analysis maintains that they are “ultimately verbal objects—word and world debris” and mostly resemble “found poetry.” While Marz’s brief article does provide a more insightful reading of the Newsreels than most criticism, though he overlooks how they could be linked to the medium from which they are inspired (198). I contend that the Newsreels of USA resemble textual collages, and their fragmentary, discordant structure
Figure 12. Sample design from John Dos Passos’s *1919* (1932). This two-page spread is emblematic of the spacing and typography Dos Passos uses in both the Newsreel and Camera Eye sections. Note that this edition, while not the original one, does accurately portray the layout and font used in the original edition.
contributes to the already established modernist style that influenced Dos Passos. By being the most visually and textually experimental of the four sections, they draw upon the visual techniques from artistic movements and the art of cinema, which at the time was silent and thus fully employed a unique fusion of sound, text, and visual that would change when the “talkie” emerged in the late 1920s. The Newsreels also contribute to the burgeoning sense of mass media and the hyperstimulus of modern life by bombarding the reader with a hybridized, mixed media sample of history.

Before proceeding any further in analyzing the Newsreels, however, I want to suggest that it is in these sections that Dos Passos crafts an active readership by way of Joyce’s self-analysis of complexity in his writing. Talking about *Ulysses* and his own immortality as a writer, Joyce told his biographer, Richard Ellmann, “I’ve put in so many enigmas and puzzles that it will keep the professors busy for centuries arguing over what I meant” (521). While it would be impossible to know whether Dos Passos had such a tactic in mind when writing, the Newsreels undoubtedly present readers with a most surprising challenge in terms of the reading process and, by relation, comprehending *U. S. A.*. Do we gloss over the fact that these blocks of text are provided without context? Are these sections enough to provide the historical context of the other sections? And considering Marz’s quandary: is it futile to try and trace out the origin of these fragmented segments of text? It is in answering these questions that we can begin to tackle what it means to read the Newsreel sections. Taking Newsreel XXVI from *1919* as an example, I would suggest that the Newsreels almost require readers to perform research and actively think.

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6 The first “talkie,” or movie to have synchronized sound, was *Don Juan* (1926), thought it did not feature dialogue. That honor would go to *The Jazz Singer* (1928).
about the historical contexts, especially readers with no life experience of the early twentieth century, while at the same time forcing readers to determine how they choose to incorporate the fragmented style into their reading experience. The section opens with a headline—“EUROPE ON KNIFE EDGE”—followed by a snippet of song about the Thames River entitled “Tout le long de la Thamise” (Prim’rose Day), or “All along the Thames,” made famous by Kiki de Montparnasse. Dos Passos then presents two brief excerpts of what would appear to be articles or editorials, one about convicted anarchists and the other about the industrial worker both of which bookend more song lyrics and newspaper headlines. While the common reader of the period may have been familiar with the sources of these fragments, it takes some research to uncover that the excerpt about the industrial worker was originally published in *The American Federationist*, a publication that has been out of circulation since 1955, and this particular excerpt coming from Charles M. Schwab from a piece entitled “They Will Not Fail” from September 1918. Likewise, the headline that follows “SAMARITAINS BATHS SINK IN SWOLLEN SEINE” refers to the spa at the Parisian department store La Samaritaine, though knowledge of this place is much more accessible given that the store was open until almost the end of the twentieth century, closing in the late 1990s. This headline precedes a much longer song sample pulled from William Herschell’s “Long Boy” (1917), while the sections ends with more news headlines from the *New York Times* and the repeating refrain of “Where Do We Go From Here” by Peter Wenrich and Howard Johnson (1917). (1919 144-145) While I demonstrate that, given some time, readers can find the source material of the Newsreels, these “enigmas and puzzles” may garner attention beyond finding the original documents that influenced the writing of *USA*. 
The collage-like nature of the Newsreels requires readers to move between different registers—from songs to headlines to editorials—in much the same way that a citizen of the early twentieth century would be bombarded with the hyperstimulus of the metropolis and have to navigate between the various mediums that occupied their daily existence. The visual discord contained within this section between bold headlines and the capitalized and italicized fonts are a typographical way of shifting between mediums. The resultant collage poem of “found objects,” as Marz suggests, creates what John P. Diggins calls the “the fleeting disjointed impressions [that] convey the discontinuity of the historical experience” (333). Diggins’s usage of “impressions” recalls the aesthetics genre of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that were fundamental to the visual and textual forms of modernism. This reference to Impressionism both as an artistic approach and as a mode of viewing is useful, to consider how a first impression creates a potentially incorrect reading, specifically how this “fleeting” blur is crafted in Newsreel XXVI [Figure 13]. While the refrain of “Where Do We Go From Here” weaves between the fragments and sutures them together, we see a more indistinct blur created by headlines as well. “AFTER-WAR PLANS OF AETNA EXPLOSIVES” is followed directly by what appears to be a smaller sub-heading “ANCIENT CITY IN GLOOM EVEN THE CHURCH BELLS ON SUNDAY BEING STILLED” (1919 145). Upon a first reading, I thought of Mt. Aetna the volcano and its potential explosion seeing a poetic link between the conspicuously different headlines. Research on the source materials, however, quickly revealed a false reading that was created by this distorted reading or impression. “Aetna” refers to the Aetna Explosives Company and not the Sicilian volcano that would have overlooked an “ancient city.”
Figure 13. Newspaper scans from the New York Times (December 1918). The top two figures feature headings and subheadings that Dos Passos lifts from the New York Times for Newsreel XXVI in 1919 (145), which is featured in the bottom image.
The German city of Trier near the French border, in fact, is the ancient city discussed in the article.

In regards to Aetna, it is easy to see how speeding through a text can produce a misreading, or perhaps in a different way, create a more careful, slower reading, and readers of *U. S. A.* make this decision when confronted with the Newsreels. “Because typography both divides and ties sections of text together, it acts to organize the text into visibly accessible pieces of information,” writes Teena Carnegie (85). She asserts then that novels that play with typography have the potential to transform the reading experience: “[...] placement transforms into displacement. Typography [...] fragments the text by disrupting the syntactical connections which create cohesion. It inhibits movement through the text and requires the reader to concentrate almost exclusively on finding and making connections between the textual fragments. What was once an unconscious process becomes the central concern” (Carnegie 92). While “impression” may be a mode of viewing adopted by a reader, what emerges from the Newsreel is not an altogether new subgenre we might begin to think of as “impression,” but rather a style more easily identified as a textual collage or a Cubist portrait. Indeed, the two headlines I examined in the previous paragraph are from the same issue of the *New York Times* and appear as cut and paste jobs right into the Newsreel text of *1919*, and the mixed media and mixed genres of the Newsreels distinctly echo the angular geometry of Cubism by providing various angles to provide reportage of history and the setting. By playing with typography in the Newsreels, Dos Passos creates textual situations in which his readers are forced to choose how to read, and more specifically where and how to locate meaning in these fragments from the cacophony of historical records, or the “totality of chaos” as Diggins describes (335).
Characters, Fictional and Real, in Print

Doctorow invokes Dos Passos’s “love of thirteenth- and fourteenth-century European tableaux—those with the saints painted big and the ordinary people painted small, filling up the background” as a means of explaining how the work of Rivera’s murals founds their way into *USA* (*1919* viii). The identity of the “saints” and the “ordinary people” of *USA* are subject to debate. While Dos Passos creates a special section for what he calls “portraits,” short interludes that read as biographies or obituaries of famous luminaries in American culture, the bulk of the entire trilogy is devoted to fictional characters. Here, the size of textual space does not easily correspond to Doctorow’s comparison. The saints of olden days are painted “big,” yet Rivera and Dos Passos both emphasize the individual, the worker, the layman. The role that type and print culture plays in the portraits is evident by their unique typography and layout and by the fact that one would most likely find an obituary in a magazine or newspaper, while print culture’s significance in the narrative sections of *USA* is most evident in *The 42nd Parallel*. The characters of that volume demonstrate the various ways in which type, print, and headlines dominate everyday life.

The advancement of technology that made mass printing more efficient in the nineteenth century coupled with the ever-expanding and increasingly literate population meant that print became one of the predominant mediums both to educate and entertain. The typewriter “would trill and jingle and the girls’ fingers would go like mad typing briefs, manuscripts or undelivered speeches by lobbyists, occasional overflow from a newspaperman or a scientist, or prospectuses from realestate offices or a scientists, or prospectuses from realestate offices or patent promoters, dunning letters for dentists and doctors” (*42nd* 117). From newspapers to pamphlets to comics,
print brought people together. Take for instance the following description of the newspaper in Janey’s narrative: “Janey and Joe read the funnypaper together because they were the oldest and the other two were just babies and not old enough to know what was funny anyway. They couldn’t laugh out loud because Popper sat with the rest of *The Sunday Star* on his lap and usually went to sleep after dinner with the editorial section crumpled in one big blueveined hand” (42nd 106). The paper becomes not only the object that galvanized the emotions of the family, as evidenced by her father’s manipulation of the pulpy texture, but what joins siblings and family members together. Dos Passos illustrates this concept in Mac’s narrative as well; as a typesetter and pseudo-Communist, Mac uses pamphlets to organize and educate workers, at one point losing his job for “instillin’ ideas of revolutionary solidarity” through the publications he creates (42nd 79). Mac first starts as a linotype operator and printer working with his uncle’s shop printing handbills, but his life, in some ways, truly begins once he starts working for Truthseeker Literary Distributing Co., Inc. with Doc Bingham who criss-crosses the titular line of latitude by embarking on a “sales campaign to cover the whole country,” which features “a magnificent line of small books and pamphlets covering every phase of human knowledge and endeavour” (42nd 24-25). In Mac’s narrative, Dos Passos validates how print functions as a primary medium of language and culture. This validation is further supplemented in the Eleanor Stoddard narrative where print, art, and magazine culture are linked to show how cultural capitol can be gained by consuming print culture:

> They [Eveline and Eleanor] made many friends and started going round with artists again and with special writers on *The Daily News* and *The American* who took them out to dinner in foreign restaurants that were very smoky and where they talked a great deal about modern French painting and the Middle West and going to New York. They went to the Armory Show and had a photograph of
Brancusi’s Golden Bird over the desk in the office and copies of the *Little Review* and *Poetry* among the files of letters from clients and unpaid bills from wholesalers. (*42nd* 185)

As a failed architect turned into an interior decorator, Eleanor occupies the uneasy boundary of high and low culture in her narrative. She is educated, but her steady stream of work never allows her to earn a living wage. The allusions here to literary magazines, on Dos Passos’s part, show how his own work emerges from the modernist literary aesthetic, while also functioning as the context for Eleanor’s character: she hopes that her reputation as a (good) consumer of (good) art will enhance her career opportunities.

Rarely in the narratives, however, do the characters find themselves the subject of print culture, although it does occur. Dos Passos’s characters create type and work in print shops, and they consume all forms of print culture. But rarely do the “ordinary people” find themselves topically relevant. One exception is J. Ward Moorehouse, a character modeled off of Ivy Lee, who many believe to be the father of public relations. Dos Passos writes: “The wedding came off in fine style and J. Ward Moorehouse found himself the center of all eyes in a wellfitting frock coat and a silk hat. People thought he was very handsome. His mother back in Wilmington let flatiron after flatiron cool while she pored over the account in the papers; finally she took off her spectacle and folded the papers carefully and laid them on the ironing board. She was very happy” (*42nd* 153-154). The transition from the wedding scene to his mother’s perception of it is through print culture, which closes the geographical gap between characters. While the narrative sections present the most standard forms of typography readers might associate with a novel, the portrait sections, much like the other types in the trilogy, take creative liberty with spacing and type [Figure 14].
To analyze how design works in the portrait sections, I want to focus on Dos Passos's portrait of the architect Frank Lloyd Wright. It is worth noting that Wright was alive during the writing and subsequent publication of *The Big Money*, which is why the portraits occupy a liminal space between obituaries and biographies, since many of the other portraits are about figures that were dead by the time of Dos Passos writing *U. S. A.*—Rudolph Valentino and Isadora Duncan among others. While he profiles figures of national and international fame, Dos Passos sometimes goes so far as to obscure the subject because the portraits tend to follow their
own unique pattern; he breaks up sentences, eschews common punctuation, and uses metaphorlic
language to stand in for the figures, going as far as obscuring the subject of the portrait. In that
sense, I see the portraits as heavily influenced by the visual arts, specifically genres of cubism
and impressionism. Note the broken lines and unique spacing I have reproduced in the following
passage:

Near and Far are beaten (to imagine the new city you must blot out every
ingrained habit of the past, build a nation from the ground up with the new tools).
For the architect there are only uses;
the incredible multiplication of functions, strength and tension in metal,
the dynamo, the electric coil, radio, the photoelectric cell, the
internalcombustion motor,
glass
concrete;
and needs. (Tell us, doctors of philosophy, what are the needs of a man. At
least a man needs to be notjailed notafraid nothungry not cold not without love,
not a worker for a power he had never seen
that cares nothing for the uses and needs of a man or a woman or a child.)
(Big Money 345)

Both “glass” and “concrete,” the fundamental materials for building, receive their own line,
showing just how important they are. Angela Frattarola writes that Dos Passos works in the
“laboratory of postperspectival optical experimentation” to borrow a phrase from art historian
and critic, Martin Jay (80). Much of the critical work regarding the visual aspects of U. S. A. deal
with the Camera Eye, which I will talk analyze in the next section, though readers see that style
being implemented in the portrait sections. Just as the spacing in the Newsreels either propels
readers forward or slows them down, the spacing in the portraits re-trains readers to pay attention
to how texts are built and structured—made all the more fully realized in this portrait of
America’s most famous architect.
When asked if he was attempting to craft “an entirely new kind of novel,” Dos Passos responded by stating that he did not “know how this question can be answered” and in turn discussed one of the novels that influenced him—*Tristram Shandy*: “Sterne made up his narrative out of a great many different things. It doesn’t seem to have much cohesion, but if you read the whole book, it adds up to a very cohesive picture” (Sanders). Considering how the various pieces of *U. S. A.* work together, I contend that the very possibility of creating a new, cohesive image of America in fiction is the goal of Dos Passos as well as Wright’s architectural vision for the country:

> Building a building is building the lives of the workers and dwellers in the building.
> The buildings determine civilization as the cells in the honeycomb the functions of bees.
> Perhaps in spite of himself the arrogant draftsman, the dilettante in concrete, the bohemian artist for wealthy ladies desiring to pay for prominence with the startling elaboration of their homes has been forced by the logic of uses and needs, by the lifelong struggle against the dragging undertow of money in mortmain,
> to draft plans that demand for their fulfillment in a new life;
> only in freedom can we build the Usonian city. His plans are coming to life. His blueprints, as once Walt Whitman’s words, stir the young men:— (Big Money 345-346)

Wright’s vision of an “assembled house,” a model house of the future for America, was one that could meet the economic crisis of the Great Depression head on by crating houses that met the needs of the people (Wright 270). “Have we got to go on building buildings, partitioning group, setting up institutions along these dead old lines, and crucifying human life to make money,” Wright asks (274, emphasis mine)? Wright’s vision for the new homes of America, much like Dos Passos’s creation of the great American novel, meant rethinking utility, function, and layout. This attention to detail, to how objects—whether they are homes or novels—are spatialized
resulted in innovation. As such, the portraits are indebted to artistic styles like Cubism and modernist architecture that utilized in new, intriguing ways. Whether the clear, sleek lines that typify the Usonian home or the geometric interplays of lines in Cubist paintings, the supremacy of the line as a structure in art is clear, and even Dos Passos goes great lengths to transform the lines in his own novels.

Grammar and Maturation with the Camera Eye

The predominant examination of Dos Passos’s *USA* and the visual arts focuses solely on the Camera Eye sections of the novel at the expense of interrogating how the other sections make readers re-think spatial form. To my mind this critical preoccupation is a misstep when one considers how the portraits and the Newsreels do measurably more to innovate design and typography, when viewed as textual innovations, especially with regard to their modernist underpinnings. Moreover, the narrative sections of *USA* that are presented with no authorial voice, simply reported, would be more adequately related or likened to the camera and early cinema given that they simply record events. With the Camera Eye, Dos Passos more closely aligns himself with the stream-of-consciousness techniques made famous by other modernists, particularly Joyce. I refer to Joyce again not only as the other modernist touchstone of this chapter, but to show that Dos Passos was referring to Joyce’s style, as we will see in the Camera Eye sections, which in many ways parallel the opening pages of *A Portrait of the Artists as the Young Man* or the Telemachiad of the *Ulysses*. As Donald Pizer writers, “Individual segments consists of discrete moments in this development presented by means of Joyce’s method of the impact of a concrete event or scene upon a consciousness” (62). “What Dos Passos attempted to show through the entire group of Camera Eyes was his gradual assimilation into a world beyond
the shelter of his self-conscious imagination. The more he could find his place in that world, the less of a separate, subjective life was there to portray,” observes Townsend Ludington (444). If anything, as Ludington, Pizer, and other critics suggest, the Camera Eye sections demonstrate strong links to the art of impressionism, which I have already suggested was critical to the artist’s attempt to document the social restructuring of how we observe the world we inhabit.

Like the Newsreels, the Camera Eyes sections do not follow a coherent narrative per se; Ludington links them to Dos Passos’s pseudo-biography, while Michael North, Frattarola, and Diggins see the sections as the textual embodiment of a growing political, social consciousness that matures because of its experiences in the world. Their unconventional punctuation, capitalization, and spacing, however, suggest that the camera and cinema have an ability to heighten the senses by asking viewers/readers to experience the world differently, whether politically or not, through visual and textual artistry. One of the first Camera Eye sections emphasizes memory and storytelling:

but not the dark was all black again the lamp in the train and the sky and everything had a blueblack shade on it and She was telling a story about Longago Beforetheworldsfair Beforeyouwereborn and they went to Mexico on a private car on the new international line and the men shot antelope off the back of the train and big rabbits jackasses they called them and once one night Longago Beforetheworldsfair Beforeyouwereborn one night Mother was so frightened on account of all the rifleshots but it was allright turned out to be nothing [...] (42nd 19)

Here, the narrative is that of other stories—those being overheard, those being told and retold to the consciousness of these sections—and, as the Camera Eye progresses, Dos Passos shows that the camera transitions from simply representing and recording stories into creating them. In this early section from The 42nd Parallel, the story is one about “Longago” and “Before” when
America was still creating its boundaries, a story about rifles and fear. As the Camera Eye continues in 1919, a great majority of these follow a figure fighting in the Great War with the stories rendered more concrete by the use of the present tense to describe these past events. The following is one such example, and is one that emphasizes sensory perception:

sunny afternoon through the faint aftersick of mustardgas I smell the box the white roses and the white phlox with a crimson eye three brownandwhitestripped snails hang with infinite delicacy from a honeysucklebranch overhead up in the blue a sausageballon grazes drowsily like a tethered cow there are drunken wasps clinging to the tooripe pears that fall and squash whenever the new guns spew their heave shells that go rumbling through the sky. (1919 78)

Of the two Camera Eye sections presented, it is worth noting that neither are fragmented the way that the Newsreels or the portraits are, nor are they typographically different from the standard novel or printing conventions. Here, Dos Passos writes in complete sentences, though he does fuse words together and insert longer gaps between sentences or phrases. What exactly is the function of these changes?

To answer that question, it is necessary to see the final trajectory of the Camera Eye sections: the breakdown of language. As this thread of USA continues, Dos Passos suggests that language is changing forever because of the influx of international citizens into America and the changing nature of work, capital, and entertainment during the 1920s. In The Big Money, Dos Passos advises to

hock the old raincoat of incertitude (in which you hunch alone from the upsidedown image on the retina painstakingly out of color shape words rembered light and dark straining to rebuild yesterday to clip out paper figures to simulate growth warp newsprint into faces smoothing and wrinkling in the various barelyfelt velocities of time) (Big Money 156)
Leaving this thought unpunctuated, the consciousness tells readers to remove the barrier that protects the subject from both words and images. Memory, here represented by the action “to rebuild yesterday” and “newsprint,” as well as the Camera Eye consciousness is affected by the “velocities of time.” Time is powerful and continues in spite of any forces that try to impede its progress. Language, however, is mutable. Print culture is evoked here in *The Big Money*, whereas it is almost overlooked in the Camera Eye sections: “our work is over the scribbled phrases the nights typing releases the smell of the printshop sharp reek of newsprinted leaflets” (371). Dos Passos continues lines later, “America our nation has been beaten by strangers who have turned our language inside out who have taken the clean words our fathers spoke and made them slimy and foul” (*Big Money* 371). The Eye here is the witness to a political crime, anarchy or treason we can safely assume due to *The Big Money*’s references to the crimes and execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, or perhaps the crimes of Mary French, a fictional radical from the narrative sections of the novel. The effect the crime has on the consciousness is to render it aware of the myriad of ways that the power of language has over the people; here, it is worth recalling how Mac’s pamphlets continually perpetuated change in labor while also landing him in trouble numerous times due to their liberal agenda. By the time Dos Passos writes *The Big Money*, he is more preoccupied with memory and sensory overload, and as a result, these sections have lost cohesion and are being propelled by forces outside of grammar. Not even the standard typographical rules of printing apply here, even though they were loosely

7 Ferdinando Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti are two infamous Italian-born anarchists convicted and executed for the murder of two men during the robbery of a factory in Massachusetts in 1920. Dos Passos was deeply and personally involved in the case as a member of the Sacco-Vanzetti Defense Committee. He visited the two in 1927 just prior to their execution and shortly thereafter composed and published a poem, “They Are Dead Now—”.
utilized in the earlier sections. The Camera Eye sections end abruptly and without logic as if assaulted by the authorities:

he lifts his hand towards the telephone
the deputies crowd in the door
we have only words against (420)

Dos Passos never answers or provides any hint how words or language will protect the consciousness. Instead, the camera ends with no suggestion as to how it can change or fight back. Against what exactly will words be used? As the only section of *The U. S. A. Trilogy* that breaks down language and its inherent logics to this extent, the Camera Eye sections illustrate how the camera and how attention to the visual have changed the novel—and will continue to influence its evolutions. Exactly how it will change, however, is something that *The U. S. A. Trilogy* does not determine, instead leaving a legacy of an experimental text deeply influenced by the visual arts. The way forward is in collaboration and hybridity.

As the early twentieth century economies of Western Europe and North America became increasingly synonymous with consumer culture, art responded in kind. The visual and textual arts had been around for centuries and were certainly not heading towards extinction, but the introduction of a new technology like the camera, and to some extent the typewriter, ushered in new waves of innovation that expanded the already current repertoire of aesthetic techniques. The result was a market for art that would only continue to multiply exponential degrees in the subsequent years as the reproduction and transmission of these mediums became increasingly available both to producers and consumers. Simmel and Woolf, as cultural critics, commented on these very changes, especially in relation to the emerging concept of mass media to the hyperstimulus created by this overabundant art market and the growing metropolis. With *Ulysses*
and *The U. S. A Trilogy*, Joyce and Dos Passos forged novels that exist at the intersection of art, fiction, and film; their works are hybridized, encyclopedic, and demanding—voraciously integrating a wide scope of themes and characters. But what stands out in the copious amount of material included in these modernist tomes is the novel’s growing flexibility and the possibility of textual experimentation. Deeply influenced by the visual arts and print culture, these works became the progenitors of textual experimentation. If Joyce’s stated intentions for *Ulysses* was to “keep the professors busy for years,” a parallel result emerged in that *Ulysses* would motivate multiple generations of readers and writers to seek out and craft, respectively, new forms of the novel. *The U. S. A. Trilogy* similarly eschewed conventions in numerous ways providing novelists and publishers alike with an example of work that pushes against the boundaries of convention. Indeed, in the chapters that follow, I pinpoint the enduring legacy of the innovations in the classic works: the role of collage in fiction, non-standard typographical practices, paratextual and intertextual devices, and the role of design in the printing of novels.
Chapter Two:
A Novel Art: Collage and Mosaic in A. S. Byatt

She has the first vague premonition of an art-form of fragments, juxtaposed, not interwoven, not ‘organically’ spiraling up like a tree or a shell, but constructed brick by brick, layer by layer, like the Post Office Tower. — A. S. Byatt, *Babel Tower*

Visual art has a vibrant and significant place in A. S. Byatt’s writing. Sculpture, architecture, glasswork, paintings, wallpaper, woodcuts, and other forms of visual art are props that are self-consciously deployed; these artworks that feature so prominently are both real and imagined. These artworks perform many functions: create imagery utilized in narrative, act as intertextual references that aid in the creation of meaning in her novels, and structure the material page of the text. Likewise, her writing features real and imagined artists who play both major and minor roles in the narrative worlds she creates. References to real works of art abound, and Byatt even uses visual images—most often reproductions of paintings or photographs—as paratextual epigraphs for many of her stories. While various forms of visual art—both real and imagined examples—appear throughout her writing, they are rarely used except as paratextual elements. Thus, Byatt’s fiction and nonfiction alike have featured visual art not only as a vehicle for her writing, similar to the way an image is used in a graphic novel, but also as an element that acts as an intertextual reference to her own narrative. As she notes, “A novel may use a portrait

1 Noteworthy examples of these references are Pablo Picasso, who pops into a chapter of *Still Life* (1985), or Henri Matisse and his art. Both serve as inspiration for a short story collection entitled *The Matisse Stories* (1993). Several artist-characters also play prominent roles in Byatt’s writing such as Desmond Bull in *Babel Tower* (1997), Thorsteinn Hallmundursson in “A Stone Woman” (2003), and Bernard Lycett-Kean from “A Lamia in the Cévennes” (1998).

2 For example, the illustration “Jael and Sisera” by the School of Rembrandt is used as an epigraph to her story “Jael” in the collection *Elementals: Stories of Fire and Ice* (1998), and similar illustrations precede stories in her short story collections.
as an imagined icon or a unifying motif” (Portrait 2); the reverse of which can also be said of art that uses books and readers as its subject. The analogous relationship between the art world and the literary world is one that she explores in her oeuvre suggesting that Byatt is invested in seeing the novel as more than just a language-based art. While the activities of reading and writing will almost always hold center stage in Byatt’s fiction, in this chapter, I will demonstrate how these activities are inextricably linked to the aesthetic techniques of mosaic and collage in her experimental works, Babel Tower (1997) and The Biographer’s Tale (2000). Byatt links together the visual artist and the writer both narratively and graphically through her storytelling prowess and the distinct formatting of page space in an attempt to explore how spatial form and fictional space enhances an understanding of the novel.

By focusing on two individuals in Byatt’s novels, Frederica Potter in Babel Tower and Phineas G. Nanson in The Biographer’s Tale, I will, moreover, show how Byatt utilizes artistic mediums, particularly visual mediums, as a means of experimenting with the actual structures of fictional space—the material space of the page, setting, and the narrative space—in her writing. These two writer-characters, who are members of an academic community, draw upon aesthetic and compositional techniques from the visual arts in their own works as a means of understanding their place within the larger world and, through them, Byatt challenges the structure of fictional texts and the traditional understanding of narrative as mimetic. By aesthetic and compositional techniques, I mean a method in which a visual artist creates his or her art, as described in the introduction. Collage and mosaic—the two practices explored at length in these novels—are other aesthetic techniques— that Byatt is able to translate easily into a textual medium. I will discuss both techniques in greater detail below as I synthesize how Byatt utilizes
them both materially in textual form and narratively through fictional space. The manner in which Byatt composes and structures her work testifies to her own understanding regarding the significance of these techniques from visual art—paradoxically, they allow her text to cohere, to hold together despite their emphasis on division and separation. As Elizabeth Hicks proposes, “While they appear to indicate Byatt’s veneration of the visual over the verbal, these images of collage, jigsaw, kaleidoscope and mosaic can nevertheless be seen as part of her project to foreground the limitations of art in that they construct narratives from their disparate visual elements, consequently displaying textual cohesion” (101). This chapter will demonstrate how Byatt uses collage and mosaic, not only as significant metaphors in her novel, but as the vehicles through which her written narratives experiment with spatial form and fictional space.

In order to accomplish this analysis, I will take a two-pronged approach. First, I think it is crucial to scrutinize how Byatt’s usage of fragmentation relies upon her construction of fictional space and how she accomplishes this feat using techniques from visual art. The manipulation of the material text is one aspect that initially garnered Joseph Frank’s attention when reading modern fiction and poetry, and his understanding of spatial form as one element of fiction helps to guide a reading of these two novels. Spatial form, for Frank, emerges from “the organization of the art work as it presented itself to perception” (10) and lies somewhere between the axis of visual and sequential structure. The highly fragmented nature of modern writing means “as a result, the reader is forced to read […] by continually fitting fragments together and keeping allusions in mind until, by reflexive reference, he can link them to their complements” (Frank 20). These fragments—what Byatt creates in Frederica’s sections regarding lamination (cut ups, quotations, short stories) and Phineas’s exploration of the Destry-Scholes archive (notes, stories,
Second, I will look at the role in which traditionally fictional techniques, such as a focalization and subgenre, make up other aspects of spatial form in her novels—particularly narrative space, or the type of space that is created through the “space of the speaker” or “the space generated by the fact that the narrative rests on a speech act, and the space involved in the fact that this speech act must be recorded on some sort of physical medium” (Malmgren 39). I use subgenre in this instance to refer to various “novel-types,” a term used by Mikhail Bakhtin. Byatt plays with focalization and subgenre in these texts as one way of creating self-reflexivity and manipulating the material space of the novel. My analysis in this section will turn to the narrative position that the artist-writer-character figures in the text, Frederica and Phineas, hold to show how this position furthers Byatt’s agenda regarding reinvention and representation in narrative.

While Byatt consistently features the culture of visual art in her own stories, her examination of language, textuality, and narrative suggest that she is invested in the textual as a

3 While I maintain that these novels are examples of textual collages/mosaics, it is important to remember that the scope of my analysis is focused on very specific areas of these novels—the Frederica narrative strand and Phineas’s research. Thus, while I believe that Byatt creates these text-wide structures, her creation of them on a smaller scale emphasizes how fragments are utilized by both techniques. The meaning of fragment deployed here is one suggesting division or small pieces of a whole. To say that her novels are fragmented in the sense that they are incomplete would be false, though there are sections of each novel that contain pieces that are deliberately constructed as fragmented pieces of a larger work. Babel Tower actually includes several excerpted works that are incomplete, the most significant one being Jude Mason’s novel Babbletower, Frederica’s Laminations, and Agatha Mond’s Flight North are also incomplete though Byatt does offer up other sections of the later two works in A Whistling Woman (2002). The incomplete sections in The Biographer’s Tale are “The Three Documents” and the notecard collection of Destry-Scholes.

4 References to this term can be found in Mikhail Bakhtin’s Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays (65, 90, 301, 312, 334).
means of producing art and commenting on identity. However, portraiture and other forms of visual art have been the impetus for much of her writing and have lead Byatt to create complex characters (Byatt, *Portraits* 1). Byatt quotes Henry James to demonstrate the connection between visual art and written narrative: “It is here [in creating a reality] that the novelist competes with his brother the painter in *his* attempt to render the look of things, the looks that conveys their meanings, to catch the colour, the relief, the expression, the surface, the substance of the human spectacle” (Portraits 15). Byatt cites the relationship between the writer and the artist because she recognizes that both figures convey a reality to their viewers through the visual. As a painter uses canvas and oils, Byatt uses page space and language as ways of producing an aesthetic object—namely a book. *Babel Tower* and *The Biographer’s Tale*, in particular, use aesthetic techniques such as collage and mosaic as a means of creating narrative and manipulating fictional space, and the usage of these tactics to create novels results in the formation of works that are designed differently in both material and narratological ways. Rather than create a linear, singular narrative or follow the pattern of a traditional printed text, Byatt’s most experimental and postmodern novels—*Babel Tower* and *The Biographer’s Tale*—offer readers multiple plot lines and paratextual elements that resemble the visual mediums of collage and mosaic.

The artist, as a figure or character, allows Byatt to question her own position as an author and creator of imagined worlds. In “Still Life / Nature morte,” Byatt laments her inability to

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5 Byatt notes her own indebtedness to James in *Portraits in Fiction*: “Novelists have playing in different ways with characters who use portraits from other times and places as temporary mirrors to see themselves with a difference” (*Portrait* 5). After interpreting the role of portraiture in relation to Milly Theale in *The Wings of the Dove*, Byatt concludes that “the portrait here too is a paradox—representing both life, death, and life-in-death, a kind of false eternity”—a concept she explore in greater depth in *The Biographer’s Tale* (*Portraits* 6).
write a novel that “would try to forgo metaphor” (Passions 3). Her attempts to “be as plain as possible” ultimately failed as she realized that, while she felt she may be “doing violence” to other writers by emulating their style, ultimately a writer needs tools like metaphor and analogy in order to create the reality of a work—its setting, its complex thematic structure, its characters (Passions 3, 8). In Babel Tower and The Biographer’s Tale, Byatt uses collage and mosaic as metaphors for writing, and in doing so, she takes aesthetic techniques once relegated to a visual medium of art into the form of a written narrative, thereby expanding the definition of the "novel." Byatt creates a link between the visual artist and the writer to explore how these two creative forces are similar, how both rely on techniques—visual and textual—in order to create their art. Hicks concurs with this reading in her study of the still life genre in Byatt’s works: “[The] use of artist-figures and discussions of aesthetics is important as it is a means by which she teases out her views on the relative pleasure afforded by art and writing. Her stories are populated not only by ‘real’ artists, but by many fictional characters who, to varying degrees, experience the ‘life of art’, whether it be epistemologically or ontologically” (75). By questioning the relationship between the arts, Byatt is able to explore in her writing how art is created and its relationship to reality and thus creates a “zone of contact” between the two media in her narrative. Featuring characters that primarily experience life through the art that they consume and produce invites her readers to investigate how their experience of reading shapes the creative process. As Hicks further elaborates, “The trope of the artist as one who experiences aesthetic problems which are solved over the course of the story is a means by which Byatt describes the difficulties she encounters in her own writing. She is herself an artist who has constructed texts which may be considered sites at which she problematises aspects of the
creative process” (75). Hicks presents us with both a curious and fruitful analysis of Byatt and her characters and shows how Byatt’s allusions to art allows readers to question their role in the creation of art itself and their consumption of it. In the course of this chapter, with this critical approach in mind, I will demonstrate how the artist is one vehicle through which Byatt aids her readers’ interrogation of how spatial form and aesthetic techniques create patterns within narrative.

Both collage and mosaic have one element in common: the fragment. Both art forms rely upon smaller pieces of a medium that are combined in various ways to create a whole. From the French for “pasting, gluing” (OED), the technique of collage has often been used in the visual arts, although examples of literary and textual collages are a prominent mode of experimental form in the twentieth century. Collage combines various objects and mediums—from newspaper to paint to other artworks. The use of disparate materials to create a unified product is, thus, a hallmark characteristic of collage. Regarding collage as an aesthetic technique, literary critic Carl D. Malmgren notes its “interesting” quality because of

[…] the relation it establishes between the artwork and “reality.” A collage apprehends heterogeneous bits and pieces of extratextual reality and relocates them within a textual framework where they retain their concrete particularity and contribute to the aesthetic totality. The resultant artwork possesses two special qualities: first, it does not adhere to mimetic or illusionist aesthetics, insisting rather than art is “added” to the world, since there is no equivalent for the collage in nature; second it presents itself as a more “open” system, one whose boundaries are arbitrary and crumbling, since other bits of “reality” could be substituted or added on. (Malmgren 129)

This summary of collage eloquently describes one of the projects at play in Babel Tower, specifically the questioning of how language shapes the various characters’ experience of the reality. Thus, what is unique about collage is that it does not have a “natural” source and is
categorized by its artificiality. Just as the Tower of Babel falls in the myth, so, too, do the walls of Frederica’s reality in the novel, and she uses collage as one technique to ground the disparate experience of herself as a thinking woman and as a physical creature.

Mosaic is an ancient form of art that can be traced back over 5,000 years, and it is an art form that has not necessarily been connected to the textual, like collage. For that reason, *The Biographer’s Tale*’s incorporation of mosaic as an overarching metaphor for the text and as a way of creating character is important since I consider Byatt’s treatment of mosaic as tantamount to her experiment with spatial form. Just like a collage, a mosaic can assimilate various materials to make the whole—pebbles, marbles, glass, tile, etc. These are often self-contained pieces; Sonia King discusses this quality in her description of the form: “Each individual piece, or tesserae, retains its individual identity yet the eye assimilates the pieces into a whole image. There is an interdependence between what is defined by the tesserae and what’s implied. This is very different from a painting or a drawing, where the medium is subservient to the image” (King 9). Mosaic foregrounds the concept of perspective since the distance that the viewer stands in relation to the mosaic will change his or her perception of it—specifically the individual tesserae role in the formation of the whole. Mosaic is made up of distinct tesserae arranged apart and separate, whereas a collage pastes together fragments emphasizing layering, overlapping, and fusion. While mosaic is similar to collage in that the two are the result of uniting various materials, one of the differences that I intend to emphasize is the grout used to cement pieces of the mosaic together. The grout, unlike glue, is a very visible feature of a mosaic, and in my analysis of *The Biographer’s Tale*, I argue that Phineas’s narrative voice acts as the grout for the textual mosaic—his voice unites the tesserae of texts—whereas in *Babel*
Tower an ephemeral third-person narrative voice acts as the adhesive that holds together the textual collage. While the art form of mosaic varies in type, what remains uniform is how different colored tiles or objects come together to produce a work of art; it is only upon a closer examination that one can see the grout, the cohesive element in the work. The contrast in focalization offered in these two novels will allow me to show how collage and mosaics in literary texts are similar and yet offer up some opportunity to show how unique each form is when employed by Byatt.

As the primary mode through which Byatt deploys allusion and creates intertextuality, the prevalence of citation is the product of her schooling and also a feature of her use of visual techniques in a textual medium. Byatt discloses her penchant for quoting extensively while discussing her generation’s education in criticism,

I think, unfortunately, most readers skip most quotations these days, thinking wrongly that they know them, or ought to, already. It isn’t so. Good writing is always new. My quotations are like the slides in an art historical lecture—they are the Thing itself, which is in danger of being crushed under a weight of commentary. Criticism has become a power game—I like the old forms, where the writers had space to be read, not paraphrased. *(Histories 6)*

By likening quotations to art slides, Byatt is further solidifying the relationship between writing and the visual arts. Byatt, and her characters, quote considerably as a way of interrogating their own reading practices, and these citations allow Byatt to use fragments—the separate sections of the different layers of Babel Tower or the types of documents produced in *The Biographer’s Tale*—within her narrative that alter how the reader comprehends the work. Rather than present the reader with blocks of text only differentiated by the indentation of a paragraph, in both of these novels she uses sections of quotation, font changes, and images to signal genre shifts or scene
shifts creating forms of textual art. In other words, textual fragments are created through the manipulation of material space, which calls upon the visual. A font change in Babel Tower signifies transitions between the narrative strands; the same could be said of the fragments in The Biographer’s Tale. These manipulations, in turn, are aspects that aid in the creation of textual collages and mosaics, and her usage of quotation is one of the primary features that I will investigate in the section on material space in Byatt’s novels.

Babel Tower is the third installment of the Potter Quartet [The Virgin in the Garden (1978), Still Life (1997), Babel Tower, and A Whistling Woman (2002)], a series of novels that follows the Potter family through the 1950s-1970s. Referred to as a “doorstop” novel because of its impressive page count of 622 pages, Babel Tower actually offers its reader four beginnings: a story of thrushes and snails taken from Frederica’s Laminations, an old friend who discovers Frederica and her son, Daniel Orton’s job at a hotline, and the opening chapter of a novel-within-a-novel, Babbletower. The other major strand of the plot is Jude Mason’s novel, Babbletower—a dystopian narrative influenced by the writings of the Marquis de Sade about a community of revolutionaries who attempt to experience “freedom”—which Frederica helps to publish and in several ways acts as a foil to the actual world of 1960’s London. This very structure foregrounds the technique of collage that is found in the Frederica sections, one of the primary strands of narratives that follows her escape from a country house and bad marriage to her life in the city and re-entrance into the academic and professional world as a writer and teacher. The other two beginnings play minor roles, mostly as ways to resonate with the other two more complex
narratives and join together the disparate plot lines of the novel. Language—literary, scientific, imaginative, factual, representational—is the real subject of the novel, or as Mara Cambiaghi claims, *Babel Tower* is a “novel about language, its potential uses and abuses, its glory and decadence, its manifold traps and seductions, as well as its capacity to map unexplored areas of knowledge and revitalize human existence” (280). These interrogations manifest themselves in various forms: Frederica’s collage text; the Steerforth Committee on early education and language acquisition; and the obscenity trial over Mason’s novel, to name but a few. These fragments of narratives make up the greater collage of the novel, and Byatt’s manipulation of fictional space to form a textual collage sets up the work in her later fiction with textual mosaic in *The Biographer’s Tale*.

*The Biographer’s Tale* is one of Byatt’s few first-person narrative works of fiction. Published after *Babel Tower*, this novel, in many ways, continues the various interrogations of language and identity started in the Frederica sections of *Babel Tower*. Byatt herself described the work:

> It follows a poststructuralist critic who decides to give up, and write a coherent life-story of one man, a great biographer. But all he finds are fragments of other random lives—Linnaeus, Galton, Ibsen—overlapping human stories which make up the only available tale of the biographer. It is a tale of the lives of the dead which make up the imagined worlds of the living. It is a study of aesthetics of inventing, or re-inventing, or combining real and imaginary human beings. *(Histories 10)*

The critic/student, Phineas, realizes that all he can ever know about his subject, Scholes Destry-Scholes, comes through Scholes’s notecards and the archive of materials left behind after his

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6 For reading focused on the snail and thrush imagery and significance to the more complex plots in *Babel Tower*, consult Jennifer Anne Johnson’s “Soothsaying Song Thrushes and Life-Giving Snails: Motifs in A. S. Byatt’s *Babel Tower* and *A Whistling Woman.***
death. The emphasis on fragments in the novel allows for Byatt to draw upon the art of mosaic throughout the novel both as the object of study for Destry-Scholes and as a narrative structure for the work. Phineas, unlike Frederica, seems less intent on understanding his own identity and more on trying to depict the life of someone who has piqued his interest, the biographer Destry-Scholes. In order to do so, Phineas collects notes, facts, quotations, and pictures in an effort to write a biography. Like the various pieces of tile that make up a mosaic, these fragments that Phineas collects and orders are the textual and visual objects that attempt to create a portrait of Destry-Scholes in the novel, though it remains resoundingly incomplete.

In thinking about how aesthetic techniques from visual art can be employed by novelists, I want to consider how Byatt pushes the boundaries of what is considered narrative. Byatt’s emphasis on the past and memory, as well as the interrelated acts of reading and writing, clearly accentuates her intention to “revive” past texts and readings. Byatt’s allusion to works of art and literature form a network of texts that she can use as cultural capital in the creation of her own characters, who are distinctly crafted as consumers of art. Collage and mosaic are both techniques that rework and rearrange fragments to create new pieces of art. Thus, Alexa Alfer and Amy J. Edwards de Compos astutely claim, “Questions of how to make the old new, how to recreate and revive the forms of the past or whether to reject them outright, are, of course, at the very heart of the representational problems grappled with by many artist and writers of the postwar period, including Byatt herself” (70). The core of this representation problem is the struggle with language itself and its ability to represent the full extent of identity and reality. If language often fails people or acts as a “straightjacket” (BT 149-151), Byatt demonstrates through her characters’ struggle that one must negotiate language’s confining rules rather than
simply submit to the laws of language and grammar. In these novels, Byatt explores how the visual opens up a new logic within language, one that transforms reading and writing practices as well as narrative itself.

“The fragments I have shored against my ruin”: Fragments and the Structuring of Narrative

One of the key literary devices that led Joseph Frank to the concept of spatial form is the fragment; thus, it is not surprising that he used T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* (1922), a poem that contains discreet sections often classified as fragments or pieces, as a primary text in his study. Frank recognizes Eliot’s *The Waste Land* as a “radical transformation […] in aesthetic structure” into “the creation of a hybrid pictographic ‘poem’” because the distinct fragments force the reader to create the links that exist between the pieces of the whole (Frank 14-15). This concept allows Frank to show how fragments within a work emphasize the material space of the text and simultaneously creates an aesthetic structure for reading. A. S. Byatt, who has admitted to fashioning the name under which she publishes after Eliot, also uses fragments as a structure within her narrative and as a way of creating spatial form. When Eliot writes “These fragments I have shored against my ruin” (Eliot 430), he is suggesting that one can continue to forge art and identity despite the chaos of the modern world and the breakdown of identity caused by it, a sentiment Byatt embraces in the formation of her novels. Her deployment of this concept from Eliot suggests her acknowledgement of fragmentation as a defining element of contemporary life. One way that Byatt signals transitions between the narratives in these novels is through the manipulation of material space and font. How then do these transitions mark boundaries between subgenres and textual spaces and also create elements of the textual collage and mosaic in the
pages of these novels? I will explore how the material space of the page—with its font changes, section breaks, inclusion of visual images, etc.—is one way that Byatt creates the spatial form of her novels. In this section, I will examine how these fragments within the respective novels thematize mosaic and collage textually by playing with material and narrative space.

As one of the inner frames of narrative in *Babel Tower*, *Laminations* is an example of a textual collage that Frederica fashions as a means of uniting the disparate parts of herself: the sexual woman, the instructor of the modern novel, a maternal figure, a reader, a wife, etc. A scene after a sordid sexual liaison in *The Virgin in the Garden*, the quartet’s first installment, features the beginnings of lamination. Frederica Potter muses on the connection between Freud, Racine, and her crush, Alexander:

> But, if you kept them separate. *If you kept them separate, in many ways you saw them more truly.* […] One could let all of these facts and things lie alongside each other like laminations, not like growing cells. *This laminated knowledge produced a powerful sense of freedom, truthfulness and even selflessness, since the earlier organic and sexual linking by analogy was undoubtedly selfish.* It was she […] who had linked these creatures to each other out of her own necessity. […] She sensed that the idea of lamination could provide both a model of conduct and *an aesthetic that might suit herself* and prove fruitful. It would, she decided, as in the event it did, take years to work out the implications. (*Virgin* 209-210, emphasis mine)

And it is in *Babel Tower* that we see these seeds of thought germinate into something much more personal and complex.

And she, Frederica, had a vision of being able to be all the things she was: languages, sex, friendship, thought, just as long as these were kept scrupulously separate, *laminated*, like geological strata, not seeping and flowing into each other like organic cells boiling to join and divide and join in a seething Oneness. Things were best cool, and clear, and fragmented, if fragmented was what they were. […] And if one accepts fragments, layers, tesserae of mosaic, particles. There is an art form in that, too. Things juxtaposed but divided, not yearning for fusion. (315)
These passages illuminate key issues for the character of Frederica and for Byatt’s narrative experiment in *Babel Tower*. The references to “fragments” and “tesserae of mosaics” highlight the very visual nature of lamination, just as “layer” emphasizes the textural connotations the concept carries. For Frederica, this theory of lamination allows her to take control of her life; lamination is both as a way of thinking and as an art form that separates the good from the bad, the sexual from the intellectual, and the mother from the instructor of the modern novel. As Byatt further describes and includes sections of *Laminations*, we see how the concept of a textual collage exists on a micro-level in the novel. The collage is created by the rearrangement and cut-up techniques that allow for the artificial blending of words and passages of text that do not follow a linear or coherent progression. Unlike a standard, linear narrative of events, *Laminations* presents fragments of text that are rearranged snippets—often taken from other sources rather than original writing—that Frederica crafts to combat her sense of lost freedom. The act of lamination plays a crucial part in the Potter Quartet because it is Frederica’s attempt at seeing how she can unite the disparate parts of herself while recognizing the divisions and conflicts within her own being.

These divisions—within Frederica and within the novel—finally reach a climax when her divorce forces her to realize how subject she is to the structures of language. After receiving a response to her suit for divorce from her husband’s, Nigel’s, divorce lawyer, Frederica cuts up the letter and “re-writes” it to examine her emotional anxieties and fears of losing her son. She cannot identify with the image of Frederica that the letter evokes because her own emotional experience contradicts the harsh, sterile language used by the lawyer. The second letter does not even mention her by name, and its allegations leave her at a loss: “There are no words with
which Frederica feels able to explain her relations […] Frederica feels wild and oppressed[,]”
and she uses her notebook to “reduce the lawyer’s language to plain expressive English” (BT 378-379, 381). Feeling inspired by Desmond Bull’s new show on collage and William Burroughs’s cut-ups, “she takes the sharp shears and slices Guy Tiger’s [the lawyer] letter in two, vertically, and then again horizontally” (BT 378-379). To gain power over her distress and feelings, she creates a new letter; she creates a textual collage. She rearranges one section to read, “My client [Nigel] does not care for the boy” (BT 379), which was actually a charge laid against her in the countersuit. Frederica’s rewritten letter is not linear and features grammatical errors, but it is a better approximation of her own reality. The narrative voice articulates this position: “Lawyers are concerned to make unambiguous statements with unquestionable conclusions; Frederica’s cut-up has therefore less beauty than a cut-up of some richer text might have, but it does approximate to a satisfactory representation of her confusion, of her distress, of her sense that the apparent irrefutable clarity of Nigel’s solicitor’s arguments is a nonsense in her world” (BT 380). To achieve “a satisfactory representation,” Frederica turns the lawyer’s letter into a collage of its former self. Frederica is beginning to realize fully how the structures of language are structures that she, too, can manipulate as a way of accessing a more truthful representation of her self.

Lamination is the method by which Frederica combats “nonsense” and seeks personal clarity, and it is also a model for both a mode of composition and an example of how material
space can be manipulated to resemble a more visual medium. Byatt uses lamination as a method to create narrative and as a way to develop Frederica as a character. It is an actual layer of the narrative, and it also serves as a model for the novel’s own spatial arrangement. Frederica laminates her experience as a way of translating herself for others, just as Byatt uses rewriting and allusion as literary techniques to create self-reflexivity and structure her own work. Thus, we see how language, as Byatt’s medium, is transformed by an infusion of visual techniques into her writing. “Language rustles around her with many voices, none of them hers, all of them hers” (BT 381), the narrator says of Frederica. This simple description, which is used for Frederica, can also be applied to the novel with its own “many voices”—its various plots and the cacophony of intertexts. The narrator goes on to remark later that: “Frederica is an intellectual, driven by curiosity, by a pleasure in coherence, by making connections. Frederica is an intellectual at large in a world where most intellectuals are proclaiming the death of coherence, the illusory nature of orders, which are perceived to be man-made, provisional and unstable. Frederica is a woman whose life appears to be flying apart into unrelated fragments […]” (380, italics mine). These fragments merge in her creation of Laminations, which challenges the nature of linearity in narrative and possibility contained in textual space. They also allow Frederica to restore her sense of pleasure—in her personal, professional, and intellectual life.

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7 This use of layering and repurposing texts also resembles the concept of the “palimpsest,” though more complete examination of palimpsests in Byatt’s oeuvre is outside the scope of this analysis. According to The Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory, the palimpsest “resembles canvas or writing scroll containing several layers of pictures or texts. Typically, scratching the surface of a palimpsests exposes part of an earlier picture of text. In Genettean poetics, the term is used to refer to a ‘layered’ text which builds upon, parodies, alludes to, contains traces of, or otherwise contains an earlier text” (417). Considering Byatt’s extensive use of quotations and previously publishing material as intertexts, her novels could be labelled as palimpsests.
As an example of a collage, *Laminations*, and even *Babel Tower*, is a work that forges a new, unique expression of possibility in the novel in that it does not allow for a linear prose narrative. If citation is Byatt’s form of re-invention, then Frederica clearly uses *Laminations* as a way to re-invent and to explore her past reading of literature. The two fictional texts that play a significant role in the work’s origin are D. H. Lawrence’s *Women in Love* (1920) and E. M. Forster’s *Howards End* (1910), and Byatt’s citations and cut ups of these texts represents a reordering of material space. In teaching these novels, Frederica urges her students to understand that the reader emerges as the central element of fiction because the reader “remakes” and rewrites the novel within his or her head. While fiction can be tangibly grasped in the physical form of a book, the novel’s contents must be grasped in a complex set of mental processes and images, as Frederica determines during a reflection on teaching Lawrence. Frederica certainly wonders if her students comprehend this understanding when they discuss literature: “They know perfectly well, if reminded, that four of these six beings are actually made of words, are capering word-puppets, not flesh and blood” (*BT* 331). Yet, Frederica manipulates the material texts as a way of exploring how the reorganization of fictional space alters its mimetic qualities and opens up the possibilities for thinking about herself and Lawrence’s novel. And in doing so, Byatt demonstrates how material manipulation of texts can allow for a new comprehension of an already established canonical narrative. Using Burroughs’s technique, Frederica’s collage rearranges and pastes together the original passages to create a new text that deepens rather than reduces the original: “A vertical snip, a horizontal snip, re-arrange. This method produces something interesting and rhapsodic from the Lawrence: […] which says more or less what it was originally saying, with more or less the same rhythm, as though all the breathings of all the
words were interchangeable” (BT 383-384). Frederica creates a palimpsest of Lawrence’s and Forster’s novels, editing the words to relate back to her own specific situation. Her own textual mosaic shows how she, too, is subject to the ways literature is socially constructed as she attempts to create new meanings in regards to gendered relationships through Lawrence’s novel.

Frederica’s own experience of “unity” and “oneness” contradicts how they are presented in Women in Love and Howard’s End. A closer examination of Frederica’s rewriting of Women in Love reveals her mistrust of Lawrence’s ideas is worked out in Laminations. It is through the transformation of linear narrative and spatial form that she rewrites her own experience and reinforces her realization of how language shapes reality. She recasts the original word order of Lawrence’s sentences, which leaves behind only traces of the original lines: 1) “How can I say ‘I,’ he said, whispering with truth to be, and you have ceased to the real truth” and 2) “In the new superfine bliss she could not know there was no I and you, there to be adored. There were wonder of existing between them” (BT 383-384). These re-written sentences come from Chapter 27 of Women in Love, and this tweaking of Lawrence shows how collage, as a technique, involves change and a rewriting of the source. Byatt demonstrates how Lawrence’s text serves as a vehicle for Frederica’s questioning as she reads his novel and assimilates it into her own writing project of her own “I”—her own identity—with its inability to connect to Nigel or others. Instead of having Ursula claiming a newfound unity when assimilated into Rupert’s identity,

8 The sentences are taking from Chapter 27, “Flitting,” of Women in Love. Lawrence’s original lines read as follows: 1) “How could I say ‘I’ when he was something new and unknown, not himself at all?” (369) and 2) “In the new, superfine bliss, a peace superseding knowledge, there was no I and you, there was only the third, unrealised wonder, the wonder of existing not as oneself, but in a consummation of my being and of her being in a new One, a new, paradisal unit, regained from the duality” (369).
Frederica transforms the passage to show how artificial the “I” really is and that it is not wholly contingent open the other for formation. Likewise, her alteration of the second passage shows that there is often a failure in connection, rather than a union, and that identity can emerge through existing “between” discourse rather than in union together. Her lamination startles her own sensibilities, “She thinks: I am being unjust. I am not thinking clearly. I am accusing Forster and Lawrence of making me marry Nigel, out of some desire for Union of Opposites, of Only Connecting the Prose and the Passion” (BT 384). It is after this realization that she titles her work “Laminations” and begins piecing together all of its parts with the rest of the chapter, offering up more of these fragments to the reader.

Though Laminations contains cut-ups and original writing, it also quickly becomes a collection for Frederica to gather quotations. Citation plays a significant role in the novel as Byatt continually shifts between Jude’s novel, Frederica’s life, Laminations, and the other various strands of narrative—all of which use citation as a motif and rely upon it as a mean of relaying information to the reader.9 Byatt writes, “‘All writing is in fact cut-ups. A collage of words read overheard.’ These sentences of Burrough’s sent a spiky thrill of recognition through her brain. The point of words is that they have to have already been used, they have not to be new, they have to be only re-arrangements, in order to have meaning” (BT 385). This realization continues further when Frederica thinks about how her quotations of other texts could add to her

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9 Though it would seem like Lamination is the most overt section to use citation, one should consider the way Babel Tower is made up of various texts to create the cacophony of voices competing in the novel: court transcripts as the vehicle to continue Jude’s and Frederica’s story in the last 100 pages of the novel; Babbletower, the novel within the novel, that is only partially relayed to the reader; sections of reports on literacy, cognition, and education; and Agatha Mond’s Flight North as interludes to add to the novel’s cacophony of voices.
project; thus, Byatt includes this insight into Frederica’s project, “Quotation is another form of cut-up; it gives a kind of papery vitality and independence to, precisely, cultural clichés cut free from the web of language that gives them precise meaning” (BT 385). To examine quotation textually is to recognize that when Byatt does cite other texts, these citations are formatted differently. For instance, each of the entries of *Laminations* is a different font size from the frame narrative that surrounds them, while the excerpts of *Babbletower* are in a different font altogether. Byatt uses citation to craft her entire novel as she shifts between various threads of narrative, and the arrangement of narrative within *Babel Tower* suggests that citation—a textual collage—is one method that can be visually impressed upon the reader, especially if these elements are graphically different in the layout of the novel. Some of the citations are even completely italicized, setting them apart from the narrative very conspicuously as quotations. The fact that these elements are visually altered suggests that the reader must consider the visual construction of the material text. Through Burroughs, Byatt notes that all writing is citation and collage; her own novel exemplifies this conclusion through its layout of material space, implying that the visual and the textual must work together in fiction as a way for the reader to apprehend the reality presented in the novel.

Though I link collage to *Babel Tower* rather than mosaic, I am not trying to create a dichotomy between the two aesthetic techniques. In fact, both collage and mosaic are noted for combining various fragments and elements, as suggested above. This feature alone, which Byatt enacts through the manipulation of the material space in her novels, shows the significance of spatial form because it emphasizes how the juxtaposition and placement of fragments shapes how a work is structured and experienced. Critic Michael J. Noble refers to this concept in his
work on memory and Byatt’s novels: “Babel Tower questions the nature of language—its origins, its transformation, its efficacy—through the juxtaposition of various memory scenographies and narratives. […] Like the shattering of the glass at St. Simeon’s, they remain only in the color fragments of ideas. For this reason, the novel begins by piecing together various beginnings to create a restructured mosaic that may serve as a framework for knowledge” (Noble 190). Noble envisions mosaic as a potential “framework for knowledge,” and Byatt clearly sees it as a metaphor for her fiction writing. She forges lamination as a type of writing style that translates the visual art of collage into a written form in Babel Tower, which greatly influenced her writing style and the integration of mosaic in The Biographer’s Tale.

Mosaic, however, plays a much more prominent role in her novel, The Biographer’s Tale. The first references to mosaic are examples of the art form found in the adventures of Elmer Bole, the subject of Destry-Scholes’s first book (TBT 17, 26), although Phineas soon acknowledges the role that mosaic plays in his own research. Phineas gathers together quotations as a way of collecting “the purest and most beautiful parts of the transmission of scholarship” (TBT 36). These quotes are like the pieces of tile that make up the mosaic of his research. “I began a collection of them, intending, when my time came, to redeploy them with a difference, catching different light at a different angle. That metaphor is from mosaic-making. One of the things I learned in these weeks of research was that the great makers constantly raided previous works—whether in pebble, or marble, or glass, or silver and gold—for tesserae which they rewrought into new images” (TBT 37). The arrangement and manipulation of the tiles helps to create the whole, to catch the light in new ways. Similarly, the organization of citations creates the structure of the novel and his research.
If a theory of lamination guides Frederica, Phineas is most clearly influenced by mosaic-making as a method of creating his own text. Not only does he examine mosaics through his research, he clearly and self-consciously creates them. Byatt inculcates this fascination for citation and quotation as a method of mosaic-making in Phineas’s research practices. The spatial arrangement of *The Biographer’s Tale* clearly follows Phineas’s arrangement of note cards and practices—all interspersed with his own writing which emulates drafts of notes on his own progress at changing his life. Clearly unhappy with the state of literary theory in his academic program, Phineas turns to the genre of biography, with its emphasis on facticity, as a means of continuing his academic life. Byatt arranges the text in such a way that the reader follows Phineas’s development, and the various segments resemble the fragmented form of the mosaic.

Whereas *Babel Tower* is clearly divided into chapters, *The Biographer’s Tale*’s various sections are often unlabeled blocks. The one exception is “The Three Documents”—the working drafts of the three biographies Destry-Scholes was working on at the time of his death. These documents are fragments, unfinished texts. As Phineas begins to enact his research, he turns to the citation of “The Three Documents” in order to record the next step in his journey. His discovery of mosaic as a feature of the biographical subjects’ own lives allows him to draw upon that technique to govern his own writing.

The fractured nature of the mosaic is evident in the structure of *The Biographer’s Tale*, and looking more closely at Phineas’s exploration of Destry-Scholes’s shoebox archive illustrates how Byatt plays with the material space of the text to create a textual mosaic. This section of the novel, which itself weaves together four distinct roles that Phineas acts out—student, store employee, researcher, and lover—is marked by its divided (though unmarked) sections, like tile,
that are interspersed with various intrusions by Phineas’s first-person narration. Vera Alphage, Destry-Scholes’ only living relative, allows Phineas to explore the attic of his old house and gives him two shoeboxes full of research material: “They appeared, at very first glance, to be a file of disjunct quotations or jottings—again in no immediately apparent order, and again with no apparent system of reference or categorization” (TBT 158). It is Phineas who brings order to the chaos of the cards and the writing they contain: “All on separate cards, with an illusion of equivalent importance given by the geometry of the cards themselves, the 8” X 6” rectangles, the fine shadowy feint of the grey lines, the single red line at the top, on which the heading should have been, and wasn’t” (TBT 162). Phineas rearranges the cards and in a sense, creates his own mosaic. There are seven distinct clusters that Phineas marks including “hybrids and mixtures” (180), “the (composite) portrait photography, or composite portrait (photography)” (203), and “taxonomic collections” (222). In each of these clusters, Byatt includes the writing found on some of the notecards, which is sometimes quotations of source material and sometimes actual prose by Destry-Scholes. It is also worth noting here that Byatt does not include every notecard from the archive, only the ones that Phineas has deployed in his mosaic clusters. Situated between each of these clusters is Phineas’s commentary and narrative about his own adventures. These distinct sections are all marked by gaps (or white space in the text), the inclusion of actual images in the narrative, and shifts in font.

The fictional space of The Biographer’s Tale takes on the shape of the mosaic—the very art form that is most likened to biography itself in the novel. Regarding this genre of writing, John Garraty writes, “Biography, to begin with a very simple definition, is the record of a life. It is thus a branch of history, each life a small segment in a vast mosaic, just as the story of the
development of a town, a state, or a nation may be thought of as an element in a larger whole” (3). This particular critic draws upon mosaic as one way to guide our thinking about biography. Beyond subgenre however, Byatt challenges the visual notions of textuality that has categorized narrative, or as Teena Carnegie writes, “the visual appearance of the text becomes part of the reading experience and the text’s signification. It challenges standard conventions and requires that the reader consciously participate in the creation of the text to a degree not experienced in more traditional novels” (90). Here, Carnegie is discussing those works of fiction that play with design and typography in such a way that many gaps are presented in the text. In offering her reader a less-traditionally formatted text, Byatt encourages the reader to become an active participant in its creation—to lay down the pieces of the mosaic—by taking the pieces of this mosaic and creating yet another through the act of reading. It is no surprise then that she has a minor character of the text go on a “mosaic-making holiday” since this role is also one the reader enacts (TBT 217). She presents various tiles and fragments as a way of marking discrete units of her work—The Three Documents, the clustered notecards, and Phineas’s reflection on his academic work—and each of these contain their own tile-like pieces of text. Ricardo Gullón asserts that, “the words and the lines on the printed page are distributed so as to help the reader to decode the text” (14), thus suggesting that the layout of the material space is in part what helps

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10 This character is a customer at Puck’s Girdle, the travel agency where Phineas works part time, and she is only referred to in passing. However, one minor character whose mosaic making plays a more significant role is Vera Alphage, Destry-Scholes’s granddaughter. Her attempt at aligning together the marble collection with the list of names for the marbles remains a frustratingly unfruitful example of being unable to complete a mosaic and serves as a foil to Phineas’s attempt to write the biography of Destry-Scholes (Byatt, TBT 199-203).
the reader understand the text. Byatt uses the image of a mosaic as an entrance to a critical reading of the novel but also as a material structure that challenges traditional narrative.

Examining the section on “taxonomic collections” shows how Byatt self-consciously plays with the visual in the creation of her novel. Francis Galton, the nineteenth century anthropologist and eugenicist, is one of the three figures that Destry-Scholes was studying at his death. In this cluster of notecards, Phineas discovers how his work in Eye and Hair Colours was influenced by art and the mosaic. Card no. 90 reads, “In 1869 he had been struck by the great variety of permanent colours which are produced for mosaic work. He had been over the Fabbrica of mosaics attached to the Vatican and seen their 25,000 numbered trays or bins of coloured mosaic” (TBT 223). Galton, in a desire to describe fully the complexity of types of people in existence, is awed by the variety of color represented in the mosaic, as if these colors could define the standards used to classify humans. The next three cards cite this Vatican storage of color and the sheer immensity of material it had to create mosaics, ones that “were manufactured for the representation of human figures among other things, for skin, hair and eye-colour scales for anthropometric purposes” (TBT 223). Galton questions here if art—mosaic, biography, and portrait—can capture the possibility of human experience given the immensity of human characteristics. The subsequent cards mark other collections belonging to Henrik Ibsen and Carl Linnaeus, the other two figures detailed in Destry-Scholes’s research. These collections range from animal and plant specimen, a lab inventory, exam results, and titles of honor and accomplishment. That a collection of notecards should itself contain a cluster on collections demonstrates how Byatt utilizes small-scale and large-scale images of a mosaic as a way of structuring her text.
Another cluster on portraiture is also significant as an example of how Byatt uses images within her narrative, and in fact *The Biographer’s Tale* is the only example of Byatt’s fictional work that features an image that is located within a narrative. In this novel, she includes images of Ibsen and Galton on their deathbeds and a composite portrait of three women used in Galton’s research. She also contains diagrams of flowers from Linnaeus’s work and a reproduction of his portrait as sources that Phineas uncovers in his research. Photography and portraits are two mediums that she reproduces in her textual mosaic. Phineas is initially disappointed because “none of the photographs in the box had any markings to suggest that it represented—had snapped—Scholes Destry-Scholes” something he is desperate to uncover in his study (*TBT* 209). He discovers that part of Galton’s research dealt with how photographs were linked to representation and the failure of physiognomy as a hard science; the study of “the photographs of criminals in order to discover and define the types of features, if there by any, that are associated with different kinds of criminality” was already “known to be bodies rather than their living physiques” already suggesting some failure of photography as a form of representation (*TBT* 204). He discovers that part of Galton’s research dealt with how photographs were linked to representation and the failure of physiognomy as a hard science; the study of “the photographs of criminals in order to discover and define the types of features, if there by any, that are associated with different kinds of criminality” was already “known to be very inaccurate” already suggesting some failure on photography as a form of representation (*TBT* 204).
But the inclusion of these death photos suggests something altogether different—that photographs “partake of death” (TBT 208) [Figure 15]. When Phineas first writes about photography, he notes the following: “All writing about photographs, including this writing I am at present engaged in, has something decayed (decadent) and disgusting about it. People have not understood (except Barthes) to a certain extent the horror of these snatched imprints of light and shadow on jelly [...]” (TBT 164). When Phineas creates the cluster on portraiture, the writing on the cards soon reminds him of the box of photographs, and the text features the images of these dead figures. The images interrupt the text of the narrative. They demand that the reader pause and take in Phineas’s analysis that “Galton and Ibsen resembled each other in death, as they did not, much, in life [...]” (TBT 208). As fragments of the textual mosaic, these photographs make up an altogether unique element of the text because they interrupt the narrative and ask the reader to consider how the visual image, much like the textual, can be used to both interrupt and create narrative. They create a pause in the reading process because they require a different interpretive framework to be used by readers. By halting the narrative, a story brought to life by the reader, they signal a temporary death or stop. The photographs also provide a commentary on this mode of writing and the style of bookmaking used in biographies, which often features imagines of the biographical subject. If what biography does is create the image of a person after his or her death, this mode of writing appropriates the photographic image of the dead to create that biographical portrait.

A composite portrait of Linnaeus’s family is also included. This portrait is its questionable authenticity given Phineas’s desire for fact [Figure 16]. Whereas there is no doubt
Figure 15. The deathbed images of Henrik Ibsen and Francis Galton. These photographs were found in Scholes Destry-Scholes archive and included by Byatt as part of the narrative of *The Biographer’s Tale* (210).
Figure 16. A photographic plate from A. S. Byatt’s *The Biographer’s Tale* (2000). Byatt includes this image—of Carl Linnaeus’s wife and daughters—in a section where Phineas is researching Francis Galton’s photographic collection.
that Galton and Ibsen are the subjects of the aforementioned photographs of the dead, what comes into question in the composite portrait is its creator: “I have been unable to find any reference, anywhere, to Galton making a composite of Linneaus’s daughters. Perhaps, nevertheless, he did. They are an excellent subject for one. The resemblances are striking, the differences subtle. Perhaps Destry-Scholes made the composite, for his own amusement, having collected the others. There is no evident, no evidence at all, that any of the photographs are his work, or represent anyone associated with him” (TBT 212). Phineas discovers through his research that Destry-Scholes liked to manipulate fact, to stretch the truth, which often leads Phineas to various research tangents. Additionally, this discovery shades Phineas’s own writing in that he is seemingly forced to create a fictional narrative of Destry-Scholes’s life, thereby calling into question the facticity of both narrative and biography. Though he wishes to discover some authenticity about Destry-Scholes, Phineas is constantly deflected by the personage he seeks to discover: “There was also the question, beyond the shoebox, of the three fictive fragments of biography, where the biographer had quite deliberately woven his own lies and inventions into the dense texture of collected facts” (TBT 273). This “texture”—that of the mosaic—is one that is clearly shaped in the material space of the novel—its own portraits and fragments, its complex web of lies and truth. As Virginia Woolf writes regarding biography, “For in order that the light of personality may shine through, facts must be manipulated; some must be brightened; others shaded: yet, in the process, they must never lose their integrity” (473). Though influenced by Woolf and Orlando, Byatt is clearly questioning Woolf’s supposition by foregrounding the degree of fictionalized entries that have been incorporated into Destry-Scholes’s biographies. The Biographer’s Tale’s “integrity” can be found in its material and
Byatt’s novels emphasize fragmentation, and thus to a certain extent their form places a demand upon the reader to find connections and links between the various sections of text used to create her narrative. Part of how spatial form is created by the author is juxtaposing, in the text, blocks of text that may or may not follow a traditional narrative structure. As Jeffrey R. Smitten writes, “If conventional connectives no long exist, the reader, to make sense of the text, must discover for himself what connections are to be made among the seemingly disconnected words and word groups” (Smitten 17-18). Indeed, in these novels, Byatt does not use traditional connections, and she distinctly emphasizes separation and division in order to manipulate textual space in part creating new ways of narrating and new ways of reading. Textual mosaics and collages are challenges to traditional and linear forms of narrating because they emulate the disjointed nature of life, which these novels seek to depict. Byatt turns to these aesthetic techniques and plays with visual representation in her novels in order to demonstrate how spatial form is used to create narrative. In the next section, I will demonstrate how Byatt also uses another form of fictional space—that of narrative space—to create her novels.

**Seeing with and through the Narrator: Focalization, Genre, and Fictional Space**

My examination of fictional space in Byatt’s novels has thus far investigated the material manipulation of text; it is also necessary to consider how the authors experiments with other forms of fictional space, more specifically narrative space. The material text plays a large part in creating fictional space because the arrangement of text, as the surface of the narrative, structures how we read; however, the position of the narrator also offers up a crucial vantage point into the
novel by creating a narrative space through which the reader can comprehend the novel.

Narrative space, in part, is an fusion of concepts—the space that the speaker/narrator holds and the role that subgenre plays in the creation of a narrative world or setting. It is the reader’s responsibility to organize the discordant elements of the plot and structure, especially in a contemporary work that experiments with order and spatial form. The layout of the page is one structuring element; the narrator being another crucial element that organizes the text. The narrator, as the vantage through which the text is presented, becomes a window into the text and also one fictional device that is used to classify genre (Frow 42). As a self-reflexive writer who is so deeply concerned with the power of reading and writing, Byatt’s creation of characters who themselves are concerned with the efficacy of their identity in print becomes one way that she is able to use focalization as a way to critique narrative space.

Gérard Genette created the term “focalization” because of the “confusion between the question who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative perspective? and the very different question who is the narrator?—or, more simply, the question who sees? and the question who speaks?” (186). Whereas it is related to devices such as point of view and voice, it is important to note that focalization attempts to elucidate the difference between the narrator—the one who sees—and the narrative voice—the one who speaks—which can be different or the same figure(s) (inside or outside) of the story. Byatt plays with focalization in both Babel Tower and The Biographer’s Tale as a way of creating textual mosaics and collages; moreover, she uses focalization as a way to create self-reflexivity and comment on the role reading and writing play in the formation of identity—for her characters and for the individuals they are writing about in the innermost works of the novels. A perfect example of this play is how Byatt integrates the
divorce trial and the censorship trial in *Babel Tower*. Rather than present the trial strictly through
dialogue or an external narrator used in the Frederica sections, Byatt incorporates transcripts with
brief interruptions. This new mode adds yet another layer to Frederica’s identity, which is
presented here as distant and scripted: “Frederica hears her voice. It is not her voice, it is the
voice of a quite young woman, acting out the lives, making the plaints, of intelligent women
everywhere” (Byatt, *BT* 488).

Mieke Bal asserts in her work *Narratology* that “the concept of space is sandwiched
between that of focalization, of which the representation of space constitutes in a way a
specialized case, and that of place, a category of fabula elements” (Bal 134). The section entitled
“Space” in her study, thus, clearly does not take into account the material nature of novels and
instead concentrates on how space is created in part as the interplay between focalization and
setting. Indeed, Malmgren asserts the significance of the narrator when he discusses what he
calls “narratival space”, which he defines as the space taken up by the “necessary existence of a
speaker within a fiction, a speaker who may be either foregrounded or backgrounded, who may
either advertise his or her presence or attempt to erase any evidence of his or her existence” (39).
Malmgren does not specifically mention setting though it is clear that he sees the speaker and
narrator as the elements through which setting is presented to the reader. Returning to Bal, we
see how she elaborates much further on how “space” works in narrative: “To reiterate: the story
consists of the operations of arrangement and qualification; the ways the fabula is presented. Due
to this process, places are linked to certain points of perception. These places seen in relation to
their perception constitute the story’s space. That point of perception may be a character, which
is situated in a space, observes it, and reacts to it” (Bal 136). Thus, characters provide entrances
into a text and one way that the author chooses to organize a novel. What does it mean when the object that the main characters are “observing” are their own identities or the identities of other characters? Narrative space in a text can be created through its characters’ own self-examination and writing, not necessarily through the settings of the works. Moreover, the focalization that Byatt employs in each of these works contributes to genre’s role, as a facet of narrative, in the creation of narrative space.

*Babel Tower* is presented to the reader through a narrative-author/arranger who pieces together its discordant sections. The Frederica sections of the novel are presented through an omniscient narrator. By utilizing an omniscient narrator in this novel, Byatt allows for the narrative to be presented by an arranger that acts as one of the unifying elements of the novel. Even though the Frederica section contains various plots and frames—such as Agatha Mond’s novel, reviews, *Laminations*, trial transcripts, etc.—the narrative speaker is a cohesive agent, like glue, that holds together the fragments of the novel and goes unseen like the glue of a collage. Moreover, this type of focalization aids in Byatt’s mission to present the reader with discordant sections of the novel that come together through one entity, mirroring the image of Tower of Babel before its demise. The voice of the narrator in the Frederica sections is one vehicle that the reader can use to move through its sections. In many ways, *Babel Tower*’s interrogation of language clearly iterates the multiform and malevolent results of the Tower of Babel’s destruction, or the reality of multiple languages that have resulted in the plurality of speaking tongues. With the inclusion of lamination as one method for reading, writing, and identity formation, Byatt is clearly attempting to show how language itself can begin to create unity.
It is clear that Frederica is very distrustful of the first-person narrative, especially in relation to her ability to narrate her own story. Going through her divorce, Frederica finds that “she is surrounded by writing and cannot write” (BT 307), and when forced to respond to her husband’s suit, she writes in her journal: “I can’t write this stuff. Every ink-blob destroys a bit more of the truthful balanced memory I am trying to hang on to, of a kind of saving not-looking-but-knowing about the whole knotty mess of the experience” (BT 310). While the reader sees her journal, the narrator never changes levels of the text; in other words, the narrative of Babel Tower is never given to the reader through the voice of Frederica. The reader only gets the first-person dialogue in her journal, her writing. Nonetheless, Frederica remains suspicious of the first-person voice, and she even writes part of sections of Laminations by experimenting with eradicating her own first-person voice. Part of Frederica’s fear is, as she writes, the following: “I hate ‘I’ because when I write, ‘I love him,’ or ‘I am afraid of being confined by him,’ the ‘I’ is a character I am inventing who/which in some sense drains life from me ME into artifice and enclosedness” (BT 383). When she includes in her collections of laminations, which contain her cut-ups, her own creative musings, and commentary about current events, a story about herself at a beauty salon she writes it in the third person; “it has no ‘I’ although it is a true story, and a story about Frederica. It gives her a quite disproportionate aesthetic pleasure, both because the words do not immediately nauseate her, and because she has somehow got it right” (BT 390). The commentary on focalization and voice that is rooted in the theory of lamination demonstrates how Byatt’s text is self-reflexive. Here, the narrative discourse comments on how narratives are constructed. By removing her narrative persona as the connective agent in the various fragments of the novels, Byatt is attempting to create a textual collage through narrative voice and also
articulating how focalization is one tool in creating collage. The narrator/arranger of *Babel Tower*, like the glue that remains unseen in a collage, holds together the multiple bits that make up the novel.

By crafting a work that uses the image of collage and lamination as themes for the novel’s plot, it is no surprise that *Babel Tower* begins to emulate the features of these structures. While I have demonstrated how the novel does this materially through the text, we can also see as readers how Byatt creates this subgenre, or novel-type, through her play with perspective and focalization. Recall that one aspect of collage is that it highlights the “artificial” nature of art, and what is more non-natural than an all-knowing being. Narratologists who study unnatural narratives have locate the omniscient narrator as an “unnatural mind,” and thus, this type of focalization often “challenge[s] the reader’s traditional patterns of perception” while also challenging readers and authors to experience new methods of narrating (Alber et. al. 124, 131).

Collage certainly represents one new method. As a technique originating in the visual medium by Surrealists, its origin in the printed/textual medium allows for a new way of crafting novels. To think of collage as a subgenre then is to think about how fragments come together to create unity, something that Byatt enacts in *Babel Tower* through the various narrative threads and their woven structure. Byatt creates intertextuality not only through the usage of citation but also through the way in which each of the threads communicate or are disrupted to create the novel. While the arranger is one connecting force, looking more specifically at *Laminations*, the reader can use Frederica as an arranger of that text even though she writes very little of its content.

Indeed in the context of *Laminations*, Frederica is an arranger who decides what works are cited
and in what order. Byatt uses Frederica in this capacity as a proxy for herself, the author/arranger of *Babel Tower*.

One feature of collage that is emphasized is parataxis, or “discrete narrative units placed side by side, without the benefit of connectives” (Malmgren 126). What links together the fragments of text? In *Babel Tower*, the narrator-author is what connects the works, and this entity remains elusive, and at best, to the reader. Like the glue, which often goes unseen in a visual collage, the narrator remains absent. When Frederica sees her first collage—Desmond Bull’s pebbles—she realizes that the artwork itself has no meaning except the one imposed by the viewer and that how it connects to reality is impossible to know without an explanation of the artist. Desmond has to explain what the pebbles mean—each taken from a garden on his mother’s street—before Frederica has a reference point to understand the work: “The thing about the pebble is, they are no good to me without me being inside your head. All I can do with them, is get my own row of pebbles.” (*BT* 232). Before Desmond discloses the origin of the pebbles, she wonders, “Can it mean anything to me without your talking” (*BT* 231)? This collage in many ways is a small-scale example of how *Babel Tower* itself works. The reader is only aware of a possible pattern to the multiple narrative because the author has arranged them together in one book. While Frederica has Desmond to tell her what the collage means, the reader of *Babel Tower* must work with the fragments of the novel—to not only create the whole of the text through the reading process—but also use as a key to interpreting the novel. Byatt emphasizes this relationship between the disjointed pieces that can be put together through acts of lamination and interpretation:
She is trying to turn the jotting of her own Laminations into a coherently incoherent work. She has had the idea that she is many women in one—a mother, a wife, a lover, a watcher, and that it might be possible to construct a kind of plait of voices, with different rhythms and vocabularies. But it will not work. The story of the Stone is one thing. The legal cut-ups are quirky new objets. But the moment she tries to write anything tinged with her own feelings, she is disgusted, as though she had touched slime, a metaphor she undoubtedly finds because of her temporary contact with Helix hortensis. (BT 463-464)

The reticence Frederica feels over her “I” is in part worked out through the realization of her own diversity, multiplicity. Her embracing of collage as a literary and aesthetic technique, which she deploys in her writing, shows that while collage functions as a significant image and metaphor in the novel, it can also be used to classify the novel.

The contrast Byatt creates in The Biographer’s Tale further demonstrates how focalization and subgenre aid in creating narrative space. Byatt clearly exploits focalization as an important component of The Biographer’s Tale given that she uses first-person narrative, which she has used so sparingly in her writing and also the novel’s self-critique of voice. Throughout the work, Byatt seems to be interrogating the extent that focalization and subgenre create narrative spaces for readers and writers alike to create art. And, of course, added to the complexity of this inquiry is the generic ambiguity of the work. Is it a novel about Phineas? Or is it a meditation on the novel after theory? In what way can it be both? “I made my decision, abruptly, in the middle of one of Gareth Butcher’s famous theoretical seminars,” state the opening words of the novel. The “I” is Phineas, and his decision is to turn away from literary theory in his academic work and move toward something he sees as more tangibly factual—biography. In pursuit of this academic work, however, Phineas creates an autobiography of his experience researching the famous fictional biographer, Scholes Destry-Scholes, and in the
process interrogates the act of writing and the notion of identity itself. Nowhere else in the novel is this concept most clearly expressed than where Phineas confesses, “I have admitted I am writing a story, a story which in a haphazard (aleatory) way has become a first-person story, and, from being a story of a search told in the first person, has become, I have to recognise—a first-person story proper, an autobiography” (*TBT* 289). This realization, however, comes very late in the narrative—after Phineas has already contemplated the facticity that biography may allow that is excluded from the writing of literary theory. Unlike *Babel Tower* where Byatt actually writes a layer of text that is Frederica’s own writing, *The Biographer’s Tale* is told through the unfiltered voice of her protagonist. The other layers of the novel are not in Phineas’s voice but rather through the voices of the subjects he studies.

If Phineas’s journey is to uncover some truth about Destry-Scholes, his meditation on the genre of biography is significant because it ultimately directs him to explore his own identity. After reading “The Three Documents,” Phineas claims, “I am not very good at finding out who Scholes Destry-Scholes was because I am not very interested in finding out who I am” (*TBT* 118). It is only after this realization that Phineas turns toward more inward in his prose and begins to analyze himself as an individual, a thinker, and an explorer. Another scene in which the influence of genre is prominent is when Phineas meets Fulla Biefeld, a bee taxonomist and researcher who aids him with the archive of material. She notes some of the inauthentic material from the archive, and after their conversation about these items, Phineas thinks, “Maybe Destry-Scholes was trying to become a fiction writer. I did not mention the feeling I had had, evolved from the readerly solipsism, that he was trying to deceive or illude me, me personally. […] I might have to give up this project for lack of information” (*TBT* 139). The pursuit of facts leads
Phineas to uncover the “tissue of lies” that Destry-Scholes has created in his writing. Phineas’s question about Destry-Scholes’s generic ambiguity leads him to realize that his own pursuit of truth is one that is shaped by the pursuit of his own self and desires. “What did Destry-Scholes think the role of a biographer was? Why did he tell lies and write parodies,” questions Phineas (TBT 194)? His answer: “And all that can really be read into what we write is our own desire to translate everything, everything, all reasoning, all irrational hope and fear, into our own Procrustean grid of priorities” (TBT 194-195). It is unclear if the “we” that he mentions is Phineas and Destry-Scholes or the writers of his “own times” (TBT 194). Regardless, Phineas’s pursuit of a truth through biography only leads to a study of his own self and his own desires—a new type of memoir or autobiography, a truth-in-progress.

The connection between focalization and subgenre is therefore extremely significant because they both, to some degree, ground the work for the reader and provide an entrance into the novel. If the biographer is meant to relate the life history and factual existence of his or her subject, why then does Destry-Scholes, like a mosaic-maker, combine facts and fiction in The Three Documents challenging the sheer possibility of trying to document a life. His generically ambiguous work illuminates the idea that biography is a work of hybridity and fusion. The “I” of The Biographer’s Tale is the cohesive element of the narrative. It is through his voice that the reader comprehends the novel. The relationship to mosaic is seen more clearly in the sections where Phineas relates to the reader the shoebox archive where his voice acts as the unifying quality that allows the reader to move coherently from section to section. “I am not quite sure in what order to recount the new few parts of my tale, as I find that my memory for exact sequences is faultier than I would wish. I feel a desire in myself—an aesthetic desire—to punctuate my
assimilation of Destry-Scholes’s shoeboxes […]” (TBT 177), claims Phineas. As he discloses later in the work, “I have tried to use my own history, unselfconsciously, as a temporal thread to string my story (my writing) on, and to avoid unnecessary dwelling on my own feelings, or my own needs, or my own—oh dear—character” (TBT 248). Phineas must use himself as the grouting element of this work because it is his “assimilation” of material and his experiences that ground his own knowledge of Destry-Scholes. While Phineas claims to be disinterested in himself, his only outlet to offer a portrait of Destry-Scholes is to use his experiences and other interpretations of his biographical subject. As he asserts, “I appeared to have failed to find Destry-Scholes himself. I have to respect him for his scrupulous absence from my tale, my work. It will be clear that I too have wished to be absent. I have resisted and evaded the idea that because of Destry-Scholes’s absence my narrative must become an account of my own presence, id est, an autobiography, that most evasive and self-indulgent of forms” (TBT 248).

The reticence over the usage of first-person expressed in both Babel Tower and The Biographer’s Tale suggests Byatt is clearly aware of how focalization shapes the fictional space of a narrative. The fact that these instances of self-reflection over voice occur in regards to experiences of reading and writing makes sense because through these acts self-identity can be forged. Phineas briefly contemplates whether the three biographical fragments of Galton, Linnaeus, and Ibsen and wonders if they are a way for Destry-Scholes to interrogate his own identity just as his own project includes some self-interrogation. Phineas discloses,

I am not interested in myself. It was difficult being a literary schoolchild—I was often nearly put off what turned out to be my vocation by the urging of pedagogues who assured me I would ‘discover myself’ by reading, that I would ‘understand myself’ by ‘identifying’ with—well, whom? Robin Hood? Hamlet? Gregor Samsa? Prince Myshkin? No, no, the true literary fanatic, the primeval reader, is
looking for anything but a mirror—for an escape route, for an expanding horizon, for receding starscapes, for unimaginable monstrosities and incomprehensible (strictly) beauties. (TBT 117)

His assertion here that readers seek “anything but a mirror” stands out because what Byatt creates in these two novels are unique alternatives to traditional narratives. Like Frederica who fears the blame that may be placed on her own reading experiences as the reasoning behind her life decisions, Phineas, too, finds some fault in thinking that he will find himself in the texts he reads. But Byatt ultimately shows how the tricky nature of the relationship between reading, writing, and the formation of identity. Phineas does, in fact, find out much about himself through his mosaic-making, just as Frederica is able to rebel against the confining nature of language through her collage techniques in Laminations.

Narrative space, much like the material space of the page, is one that emphasizes the visual. Focalization foregrounds the concept of perspective, which carries with it a connotation of sight and vision. How a novel is presented to the reader—through the eyes and voice of a narrator—is ultimately a narratological element of how space is comprehended in the novel. Byatt continually shows that the visual and the textual are two aspects that work together to create fiction. Novels call upon visual images to create the narrative world—but they do so through text. In a comparable fashion, subgenres, and even genres themselves, have very different material and narrative layouts. Consider the arrangement and variety of text that exists between poetry, drama, and fiction—on a generic level. These distinctions in material space also translate into differences regarding focalization; specific subgenres utilize different perspective and focalization—autobiography uses first person, whereas a bildungsroman may or may not.
Collaboration and Conclusions

The totality of *Babel Tower* and *The Biographer’s Tale* has much to do with the way that fragments of the novels are sutured together. Whether through the voice of Phineas, the omniscient narrator of *Babel Tower*, or the material spaces of the novel, these works are examples of self-reflexive narratives that draw upon the aesthetic techniques of collage and mosaic. As John Frow writes, “All texts are shaped by the repetition and transformation of other textual structures” (48). It makes sense then that the novel, as a complex genre, is continually evolving and is created through intertextuality and citation. Frow continues, “Part of what the complex aesthetic genres imitate, then, is other genres and the effects they produce. In doing so they displace the genres they cite from their primary manner of producing these effects and turn them in a thematic object” (48). This characterization becomes clear with Byatt’s novels, with which use mosaic and collage are primary structures of form; likewise, their very structures—materially and narratively—translate the techniques from the visual art into the written form. When Phineas finally discloses his own realization about his research, he relates a central adage about Byatt’s oeuvre to the reader: “Reading and writing extend—not infinitely, but violently, but giddily—the variations we can perceive on the truths we discover” (*TBT* 274).

It is my conclusion that by creating an analogous relationship between the writer and the artist that Byatt is able to explore fully how the visual relates to the creation of a narrative. To think of a novel as an aesthetic object is to consider textuality differently—not only as the medium through which the narrative is transmitted but also as a particular evocation of themes and images found within that particular narrative. Peter Lamarque claims that “aesthetic appraisal in most other contexts is connected in some way with perception or sensory experience
or the ‘appearance’ of objects and it is often supposed that this already distances literature from other art forms and indeed from aesthetics” (30). And while much of the discussion of the “sensory experience” with literature has to do with its aural quality (Forrest 455), Byatt challenges the reader to think about how the visual apprehension of novel space guides the reading experience. Through fragmentation and focalization, *Babel Tower* and *The Biographer’s Tale* self-consciously critique experiences of reading and demonstrate how thinking about novels is to think about space—materially and narratively.

Byatt’s novels ask: how can the life of a person be presented in art, whether through a visual medium or a textual narrative? More specifically, she questions whether biography or realism, as modes of writing, are able to fully capture the identity of a person—his or her desires, ambitions, thoughts, adventures. By turning her own texts into the forms of art that her characters create, Byatt demonstrates how the use of metaphor and analogy in the creation of a character can also be translated into the structure of a narrative. If Frederica is excited over collage and Phineas over mosaic, it is no surprise that these two aesthetic techniques are used as symbols for their identity, but what does stand out as experimental and self-reflexive is how Byatt shapes the individual novels into textual examples of those art forms. In *Babel Tower* she interrogates language, and in *The Biographer’s Tale* she critiques the factual and its relation to biography and fiction. These analytical moves on Byatt’s part are two related facets through which she explores how representation itself often fails in its ability to capture reality and why an artist might turn to collage and mosaic as a means to express herself or himself when traditional forms such as a portrait or a biography may fail. I argue that the design of her novels represents a development with the novel form and that her manipulation of textual space represents not only a narrative
aesthetic but also a visual aesthetic. Through the implementation of these practices, her books self-consciously critique these art forms by turning her novels into textual collages and mosaics. By experimenting with fictional space—specifically the material space of the book—Byatt demonstrates how the visual and the textual work together to create narrative.
Chapter Three:
Paratextuality in Steven Hall’s *The Raw Shark Texts*

Behind or inside or through the two hundred and eighteen words that made up my description, behind or inside or through those nine hundred and sixty-nine letters, there is some kind of flow. A purely conceptual stream with no mass or weight or matter and no ties to gravity or time, a stream that can only be seen if you choose to look at it from the precise angle we are looking from now, but there, nevertheless, a stream flowing directly from my imaginary lake into yours.
— Steven Hall, *The Raw Shark Texts*

I think we’re going to wear away from the world, just like the writing wears off old gravestones in the aisles of churches. — (Scout) Steven Hall, *The Raw Shark Texts*

It is no surprise that Jessica Pressman generates the concept of an “aesthetics of bookishness” in a close reading of Steven Hall’s *The Raw Shark Texts*, a novel that challenges traditional notions of print and narrative in the contemporary media ecology. For Pressman, the concept of “bookishness” articulates why novelists, in a world slowly moving beyond print, seek to (re-)enforce the printed book as an aesthetic object: “The actual status of the book as a reading technology is not my focus here, but rather how the cultural and technological shift away from a book-centered society affects literature—and not necessarily the study or definition of literature […]—that is, how the changing role of the book inspires a literary and, indeed, an aesthetic response” (467). Hall’s novel certainly addresses this change through both a series of literary and aesthetic shifts from print culture and the book to screen culture and the Internet: the plot’s inspiration, intertextual references, textual design, and the novel’s promotion and distribution. As a novel which relies on visual devices, *The Raw Shark Texts* answers the charge that Ronald Sukenick places before writers—the need for “novels that acknowledge their technological reality”—by creating a novel that challenges the concept of the digital and the virtual as a
medium for narrative rather than text, film, canvas, or marble as a medium for narrative, thus bringing into question the future of print-based works. The “zone of contact” Hall creates between film, fiction, photography, and inkblots in *The Raw Shark Texts* acknowledges the role that the *visual* plays in furthering narrative expression and thus fully supports and perpetuates a print-based “aesthetics of bookishness.” My interpretation of *The Raw Shark Texts* will focus on paratextuality, and how Hall’s narrative aesthetic allows readers and critics alike to reconsider how paratextuality can frame interpretation and the book as object.

Gérard Genette’s groundbreaking work, *Paratexts: Threshold of Interpretation*, examines the fringes and borders of a text that help to create the book as an object—features such as the title, preface, introduction, epigraphs, etc.—to determine how the seemingly supplementary elements of a book’s production frame the reader’s interpretation of a given work. These elements can be either inside or outside of the narrative, which he distinguishes as peritextual (inside) or epitextual (outside). Likewise, they can be written by either the author of the text, the publisher, or allographically; and they can take on a variety of forms in different works. Paratextual elements can be invented or erased in each unique version of a work, just as they can be read or even ignored by different readers. As Genette makes clear, paratexts are “highly empirical and highly diversified object[s]” because they can be altered in each edition of a text or in each reading (13). My examination of Hall’s paratexts will focus on how he uses these features to refer or to create hybrid visual/textual forms that make more salient for readers the role that the visual plays in the creation of narrative. While my interpretation focuses on with those paratexts that are peritextual, or inside the book, because of their existence in print form, I turn toward the epitextual paratexts when considering the novel’s false ending and Halls’ digital
supplements. By shifting the focus towards Hall’s paratexts in my analysis, I show how paratexts that emphasize visual devices, particularly ones that highlight text and print experimentation or modality, within *The Raw Shark Texts* can inform a new reading of this work.

With these visual schemes and structures in place, Hall practically insists that his novel must be explored and not just read. *The Raw Shark Texts* accomplishes this feat through what Julia Panko calls “kinesthetic effects”—the novel’s sense of movement and Hall’s demand for readerly participation in the act of co-creating the narrative—into various sections such as a flip book sequence, an excerpt from Charles Darwin, and a final chapter. The book becomes, in a sense, a machine that requires our interaction, not just our interpretation. Hall accomplishes this feat by manipulating fictional space in all its forms, and by situating the novel as a multimodal text within a multimedia landscape, this novel creatively and critically responds to the changing scene of the publishing industry and print-based narrative of the contemporary moment. By “multimodal,” I refer specifically to a term used in a body of literary criticism that acknowledges that when various modes are linked together in one work that this multimodal style of composition challenges traditional writing styles and publishing practices.¹ My usage of “multimedia,” in this instance is two-fold: to refer both to the digital, epitextual afterlife of the novel, which I shall consider later, and the novel’s consistent incorporation of other mediums into this narrative structure via plot, themes, and peritexts. While a text may be multimodal, it is

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¹ The term “multimodality” is currently gaining favor in literary critical circles. For a concise overview, consult Alison Gibbon’s “Multimodal Literature and Experimentation” in *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*. For specific application with digital technologies, see Jessica Pressman’s “Conclusion: Whither American Fiction?” in *The Cambridge Companion to American Fiction After 1945*. For general resources, Glyn White’s *Reading the Graphic Surface* and *New Perspectives in Narrative Multimodality*, ed. R Page will be most useful in understanding multimodal texts.
not necessarily be described as multimedia; indeed, the print novel is one medium that may be used in a multimedia project that encompasses the print, digital, and film. Returning to Pressman, it is worth drawing out this distinction between books and their technological counterparts that she makes in regards to *The Raw Shark Texts*: “the pages containing these narrative make visually manifest the fact that the reader is interacting with a book that takes itself seriously as a material object and, moreover, as a reading machine. Books become aesthetic objects that blur the boundaries between reality and fiction connecting their book-bound body to the virtual world of digital information” (467). It is my claim that Hall, in part, acknowledges the digital through his incorporation of the visual and the kinesthetic, as well as the novel’s digital afterlife on his own website. Supporting this claim, Kiene Brillenburg Wurth, whose study encompasses *The Raw Shark Texts* and Graham Rawle’s *Woman’s World*, suggests that post-print novels “are not unified ‘works’ but rather verbal-visual conjunctions defined by their connections and interactions with other texts. They occupy an in-between space where visual, textual, and graphic figurations interact and resonate” (126). This in-between space, whether visual or linguistic, is one that is being tested by contemporary writers and readers. As such, Hall’s novel becomes an exemplary case study for this battle.

Using a pun in the title of his novel allows Hall to suggest successfully to his readers the concept of the visual and perception in the act of reading. *The Raw Shark Texts* phonetically echoes the expression the Rorschach test—a significant trope in his narrative—and as such foregrounds visual representation. Moreover, the titular pun carries with it the connotation of an individual being called to give meaning to abstract concepts, emphasizing the tacit assumption that the act of reading is an act of interpretation and also that interpretation is almost always
infinitely varied. This creative play in the formation of a homonym is made manifest throughout his novel as he experiments with genre, medium, character, and representation, creatively pushing the limits of narrative and reasserting the significant role the materiality of text and medium performs in the novel. In the creation of Eric Sanderson and his plight, hunted down by a conceptual “mind shark” known as the Ludovician—a shark that has no corporeal body and eats memories, a person made up of pure thought, and locations that exist that only liminally. Hall draws upon various visual media such as photography, film, and digital texts to render in the printed form a work that interrogates the role that the printed novel plays in relation to the other media in a televisual and digital age. As Panko suggests of *The Raw Shark Texts* and other similar works, “While there of course exists a long tradition of graphic experimentation within the novel, this contemporary generation is distinguished by deliberately employing these tactics to reflect upon and challenge the marginalized position of print. At stake is the future of the book in the digital age” (265). As the publishing industry moves towards the digital as a means of disseminating and creating narratives, Hall’s novel presents a unique case for the continued survival of print, and it is my argument that *The Raw Shark Texts* suggests that the future of print is tied to Eric’s future. Hall makes the final outcome dependent upon the reader and his/her interpretation, in a sense creating his own textual Rorschach test. In part because of this open ending, what Hall does accomplish in crafting a visual novel, is the creation of a trajectory through which the print-based novel can continue to change and gain recognition through online and real-world discovery and collaboration.

Critics have consistently interrogated Hall’s novel through an investigation of the binary between the digital and the print form, but few have given much attention to the play of words
that Hall uses in his novel. More specifically, while critics have referred to the test in their work, it has neither been nor have the repercussions of the text’s visual nature been fully explained. Both Panko and N. Katherine Hayles briefly discuss the relationship between the novel’s final chapter and the Rorschach test, while Jessica Pressman reads the connection through the flip book sequence (Hayles 130, Pressman 478). But what is at stake in thinking about the Rorschach test, the visual, and the fate of the novel within the context of *The Raw Shark Texts*? How can an interpretation of *The Raw Shark Texts* change when the critical focus also takes into account the novel’s paratexts? In taking a more focused look at the visual mediums that Hall draws upon to craft his novel, I go beyond what Hayles, Panko, and Pressman have suggested about the Rorschach test—that the final chapter “makes good” on the titular pun creating ambiguity—and instead demonstrates how it responds to the challenges of the print novel incorporating the visual and innovating paratextuality. What Hall’s novel reveals about the nature of print in the digital age is a deeply-rooted desire to elude obsolescence. His implementation of chiefly visual mediums and peritexts throughout *The Raw Shark Texts* suggests that the visual novel, as an ongoing development of the novel and narrative form, is one way of creatively and critically responding to the contemporary culture of consuming texts.

Hall draws upon various genres in both literature and film, such as science fiction, fantasy, and adventure novels to fashion his plot—Eric’s attempt to preserve memories of his dead lover, Clio, and the repercussions of his belief that he could resurrect her through the Ludovician. He readily admits to being influenced by film—*Jaws* (1975), *Memento* (2000), and *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004)—and his characters continually make reference to classic cinema—*Casablanca* (1942) and *The Wizard of Oz* (1939). These allusions provide the
reader with some stable source of cultural reference since *The Raw Shark Texts* features settings and characters that clearly move beyond the common characteristics of a more realistic fiction. The previous events that led up to the beginning of *The Raw Shark Texts*, which are scattered throughout the novel, can be pieced together as follows: after his girlfriend Clio dies on vacation in Greece, Eric Sanderson attempts to resurrect her by finding a Ludovician. He reads in *An Encyclopedia of Unusual Fish* by Dr. Victor Helstrom—a fictional work within the world of the novel—that according to myth, “shamans believed that once they had sacrificed themselves, they would join their ancestors and memory-families in eternal vision worlds recreated from generations of shared knowledge and experience. In effect, each Ludovician shark came to be revered as a self-contained, living afterlife” (Hall 265). This preservation attempt, however, quickly fails as the creature consumes Eric’s identity because the Ludovician “is an example of one of the many species of purely conceptual fish which swim in the flows of human interaction and the tides of cause and effect. […] It feeds on human memories and the intrinsic sense of self” (Hall 64). The novel opens with Eric awakening from a recent attack with no memory of his past self; he has relapsed from a confrontation with the Ludovician, but what his psychologist Dr. Randle diagnoses as an acute disassociative disorder and severe memory loss. For all of the events that occur prior to the novel’s opening, Hall refers to Eric as Eric Sanderson One because he was the first Eric to exist prior to the Ludovician attack that sparked Eric’s loss of identity and memory. As the novel progresses, Eric uncovers more information about his past and even begins to think of himself as Eric Sanderson Two, as he both copes with his memory loss and continues to battle the Ludovician. Thus, has the plot moving both forwards and backwards as Eric attempts to recover his sense of self and his memory from obliteration.
While to some extent it is a true statement that the events which occurred before the narration of *The Raw Shark Texts* is provided throughout the novel, this statement, however, does not capture the full reality of Hall’s novel. Hall writes on his website, “For each chapter in *The Raw Shark Texts* there is, or will be, an un-chapter, a negative. [...] The negatives are not deleted scenes, they are very much a part of the novel but they are all splintered from it in some way” (“Crypto-Forensics”). As his novel is designed, the negative chapters as such will and do provide a more full picture to *The Raw Shark Texts*, though as of the current date only six of the thirty-six have been “discovered.” Interestingly, the negatives that have been “discovered” exist in both print and digital format, though they have been shared only digitally through Hall’s website, illustrating that the novel straddles print and digital realities. I contend that this ploy on Hall’s part echoes the sentiment of the novel’s open ending and overt reference to the title pun and that these epitextual sections of novel challenge (and thus extend) the concept of paratextuality. Moreover, it translates a concept from a visual medium like photography—the negative—into a textual medium by allowing readers to consider how the negative of a photograph could be translated to the medium of the novel. Accordingly, my supposition that Hall makes explicit the role of reader as interpreter through the use of the Rorschach can be extended to show how Eric’s attempt to recover his memories through exploring un-space, a term from the novel that I shall define over the course of this chapter, is mirrored in Hall’s desire for readers to discover the negative chapters of the novel. Moving from the Rorschach test through un-space to the negative chapters, my reading reveals the implications of classifying *The Raw Shark Texts* as a visual novel. To analyze the novel’s paratextuality is to shift the interpretive lens...
The Rorschach Test

Defining the Test

Herman Rorschach, a Swiss psychologist, developed the test in 1921 as a tool to evaluate personality; he writes in *Psychodiagnoses*, “In normals it makes possible differential diagnosis of personality; in patients, the diagnosis of the illness” (183). Rorschach designed the test, or “experiment,” as he labeled it, around a subject’s interpretation of what he calls “accidental” or “non-specific forms” (15). Presented with these forms, the analyst then acquires various data—number of responses, reaction time, failure to answer, the form of the response, the subject’s awareness of perception—as a way of calculating the personality and interpretive skills of the subject. Psychologist Alvin Burstein writes of the test, “The task which Rorschach’s test sets the subject is: ‘make sense of this,’ ‘recognize this stimulus.’ The task is paradoxical and prototypical—recognizing the unfamiliar, making sense of the novel, assimilating new experience into the apperceptive mass. This is an effort in which affective-motivational and intellectual-cognitive systems must participate” (Burstein 4). For Rorschach, the test was primarily affective, which meant several things: the test could be used to evaluate a subject’s

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2 The Rorschach test is a highly controversial diagnostic tool whenever psychologists choose to use it because a debate on its efficacy and utility has always accompanied the test’s implementation in praxis. Most often the dispute concerns methodological approach; as Ronald J. Ganellen summarizes, issues regarding “administering, scoring, and interpreting” consumes the field due to a variety of different approaches all “criticized harshly for lacking adequate psychometric properties, such as poor inter-rater reliability for scoring and test interpretation” (15). The efficacy and reliability of the test is outside the scope of this interrogation; nonetheless, it is worth noting that critical responses to the test have almost focused “chiefly on issues of administration and scoring, interpretation of scores and responses” (Liechtman 478).
perceptive skills and ability, the test could uncover possible psychological symptoms, and the
test offers a basis to evaluate intelligence and experience (56, 87-89). These results meant that
the investigator was concerned with two primary factors—how the subject perceived the inkblot
and what the subject’s interpretation revealed.

“Inkblot”—the popularized and synonymous designation for the test—has visual and
material connotations, and it is these associations that give the test its salience in popular
culture.³ As a test of perception and interpretation, the inkblots are a series of “plates” featuring
what Rorschach interchangeably refers to as “forms,” “figures,” and “schemes.” It was important
for the test to feature nonrepresentational images because Rorschach concludes: “the
interpretation of chance forms falls in the field of perception and apperception rather than
imagination” (16). For the test to produce adequate results, he notes that the inkblots must
feature two qualities—simplicity and symmetry—and the “accident” of an ink on the page yields
a visual that forces the interpreter to draw upon “sensation, memory, and association” forcing the
subject to create/interpret a hidden representation within the apparatus (17). As noted
psychologist Ronald J. Ganellen writes, “the rationale for using these designs […] has been that
subjects can produce an unlimited number and variety of responses when asked to react to
ambiguous stimuli” (14). For example, Card One is often interpreted as a bat, butterfly, or jack-o-
lantern (Liechtman 1) [Figure 17]. The original test consisted of ten plates, and as the sequence
progresses, each plate’s image becomes more complex by featuring larger images and through

³ *BBC Magazine* claims “few devices from the world of psychology have entered popular
culture” the way that the inkblot has. Its influence is as far reaching as the art world, comic
books, and television (BBC). In a chapter of her study *Phantasmagoria*, Marina Warner talks
about how the Rorschach’s presence could be found in a vast array of culture, from the post-
World War II Nuremberg trials to the modern art of Andy Warhol (Warner 311-312).
the addition of color. These factors become the three primary elements—form, color, and movement—used by the analyst to determine the subject’s perceptive skill. While form and color clearly relate to the test’s visual component, the factor of movement is associated with the materiality and method of how the test performed by the interpreting subject. Rorschach writes, “He [the subject] is given the plate in his hand and may turn it about as much as he likes. The subject is free to hold the plate near his eyes of far away as he chooses; however it should not be viewed from a distance. The length of the extended arm is the maximum permissible distance” (16). Thus, the actual movement of the plate and its manipulation in the hands of the subject is also a factor used to diagnose the subject’s perception.
Reading and the Inkblot

Through the visual and material form of the inkblot apparatus, the Rorschach test calls for the act of interpretation, and by extension it articulates the unspoken relationship between the act of reading and interpretation—that presented with some form of stimuli, the reader can generate multiple interpretations. The relationship between the inkblot and the book is indicated in several implied ways in Rorschach’s rhetorical description of the test, and I want to highlight these instances in *Psychodiagnosics* to establish how the test, the novel, and the visual are intimately connected. Discussing the creation of the apparatus, Rorschach writes, “the production of such accidental forms is very simple: a few large ink blots are thrown on a piece of paper, the paper folded, and the ink spread between the two halves of the sheet” (16). The explanation of how the test is created conjures an image of the book as an object, for what is a book but folded pages covered in ink? Likewise, the subject’s relationship to the inkblot—specifically how he or she moves the plate, the distance at which the plate is held, the length of time a plate is examined—comprises the “movement responses” examined in the test, and these kinaesthetic factors are ones inherent to the act of reading—a reader holds the book at a certain distance, turns the page, contemplates the text to create an interpretation.

How narrative or the novel is experienced and created, of course, depends upon the reader; similarly, the Rorschach test and its results rest upon the role of the interpreting subject. In the case of the inkblot, the test is meant to trigger an event or occurrence within the subject’s memory and experience for a diagnostician to treat him or her; in regards to the novel, the book serves as the vehicle for the acts of reading, creating, and interpretation. Both the test and the novel require an interpreter, an individual who is presented with either representational (the
novel) or non-representational (the inkblot) stimuli. In the case of *The Raw Shark Texts*, the binary between representation and non-representation is not one the reader should easily fall back upon, however, as his novel seeks in many ways to blur the distinction between the two. While Hall never once overtly references the tests within the narrative, its usage as a paratextual element—the title—provides him with ample opportunities to evoke the test throughout the pages of the novel. Hall accomplishes this feat through his innovations with the material space of the book, the novel’s themes, and paratextuality—particularly in his inclusion of images of the Ludovician, the flip book sequence, and visual peritexts all of which insist that language and the written word have concrete forms. These innovations are, in part, how Hall challenges the way narrative is presented and structured because as byproducts of the fusion of the visual and textual they highlight questions of both representation within the novel and how the novel itself is structured as an aesthetic object. These paratexts act as vehicles for form and movement—two key factors examined in the Rorschach test.

**Locating Hall’s Tests/Texts**

**The Title**

Hall evokes the notion of the Rorschach tests through his title; this paratext serves as one of his tests. Curiously, neither the concept of a “raw shark” is ever once referenced in the novel, nor is the concept of the Rorschach test. Why does Hall create such an absence? Why do critics simply relegate the pun to its function as a title? To answer these questions, we must consider the function of the title which Umberto Eco claims “is in itself a key to interpretation” (qtd. in Genette 93). When Genette interrogates the title in *Paratexts*, he details several types—descriptive, thematic, rhematic—and concludes that the title’s functions are “(1) to identify the
work, (2) to designate the work’s subject matter, (3) to play up the work” (76). However this
description does not convey the complexity that such a potent paratext can confer; thus, Genette
continues: “the title may ‘indicate’ something else about its texts besides the factual or symbolic
‘subject matter’: it may equally well indicate the text’s form, either in a traditional and generic
way […] or in an original way that is meant to be purely singular” (77, emphasis mine). The
Raw Shark Texts accomplishes each of these functions while simultaneously highlighting the
“singular” nature of the work. Sidestepping the significance of the title fails to consider how that
title offers up a frame of interpretation for the novel because, as I argue, the title does more than
simply designate or name Hall’s novel. The titular pun orients the reader’s attention toward a
very specific notion—the inkblot test and toward the raw data of emotion of the narrative—and
thus becomes a Rorschach through its “accidental forms,” specifically the peritexts within the
narrative that draw upon the relationship of the visual and the textual.

How a reader incorporates the pun into an interpretation depends on how the reader
approaches what the title suggests; in other words, what is a “raw shark”? Hall directs his reader
to the concept of the inkblot through a play on words, highlighting language in this playful
slippage between the verbal and the textual, which allows him to connect text and typography to
the inkblot. The fusion of the textual and the visual, a zone of contact foregrounded in the pages
of the novel, is perhaps one interpretation of the raw shark. The raw shark is something that is
textual and visual, conceptual and real, digital and print—much like the Ludovician in the novel.
If the “thematic title,” as Genette claims, is one that “easily dominates the field nowadays,” The
Raw Shark Texts clearly exemplifies this claim since the novel is about the marriage of these
concepts, as found in the shark itself, visual peritexts, and its paratextuality (Genette 86).
Furthermore, the title, in its play with Rorschach, carries connotations that support functions of the title. As Genette writes of titles that use connotative value, “These are all echoes that provide the text with indirect support of another text, plus the prestige of a cultural filiation, and do so as effectively as and more economically than an epigraph” (Genette 91). As such the Rorschach and playful language become an entrance into the novel, and the extent of the reader’s adoption of this interpretative lens affects any potential readings of the novel.

Representing and Reading the Ludovician

The Ludovician is a complex creature: “It feeds on human memories and the intrinsic sense of self. [They] are solitary, fiercely territorial and methodical hunters. [It] might select an individual human being as its pretty animal and pursue and feed on that individual over the course of years, until that victim’s memory and identity have been completely consumed” (Hall 64). As a creature of the mind—what is known as a “conceptual creature” within the world of the narrative—the Ludovician challenges representation because it is a creature that exists in the mind. To endow this creature with a tangible existence the reader can begin to grasp, Hall uses the textual, visual, and material to not only describe the shark but to also illustrate it in the pages of the novel.

Hall shows reading to be an activity negotiated with some trepidation because through reading one engages with the conceptual world of ideas. Its danger is not altogether a given though because the Eric Sanderson One instructs that books and reading could be used to protect Eric from the shark: “Books of fact provide solid channels of information in many directions. Library books are best because they also link the book itself to every previous reader and any applications of the text. Fiction books also generate illusionary flows of people and events and
things that have never been, or maybe have only half-been from a certain point of view” (Hall 68). Books can thus be used to create a “non-divergent conceptual loop,” or a shark cage, for the Ludovician (Hall 66). However, several instances show reading to be a dangerous activity because the act of it gives these conceptual creatures access to Eric. For instance, his first encounter with the Ludovician occurs after reading the lake passage referenced in the epigram. No longer able to hold back his curiosity, Eric opens a red cabinet in his apartment, something his former self instructed him not to do in a letter. Finding a file, Eric reads a brief passage by an unknown writer, that instructs him to imagine a lake, which will create a “purely conceptual stream with no mass or weight or matter and no ties to gravity or time, [...] a stream flowing directly from my imaginary lake into yours” (Hall 55). This act of reading allows the shark to re-enter Eric’s life, the text, the reader.

Hall presents the shark to the reader through the inclusion of a visual peritext that interrupts the narrative, specifically an image of Eric’s television: “There was something distant and alive in the depths of the white noise—a living glide of thoughts swimming forward, a moving body of concepts and half felt images” (Hall 57). Following this, Hall supplements the text with a visual [Figure 18]. As Eric moves closer to the television just a page later, Hall shows how the screen transforms [Figure 19]. The shark enters in this chapter through these words and pictures creating an indecipherable concrete poem of the shark. Since the Ludovician is a creature that devours ideas, Hall offers his reader a representation that draws upon our understanding of what a shark is and yet plays with how that representation is presented on the page. Thus, the word “eye” stands in place for the actual eye of the shark. Likewise, the shark’s snout and face is composed of text featuring numbers, names, and fragmentary sentences, in
I moved slowly off the sofa and crawled across the floor towards the television, trying to see deeper into the vast depths of no-signal hiss behind the glass. I got nearer and the creature became aware of me. It picked up

The screen threw itself forward with a screaming electric flash and the lights all died. The TV landed with a heavy glassy thud in the black and I scrambled backwards on balls of feet and heels of hands in animal panic.

Figure 18. The Ludovician in “Time and the Hunter” in Steven Hall’s *The Raw Shark Texts* (2005), first American edition.

Figure 19. The Ludovician draws closer in “Time and the Hunter” in Steven Hall’s *The Raw Shark Texts* (2005), first American edition.
which Hall foregrounds the impossible logic of the world by including information unknown and nonsensical to the reader. These “accidental forms,” in part, make up the raw, undigested quality of this conceptual animal.

This entrance of the Ludovician into the narrative challenges notions of representation—both visual and textual. Hall does his best to demonstrate this reality through the interplay of the visual peritexts and textual narrative. If the shark is made up of language and memory, Hall certainly grapples with how best to illustrate its existence within the narrative world. Through Eric’s own observation and experience, the reader can see that the shark literally dismantles his ability to understand not only the relationship between the signifier and the signified but also the one between the material and the non-material (or even psychological). Consider the following three excerpts about the Ludovician’s first attack in the novel:

- “The idea of the floor, the carpet, the concept, feel, shape of the words in my head all broke apart on impact with a splash of sensations and textures and pattern memories and letters and phonetic sounds spraying out from my splashdown” (Hall 59).

- “I tried to shake that mode of being, to force the idea back behind the physical, force my body to find and accept the hard reality of the floor as an entity of sand and stones and cement, hard physical atoms with no words or ideas or attachments for these things, but my mind could only find the words, ideas, signs and attachment for these things, never anything solid at all, and my body couldn’t act without my mind’s instruction” (Hall 60).
“Coming up for air and coughing out: shark. The word coming in a tangle-breathed shudder and then me screaming: help. Shark. Help me” (Hall 60).

What occurs in this encounter characterizes much of Eric’s experience of the shark—its ability to erase Eric’s access to memory and knowledge. He “chokes” on concepts, he sinks within a “raining” of symbols, and he even wakes up “wet” (Hall 60-61). Hall’s usage of figurative language and its real effect on Eric’s real existence characterizes much of the fantastic nature of the novel, contributing to the experimental representation of the Ludovician. Though the Ludovician is conceptual, it is able to break items in Eric’s apartment, overturn furniture, and summon water from thin air. The shark cannot simply be documented through Eric’s narrative voice; thus, it is supplemented by the hybridity of textual and visual components. Fearing for his safety, Eric finally reads the unopened letters from his former self; they document his past with the shark and safety measures. For instance, Eric receives an “‘emergency’ envelope” from his former self marked “Ryan Mitchell” and is instructed to memorize its contents (Hall 22, 30-31). This fake personality, along with the non-divergent conceptual loop detailed in Letter #3 create protective barriers that ward off the shark. These letters also relate some of the former Eric’s journey to find Dr. Trey Fidorous—a language professor and the last of a fictional tribe of the Shotai-Mu created to protect the world from the dangers of conceptual fish.

The Ludovician appears twice again before he finally meets Fidorous, and by this point in the narrative, Hall has shifted from using just half-pages to the full page when representing the shark. When the Ludovician appears next, Eric is not the victim of an attack, rather he becomes an observer. This graphic [Figure 20] illustrates the Ludovician’s whole body rather than the focus on the snout and face shown previously. Hall composes the shark by tiling text and blank
space, literally making it a graphic representation of Eric’s memory. The text within the image names Eric and Clio, while it also shows words that Eric has used to narrate his history prior to the inception of the novel. The blank spaces can thus be potentially read as the gaps and losses of memory he is attempting to recover. This appearance of the Ludovician contributes to the growing sense within Eric that the creature is always present and waiting to strike; its presence is accompanied by the “a sound like [the] hissing of memes breaking the surface of the world”—the noise of an idea that erupts into the physical universe (Hall 156). Hall’s presentation of the Ludovician in this instance also makes the shark more legible, by clearly creating an image of the creature using part of Eric’s narrative. While this instance highlights the symbolic nature of
the beast—how it is made of language, concepts, and Eric’s memory—it’s next appearance demonstrates its physical and material existence as it tries to attack Eric and Scout [Figure 21]. In this case rather than affecting his mind as in the first two encounters, Eric describes the Ludovician in such a way as to suggest it also has a physical presence: “I whipped my arm in, throwing myself forwards as the thought-funnel of teeth and blades blasted out of the floor and slammed together with a definitive clopping snap where my arm and shoulder and head had been half a second earlier” (Hall 218, emphasis mine). As visual peritexts, these representations of the shark move toward creating a more coherent understanding of what a conceptual creature would “look” like or “be” like. What these two instances also suggest is the shark’s growing presence in Eric’s life and its increasing power. Note that the first two instances show the shark bound within the frames of the television; yet the later two instances of the shark’s appearance show it unfettered by that frame, roaming the blank space of its surrounding pages, a feature fully exploited in its next appearance.

Kinetics, Medium, and the Flip Book Sequence

As Eric’s experience and knowledge of the Ludovician continues to grow, its presence in the text expands; congruently, Hall’s presentation of the shark continues to becomes more and more complex. If the shift from presenting the shark on partial page to a full page is analogous to Eric’s growing understanding of his predicament, Hall’s inclusion of the flip book sequence, which moves the representation of the shark over several sequential pages, visually and textually, enacts a Ludovician attack rather than just references to the shark’s existence. To capture this movement Hall has several blank pages precede pages that show the shark become increasingly larger, and thus closer to the novel’s characters—and by proxy the novel’s readers. By flipping
from one page to the next, the reader can control the shark’s movement, though its approach is inevitable. This final battle between Eric and the shark marks a curious moment where Hall draws upon another medium, in particular cinema, both as a reference and as a style of composition. Hall challenges common understandings of the peritext within narrative by employing a reflexive, kinetic flip book sequence, this textual device also acts as one of Hall’s
unique tests that pushes readers to re-think “bookishness” by challenging the readers’
expectations of page space within the novel.

Eric’s movement towards self-discovery continually involves looking backwards, so it
should come as no surprise that Hall turns towards older technology and classic texts. While Hall
has spoken at length about being inspired by Steven Spielberg’s Jaws (1975) and within the
novel characters even mentioning the film within the narrative, no where else in the book does
Hall draw more clearly on this source text than in the flip book sequence. “You’re gonna need a
bigger boat,” claims Brody, the character played by Roy Schneider, a line spoken during one of
the most iconic scenes of the film when his character is shown throwing chum into the water and
then walking away as the tiger shark’s quick approach towards the boat startles him [Figure 22].
Hall’s novel assimilates this scene through the flip book sequence, which features allusions to
this famous scene, in particular the chum and the shark’s sudden approach. Unsurprisingly, pages
later Eric and his companions are able to destroy the shark through explosives, just as the film
characters kill the shark in the movie. In referencing the film, Hall is able to guide his reader by
presenting a situation, or rather a plot, that resembles something he or she may have some
familiarity with, though his stylistic innovation suggests a move towards re-thinking the
possibility of the book and the printed page.

The emphasis on movement, control, and potential in these pages evokes older, non-
technological forms in visual culture—the kineograph and the mutoscope [Figures 23 and 24]. In
her discussion of the media ecology of The Raw Shark Texts, Panko contends that the “emphasis
on older (non-digital) forms of technology in the book’s visual and kinesthetic effects” suggests
the novel is “less interested in competing with hypertext of the Internet[,]” even though the
concept of media is of vital importance to Hall’s novel (Panko 270). Panko’s analysis correctly suggests that one way of interpreting Hall’s innovation is through contextualizing his play with page space in relation to multi-modality and other technologies found in visual mediums. In a 1922 study on motion picture projection, Thomas O’Connor Sloane describes the kineograph, a nineteenth-century invention as an early precursor to cinema: “[the kineograph] was a book, on one side of whose successive leaves there were imprinted figures in successive phases of motion. On letting the leaves turn over rapidly the pictures succeeded each other with such rapidity that the effect was produced, except that the effect lasted but a few seconds, for the book was soon exhausted” (Sloane 19). The kineograph or, in layman’s term, the flip book, enjoyed a wide audience, though its inability to offer up nothing more than a singular image or sequence led to it being quickly discarded. The next form that the flip book would take was the mutoscope, essentially a more complex version of the kineograph. William Howard Guynn writes,
Figure 23. Image of a kineograph taken from Thomas O’Connor Sloane’s *Motion picture projection* (1922).

Figure 24. An 1899 advertisement for the mutoscope. File taken from *Wikimedia Commons*. 
The Mutoscope, first introduced in 1897, was a novelty peepshow box for viewing ‘animated photographs.’ Unlike its motor-driven predecessor, Edison’s Kinetoscope, the Mutoscope was hand-cranked and relied on the principle of the flip book. The frames of the moving pictures had been copied onto paper slips attached to a rotating cylinder. The cranking speed could be freely adjusted, and the session interrupted at any point to observe a particularly interesting frame [...] (Guynn 220).

By encasing the flip book within a larger mechanical device, the mutoscope took the flip book out of the viewer’s hands, making the pictorial narrative last longer and transferring the physical manifestation of reading the images from flipping to cranking. The viewer became less and less physically in control of film as cinema technology developed towards motorized machines, making movie watching a much more passive experience than it had once been.

The Rorschach test is not too far removed from these early forms of moving images; its creation in the 1920s ran parallel to the rise of silent movies and the emergence of Hollywood cinema. Just as in early cinema when the viewer had control of the sequence of moving images, the interpreting subject in the Rorschach test has the ability to move and shift the inkblot cards. This movement was recorded and quantified by the observing physician, often forming a constitutive element when forming a diagnosis. Likewise, the multiple plates/inkblots observed are similar to the succession of pages in the flip book sequence. Writing about this factor of movement in the *Student’s Rorschach Manual*, Robert M. Allen notes, “Look at any blot; obviously the designs are permanently printed and stationary. Yet the subject may report motion or a feeling of movement” (Allen 1010). For Rorschach, Allen claims, this perception of movement and the test itself equated to a “transcendental quality which the subject has projected

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on the objective blot stimulus. From where does this attribute come? From the subject himself—his inner resources, creative ability, originality, and ability to fantasy [sic]. Most importantly, the impression stems from the testee’s ability to go beyond the objective stimulus as printed on the plates” (Allen 102). Substituting “mutoscope,” “kineography,” and even “book” for the inkblot in this description articulates a deep connection between this different, yet intimately related, mediums of narrative expression. Note, too, how each of these mediums requires or calls upon an outside subject to generate the potential text contained within the print form. In echoing these earlier artifacts, Hall creates a “zone of contact” between the novel, photography, and film within *The Raw Shark Texts* demonstrating an untapped potential within contemporary fiction to marry these mediums through the visual and the textual.

This potential also points to the urgency that characterizes the contemporary novelists’ view on the future of print. Hall’s allusions to how other media multiplies and takes a predominant role in society, in particular the digital, which displays the fear of obsolescence of print that novelists face in the onslaught of various technologies within the publishing world. As such, the significant role that paratextuality plays in his endorsement of for the space of the page and print as a distinct medium for the novel suggests that one way the print novel continues to retain its significance is by incorporating new forms of layout and design only made possible with the advent of new digital technologies and publishing software. Panko suggests that Hall’s playful paratextuality demonstrates how the novel readily assimilates other mediums and forms: “*The Raw Shark Texts* offers hope by revealing the print novel to be an adaptive form, capable of remediating other types of media within its pages and of situating itself within complex media ecologies that include the digital. As Hall and his generation of writers experiment with the
printed page, they present the book as a format that can compete with the digital by incorporating the visual and the kinetic” (Panko 295). Likewise, Pressman’s concepts of “bookishness” and her accentuation of medium dialogs well with Panko’s media ecology; she writes, “The book becomes a medium through which action happens, a place wherein things live, and a physical object which readers manipulate. The final page of the sequence depicts the shark leaping off the page to attack not Eric Sanderson but the reader. Here the information channels connecting protagonist and reader operate though the book as a mediating medium and present an example of the novel's employment of an aesthetic of book-ishness” (Pressman 471). Pressman’s language—”action,” “live,” “manipulate,” and “operate”—all evidence the text as a physical object, suggesting that “bookishness” in this sequence is co-created by the reader. While both critics touch on the kinetic and on medium, they do not mention the key paratextual element of the print medium Hall rescripts in the flip book sequence: the page number.

While seemingly insignificant, I emphasize the absence of the page number in the Ludovician’s approach, that moment when he is “closest” to Eric and the reader, because it is the only page of the sequence to not feature a page number, and consequently stands out in the sequence for that reason [Figure 25]. I concur with Pressman’s assertion that the shark “leaps off the page,” but I see it happening both from the kinetic interaction caused by reading and the paratextual design. Why is this the only page within the sequence to not feature a page number? Simply, it is indeed at this moment when the shark escapes the text through the act of reading to take on a life outside of the physical space of the book, or at least that is one suggestion given Hall’s design. In his discussion of paratextuality, Genette only references the concept of page numbers twice, both times in regards to the preface noting that paratexts placed in a work by
Fingers clamped my wrist and forearm and dragged me back up towards the surface with a
publishers will be “unnumbered” and that prefatorial material often uses roman numerals for page numbering (32, 162). Two scholars working in print culture and periodicals, Katherine Ellison and Katie Lanning, note that page numbers perform the function of reasserting the book as object. However, their brief, albeit useful references to page numbers, cannot adequately contribute to the discussion of pagination as a paratextual element, and Genette’s silence on the matter similarly elides its useful function, even if unconsciously overlooked, in reasserting the page as a marked part of the book. Is this perhaps a moment where *The Raw Shark Texts* is not a book but rather simply a piece of art or even pure medium? Or is the page number implied even though absent? Perhaps it is best to leave these questions unanswered because they function as a “raw shark” text/Rorschach test for the reader to decide. By posing these questions and in analyzing this flip book sequence, irregardless of how they are answered, it becomes clear that Hall’s reanimation of paratextuality contributes to a much larger discussion of “bookishness” and medium in contemporary fiction. While thus far my analysis has focused on the Ludovician as the site for Hall’s experimentation, I will now turn to other contingent visual peritexts to examine how Hall’s play with the visual/textual within the narrative is not only relegated to this unique creature but also to the novelistic world he creates.

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The only time pagination is referred to again in *Paratexts* is in a quote from Marcel Proust, writing about “order” in the manuscript text for *À l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs* (Genette 304). In this chapter on intertitles, more commonly described as chapter titles, Proust is cited for saying that he concurred with Gaston Gallimard, his publisher, that the absence of chapter headings would be okay given that “the summary and [...] page numbers [were] to be inserted in [the novel]” (Genette 304-305).
Discovering the Visual Peritext in Un-space

Un-space & Fictional Space

Surrounding each of Eric’s encounters with the Ludovician are visual peritexts that facilitate his movement into and through un-space, a place he discovers within the memories of his former self. What exactly is un-space? In Letter #206, the First Eric catalogs the following generic places where it exists or can be found:

It is the labelless car parks, crawl tunnels, disused attics and cellars, bunkers, maintenance corridors, derelict industrial estates, boarded-up houses, smashed-windowed condemned factories, offlined power plants, underground facilities, storerooms, abandoned hospitals, fire escapes, rooftops, vaults, crumbling churches with dangerous spires, gutted mills, Victorian sewers, dark tunnels passageway, ventilation systems, stairwells, lifts, the dingy winding corridors behind shop changing rooms, the pockets of no-name place under manhole covers and behind the overgrow of railing sidings. (Hall 80)

These places are deteriorated, abandoned, and ignored. They are anywhere and everywhere, and yet these locations are the derelict architectures that society has forgotten or disregarded. As the shadow places of society, they occupy a unique part of The Raw Shark Texts. On the one hand, un-space is a setting, and as one of the key components of fictional space, setting often helps to create a worldview that a reader can easily access. When Hall uses locations that readers could find in reality—tunnels, the underground, and the ocean—he is signaling that the events occurring in the novel are grounded in some reality that readers have experienced. On the other hand, by imbuing un-space with imaginative creatures and physical characteristics that defy the norm, Hall shifts that experiential grounding into a less-accessible narrative space that must be comprehended in the act of reading. These locations, and even some objects and creatures in un-space, only exist in the form of text, requiring that they must be imagined or created through
reading and interpretative process. Not only must Eric take up the position of the reader who builds and gives life to the world through his mind, so, too, does the reader of The Raw Shark Texts adopt this quality, making the act of reading a key element of the novel exploited by Hall.

While I have previously analyzed how Hall uses the “zone of contact” between the visual and the textual through the Ludovician, the following section further articulates how visual peritexts are used to frame the world of the novel. Moreover, these peritexts connect to the theme of the Rorschach as they also resemble curious representations that could resemble items or objects found in reality, yet they often appear vague and unstructured enough to occupy the area between the real and the imagined. If the visuals of the Ludovician both represented it as a figure of the novel and engaged the reader actively through kinesthetic movement, these visual peritexts function the same in relationship to un-space. They serve to document its presence and also facilitate movement into and through Hall’s alternative setting.

Moving into Un-space

The beginnings of Eric’s pilgrimage to find Fidorous is documented in five visual peritexts labeled as “Recovered Paleontology and Finds.” For the first time in The Raw Shark Texts, Hall presents a chapter composed completely of discrete visual images, relying on these texts and their footnotes as a substitute for a truncated section of the plot, specifically Eric’s journey from London to Hull, Leeds, and Sheffield. Four images present sample representations of (conceptual) creatures within the novel’s world: a single-celled animal, a nucleus of a cell, a fossil fish reconstruction [Figure 26], and a computer virus mosquito in amber [Figure 27], while the fifth image is a postcard of Naxos (Hall 93-97). By having the words “fin,” “faceplate,” “scale,” and “joint” create an image of a fossilized fish, as opposed to inserting an image of an
3. Fossil fish reconstruction

The first image is a replica of a text structure found in the Arundel Way underpass in Sheffield. The image had been created horizontally across two tiles at the base of a stairway (see photos & map of underpass layout) using letter transfers. The structure seems to represent a species of prehistoric armoured fish, although the image is incomplete with large areas of damage. The second image is my speculative reconstruction. The text has been reproduced actual size. No other underpass texts were recovered.
Figure 27. A computer virus Eric Sanderson finds in Steven Hall’s *The Raw Shark Texts* (2005), first American edition.

4. Computer virus mosquito in amber

This image was discovered as an acetate label on a 3½” floppy disk in Sheffield Interchange (see maps/photos) and has been greatly enlarged here. The structure is probably a mosquito. The disk carrying this image is transparent orange plastic (rather than the usual matt black), giving the impression of an insect trapped in amber. The text appears to be programming source code and there are some similarities to the Melissa Virus code circa 2000/2001. Could this be connected to Fidorous? The disk itself is unsalvageable.
actual fish, Hall crafts a visual peritext. This specific image is a “speculative reconstruction” of what Eric labels a “text structure” discovered in an Arundel Way underpass, which is noted in the text’s footnote (95). Similarly, the computer virus is shaped to resemble a mosquito, an insect commonly known to transfer infectious diseases, and features word clusters such as “FalseSystem.PrivateProfileString” and “MacroSetElseCommandBar” to evoke the language of an actual/potential computer virus (96). Rather than present an actual photograph of a mosquito or the screen shot of code for a computer virus, Hall crafts a figure that blends the visual and textual, forging what could be considered a concrete poem of a computer virus. These visual peritexts collapse the distinction made in semiotics between the signifier and the signified by challenging the substance that makes up a mosquito and a computer virus. Hall exploits the distinction between the signifier (the spoken words or written texts of a sign) and the signified (the meaning/definition of a sign) by experimenting with how the visual peritext represents an artifact from this narrative world. How these images and the creatures they represent relate to the Ludovician is unclear, but the postcard of Naxos does make clear that these discoveries, and the postcard in particular, “gave [Eric] a thin sort of encouragement” to continue his search for answers. As paratextual elements, these illustrations force readers deeper into the narrative world and also question the function that images play in the structure and design of a book.

Peritexts within this novel have a tendency to skew towards the visual, as shown in the previous examples, which use words to create concrete poems/images; however, Hall crafts a peritext of pages from a book to show how page space can be viewed as aesthetically and as a visual text. The next lead on the trail to find Fidorous comes in the form of a package delivered to his hotel. Eric “ripped open the envelope. Inside was a hardback book. The white dust jacket
had a detailed Victorian etching of a prehistoric stiff-finned fish. The title read: *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin, and underneath smaller; *with Evolution Engine by Trey Fidorous*” (Hall 125). What follows is a two-page spread of Darwin’s text that is altered, covering up over fifty percent of the original text with the word “plant” [Figure 28]. What is this curiosity; what is an “evolution engine; why the word “plant;” and why the usage of bold font? Recall the term “accidental form” that Rorschach uses to describe the inkblot, and consider how this passage—through the repetition and bold style of “plant”—emulates that description. This bowdlerized version of Darwin’s work creates an aporia for the reader, seemingly defying interpretation. How the reader situates this visual peritext in his/her reading of the novel will shift any interpretation because, like the inkblot, this peritext utilizes “accidental form” to fashion this curiosity. As such, this paratextual element serves as one of Hall’s own “raw shark” texts that challenge the act of reading and interpretation. Simply, this visual peritext exemplifies one way of how Hall translates the Rorschach into the textual, thus conceiving a potential zone of contact between the visual and textual narrative.

On the level of plot, the Darwin excerpt serves an altogether different function: it is how Eric is infected by the luxophage, another conceptual creature in the novelistic world [Figure 29]. Upon opening the book, a small note from Mr Nobody, an agent of Mycroft Ward, reveals itself, requesting his presence at an abandoned hospital, an example of a location that could fall under the category of un-space. Here, Hall reveals the dangers of reading through describing Eric’s mistake in bringing the book within the protective barrier; as Eric narrates, “But in my exhaustion I’d made a terrible mistake. When I’d set up the Dictaphone loop at the edges of the room, the strange package was *already inside the parameter*. And so, when the thick sinewy idea
often visited by insects, and would be oftenest crossed; and so in the long-run
would gain the upper hand. Those flowers, also, which had their stamens and pistils
placed, in relation to the size and habits of the particular insects which visited them,
so as to favour in any degree the transport of their pollen from flower to flower,
would likewise be favoured or selected. We might have taken the plant plant
visiting flowers for the sake of collecting pollen instead of plant; and as plant plant
is for plant solc of fertilisation, its destruction appears a simple loss to the plant; yet if a
plant plant were carried, at first occasionally and then habitually, plant plant
pollen-devouring plant from plant plant flower, and a cross thus effected, although
nine-tenths of the plant were plant plant still plant plant gain to the plant; and
those plant which plant plant plant plant plant plant had larger plant plant
anthers, would plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant
When our plant, by this plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant
plant attractive flowers, had plant rendered plant attractive plant plant plant plant
plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant plant
regularly carry pollen plant plant to plant; and that plant plant most plant plant plant
1 plant easily plant by many plant plant plant give plant one not plant very plant case, but as likewise illustrating plant step in the
plant of the plant of plant, presently plant to. Some holly-trees bear plant
male flowers, which plant four plant plant rather a plant plant, and a rudimentary
pistil; plant holly-trees plant only plant flowers; these plant a full-sized pistil, and
plant stamens plant shrivelled plant, in which not a plant of pollen plant be
detected. plant found a female tree exactly sixty plant plant a male tree, I put the
stigmas of twenty flowers, taken from different branches, under the microscope, and
plant, without exception, there were pollen-grains, and on plant a profusion of
pollen. As the wind had set for several days from the female to the male plant,
the pollen could not thus have been carried. The weather had been cold and
boisterous, and therefore not favourable to bees, nevertheless every female flower
which I examined had been effectually fertilised by the bees, accidentally dusted

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Figure 28. Two page spread of “The Origin of Species by Charles Darwin, with Evolution Engine by Trey Fidorous.” From Steven Hall’s *The Raw Shark Texts* (2005), first American edition.
of a thing unlaced its long, slimy thought-body from the words and letters on that folded note and swam, slithered, up the bed towards me, there were no barriers to stop it” (Hall 128). This “thing,” the luxophage, drugged Eric taking control of his mind and body; as Mr Nobody reveals, “It’s one of a family of what you might call idea lampreys. This particular species feeds by finding its way inside human beings and sucking on their ability to think quickly, to react. They tend to make their hosts quiet, well behaved and firmly entrenched in whatever rut they happen to be in” (Hall 147). This description and the Darwin peritext thus serves as a larger commentary on the act of reading, specifically the way in which Hall’s novel has enlisted the reader as co-creator and consequently showing the reader to be just as vulnerable as the novel’s characters. While the luxophage has made Eric lethargic and consequently the reader as well, the novel itself
has transformed how the reader interacts with the text—making the reader part and parcel of how the novel both actively and passively transmits information at different times in the narrative.

As Eric moves closer to finding answers about his lost memory, he ironically journeys increasingly further and further away from a setting that readers can easily identify, and Hall accentuates this distance in his concept of a “biro world” within un-space and another visual peritext—the map of Fidorous’s underground citadel. Fleeing the Ludovician, Eric and Scout, his traveling companion and Clio’s doppelgänger, access an subterranean tunnel system beneath a library. The sheer excess of print and language within this setting is relayed in Eric’s description of endless “paper trail” culminating in

[a] mound like the ones they buried ancient kings in, but a mound made from, instead of soil, all kinds of paper—newspapers, chip wrappers, glossy magazines, great strips of wallpaper, tiny labels and instruction manuals, heaps of plain and lined and letterheaded A4, the stripped-out leaves of diaries and ledgers and novels and photo books. Tons and tons of paper and all of it, every scrap covered, smothered, buried in lines and squares and triangles and swirls of blue and black and green and red biro words. (Hall 222)

The imposing amount of print material literally wallpapers the subterranean “biro world” that Eric and Scout enter, made all the more impressive because every bit seems “covered, crammed, with rolling handwritten language” which further augments how textuality surrounds them (Hall 226). To navigate this world, the two have a sheet of paper, what Scout calls a “map,” featuring only a single word: “Thera” (Hall 224).7 This map is unlike a traditional map; it has no scale, no landmarks, no distinct features, etc. While a map is often a hybrid form in its depiction of a

6 “Biro” is a British English term for “ballpoint pen.”

7 While Thera may seem like a nonsensical word, it actually relates closely to the narrative world, specifically the setting of Clio’s accident: the Greek Isles. Thera is the classical Greek name for the island of Santorini, and it was the site of an Ancient Minoan civilization lost to a volcanic eruption.
specific place or geographical landmass, the map Eric and Scout have is only textual. The only way out is through the printed word. Christian Jacob discusses this distinctive quality of maps in her work, *The Sovereign World*, claiming “the map affirms its authority and its truth by way of this geometrical process; it guarantees the traveler’s destination from the time of departure, and it makes all empirical verification symbolically superfluous. But the voyage does not belong only to the pilot [who uses the map as a guide]. It is also owned by the map’s reader, who can in turn become a pilot: reading coastal nomenclature carries the reader away on an imaginary voyage” (Jacob 223). The map’s, and thus this peritext’s, ability to transport the reader and Eric suggests one way that paratextuality cannot only assert the book’s materiality but also generate moments of self-reflexivity and narrative space.

Eric’s incredulity with regard to the map soon disappears as he realizes that tracing out the word “Thera” through his movement will be the only way to successfully navigate through the underground tunnels to reach his final destination. Hall displays this journey in a visual peritext, providing the reader with an image of the path traveled within this biro world [Figure 30]. Eric also punctuates his movement in the tunnels with overt references to the physical layout of the word and the textuality, as if to offer some visual of what traveling inside the word would be like: “I had a horror of my own bag getting wedged there, being trapped in the crossbar of the T” (Hall 226), and a page later, “We made it to the bulb of the ‘R.’ This turned out to be a room-sized chamber with a yellow domed roof made of what looked to be telephone directories” (Hall 227). Hall illustrates Eric and Scout’s movement through the bold line that appears superimposed on “Thera.” In this chapter, Hall uses this peritext to blur the distinction between Eric and the reader. Eric has to become the reader (of the map) in order to navigate this biro world within un-
space. Here, Eric is completely surrounded by the material text, which highlights how the medium of print protects his existence and acts as a vehicle for his movement within un-space. For the reader, this self-reflexive moment created in Eric’s map reading allows Hall to remind the reader the extent to which he or she has already navigated within the narrative world.

**The Ending or a New Beginning?**

As Hall explores the limits of narrative and design throughout his text, it should come as no surprise that *The Raw Shark Texts* challenges the traditional sense of closure and endings. Eric’s journey to retain memories of Clio and defeat the Ludovician is complete, and his happy reunion with Scout after the explosion of the shark allows for a cathartic release of emotion, in which he receives absolution from her: “‘You didn’t do anything wrong,’ she said. ‘Sometimes
things go bad and there’s nothing anybody can do about it. None of what happened was your fault, Eric. I don’t blame you for it, do you understand? I don’t blame you. It was an accident” (Hall 424). The double, perhaps even triple, meaning behind her forgiveness remains present. Is it because she is, in fact, Clio? Is it because of Fidorous’s death in the explosion? Is it for their current predicament of being adrift at sea? Regardless, the two go ashore on an island within un-space, what Eric calls “home” (Hall 425). In some sense then, the novel begins to present some closure to its main plot—Eric’s recovery and preservation of his memories via the destruction of the Ludovician. However, the novel’s final chapter brings into question whether the events presented in the narrative after Eric’s initial “attack” in his apartment actually happened. Up to this point, epitextual elements, specifically Hall’s concept of the negative chapters, challenge whether or not *The Raw Shark Texts* can be considered as complete or whole. Hall’s integration of the visual in the final chapter and the digital through the novel’s negative chapters suggest new ways of thinking about the novel in the complex media ecology of literature moves towards the post-print era.

The Final Chapter

Once again Hall presents a chapter told only through visual peritexts. “Goodbye Mr Tegmark,” *The Raw Shark Texts*’s final chapter, is composed of three images: a newspaper clip entitled “Body of missing man found;” the scan of a post card to Dr. Randle, Eric’s psychiatrist, from Eric, and a picture of Ingrid Bergman and Humphrey Bogart from *Casablanca*. The man referenced in the chapter title is Swedish-American physicist, Max Tegmark, famous for his work in cosmology and the theory of parallel worlds. The invocation of his name bears some relation to the first visual, a newspaper clip, which claims that the police have recovered the
body of Eric Sanderson. Was Eric’s venture to find Fidorous and his journey in un-space a fabrication? How are readers supposed to interpret the first-person narrative of Eric presented in the novel? Did these events only happen within his mind, hence the reference to Tegmark and the notion of a parallel world? The article reveals that Dr. Randle filed a missing person’s report after Eric stopped going to therapy, and that the police have disregarded the postcard sent to her office claiming that he was fine—the second image of the final chapter. In contrast to the news report, the second peritext suggests that Eric’s adventure did in fact occur, as he writes: “Whatever happens, please don’t feel bad. I’m well and I’m happy, but I’m never coming back” (Hall 427). Although “dismissed,” how is the reader supposed to interpret this postcard? Moreover, what is the reader to make of the curious image, one of sneaky collusion between the main characters of Casablanca? I present this analysis through these questions because I contend that what Hall is doing here is creating a Rorschach test of his own.

Each reader will have to make his or her own decision regarding the validity of the Eric’s adventure within the confines of the narrative world. By creating these quandaries, Hall is making good the claim proposed in his playful title, as critics of the novel have noted, often referring to the double ending of the novel and the title in relation to the inkblot. For instance, Hayles writes, “The undecidability of the double ending makes good the novel’s eponymous pun on ‘Rorschach Tests.’ Like an inkblot, the double ending inscribes an ambiguity so deep and pervasive that only a reader’s unconscious projections and conscious inclinations can give it final shape” (Hayles 130). The ambiguity presented in the ending is made all the more prevalent when, upon closer inspection, one considers the name of the forensic psychologist investigating the case—Dr. Ryan Mitchell (Hall 426). Recall that Mitchell was the name of one of Eric’s false
identities that he used for protection from the shark in the earlier sections of the novel prior to meeting Scout and Fidorous. In the report, Mitchell is cited as saying, “It’s difficult to imagine what he must have been going through,” and of course it has been difficult given the fantastical elements of *The Raw Shark Texts* and Eric’s narrative (Hall 426). But what are readers to make of the reference to Mitchell here, even if it one that he or she is able to identify? And is it sympathy or actual evidence that Mitchell is reporting? The ambiguity of the ending—given the clip, the postcard, and the curious image—suggests that Hall leaves the reader with no closure, deferring his role of author to the reader, whose decision will decide Eric’s fate.

The Negative Chapters as Epitexts

To say that *The Raw Shark Texts* ends with this curious moment of deferring closure is to have only a limited sense of the novel given its afterlife in the digital world. As print publishing seeks to stay relevant in a digitized society, it is increasingly appropriate for critics to consider how authors and publishers incorporate the digital into their novels and products, and I find it all the more pressing to consider the “digital” epitexts of the novel given what I have articulated as the novel’s preoccupation with print. While Hall certainly presents anxiety over the digitalization of reality and identity within the narrative of *The Raw Shark Texts*, Hall’s personal website and forum denote the extremes of which he has gone to create epitexts enhancing the reading experience. Hall writes in the “Crypto-Forensics” section of his website about these negative chapters, noting that they are not the “deleted scenes” of the novel, but that these “un-chapters” can be found both online and in a print formats and that “they are very much a part of the novel but they are all splintered from it in some way” (Hall Forums). His website is designed to become the focal point for the novel’s readers to exchange and digest these negative chapters,
and as such the chapters and this forum represent an interesting element in the evolution of paratextuality in the digital age. Two points are worth re-emphasizing: 1) that the concept of the “negative” clearly alludes to photography and 2) that these un-chapters exist in various mediums. Both points help to articulate the multi-modal nature of *The Raw Shark Texts*; likewise, the language Hall uses to describe these un-chapters further links the novel to a visual medium thus suggesting how the print novel can assimilate concepts from other mediums to subsist in a digital age.

Where exactly are these un-chapters? Hall writes in the initial message that the UK and Canadian special editions of the novel contain one un-chapter, number 6 and 36 respectively. Negative 6 is another letter from the First Eric, and Negative 36 is an index for the novel. These limited editions were only purchased by a selected few; however, access and knowledge of these copies are through various readers/owners in Hall’s forum. This gesture highlights reader-created epitexts by showing how readers have come together online to produce and discuss the un-chapters of the novel. In with these negatives, Hall not only experiments with the boundaries of the text by creating this shadow novel, but he also transforms the reading experience through creating a shadow readership in the collaboration and dialogue that these un-chapters fostered in the digital forum. Dorothee Birke and Birte Christ maintain that paratexts in digitized narratives and mediums allow for new ways of thinking about authorship: “Assuming that the paratext ‘performs’ authorship in order to direct the audience towards a specific reception of the text allows one to ask: [...] Does it evoke the notion of single authorship, as it is associated with the literary work mediatized in the form of the printed book, or does it posit other forms of authorization” (Birke and Christ 70)? Though they make this point in relation to digital works,
the un-chapters of *The Raw Shark Texts*, which exist liminally between print and digital, also make room for a new form of authorship. I remain suspect of linking this mode of writing to “hypertext narrative,” as defined by H. Porter Abbott, though his definition does characterize the work performed by these un-chapters as one of a “linking” function, joining together disparate readers and reading communities (Abbot 28). For Abbott, hypertext narrative “uses the linking function [of the hypertext on the Internet] to allow readers to link to other virtual spaces in which almost anything can be found (though these things have been placed there, in most current instances, by the author)” (28). The latter point made by Abbott’s definition seems apt in relation to the un-chapters given that Hall has revealed very little about how and where to find them, though he does seem to maintain control over their dissemination (Hall Forums).

Given how these un-chapters are dispersed, it is worth considering how they could function as a framing or paratextual device. Eric Berlatsky, using visual metaphors and tropes as a way to expand Genette’s concept of the paratext, writes “any element of a ‘well-made’ text will, of course, direct interpretation, but frames must, in addition, shift the direction of our interpretation, asking us to operate in a different register than the one in which we were already operating.” (Berlatsky 172). His analysis considers how author interviews and reviewer comments on book-sellers’ websites impact a reader’s reception of a novel but also frame how a reader will interpret a text. Using Berlatsky’s expansive definition of paratext to interpret the un-chapters suggests that within the post-print publishing community, readers will often have to take into account the different “registers” framing texts, not just print ones. Hall concurs, as evidenced by the release of un-chapters online, in specifically designated print editions, and through location-specific drop points. For instance, sections of Negative 26, “The Encyclopedia
of Unusual Fish,” have been released via MySpace, Facebook, and BarnesandNoble.com. Hall also disclosed in an interview that Negative 13, or “The Story of Mr. Nobody,” was “once located under a bench in Glossop” though it is not currently there nor has the person who found it shared the un-chapter via the online forum (Hall “Red Cabinet”). By making readers actively (re-)create the novel through these various mediums with no foreseeable timeline for completion, Hall shows how the book’s existence resists obsolescence; moreover, that the requirement of an active engagement with the real world and the digital, an engagement that is echoed within the narrative itself, invites the reader to remain in place as co-creator of the novel. Digital forms supplement, rather than replace, print forms.

**The Future of Print**

The novel has always embraced and assimilated other mediums as a means of exploring the limits of the genre, suggesting that a constitutive impulse of the novel is the hybrid form that multimodality fosters. Likewise, the novel, and also thinking more broadly in terms of the book, has continued to evolve in relation to emerging technologies—historically to the printing press and more recently to cinema and the digital. Print culture, and by proxy the print novel, cyclically comes under scrutiny as various technologies and art forms create a need for print culture to respond to development. Despite recurring polemic on print’s potential extinction throughout past century, innovative responses to technology in fiction and the book give credence to critical examinations of the book as a reading machine that resists obsolescence. As I have suggested in this chapter, *The Raw Shark Texts* emerges during this recurrent moment in book history precisely as a rejoinder to the meditation on print’s fate. Accordingly, Hall becomes
both innovator and archivist by showing what the novel has done to survive, what it can do to continue, and how fictional space exists in the liminal boundary between print and the digital.

Ultimately, how does a concept like paratextuality—as expressed in the Ludovician, un-space, and visuality—correspond to the new, emerging multimodal narratives and the changing face of the publishing industry? It is precisely in foregrounding these often-invisible thresholds that innovation occurs. By accentuating epitextual and peritextual devices, The Raw Shark Texts articulates new ways of depicting book features that frequently go unexamined or under analyzed because their “invisibility,” in some sense, facilitates the reading experience. Hall maximizes on the untapped potentials of paratextuality as a means of imbuing print and text with a renewed sense of vitality.
Chapter Four:
Collaborative Bookmaking and the Visual Edition

As pundits and critics alike spend ink and bytes of data writing about the end of print books as the catalyst that will reshape the future of fiction—especially now in the contemporary moment given how digital technology reshapes book production, publication, and reading practices—authors have continued to “engage” and “entice” readers through visual writing as evidenced in the novels I have examined. In the previous chapters, I considered how an author’s manipulation of fictional space contributes to a richer sense of the relationship between the textual and the visual—one not merely based on a translation of different mediums but rather on the combination of the two to create works that transform the book into an aesthetic object and not just as container of narrative. When authors use both text and image to challenge how we read books and how we define the novel, their utilization of visual writing expands any discussion of novel and narrative. Moreover, I have argued throughout this project that authors incorporate visual strategies in part because of an anxiety of obsolescence that other mediums such as painting, film, and the digital pose to written form, though I have also shown in both my introduction and my chapter on modernism that these are not altogether new issues that accompany the novel’s dissemination. But what shifts occur, if any, in our understanding of visual writing when we see its integration in the novel not through an author’s act of creation but through the practices of the publisher or the editor? This question will guide my analysis of the visual novel in this chapter as I specifically consider novels reimagined by editors and bookmakers through the incorporation of traits associated with visual writing.
“Texts have lives,” state William Proctor Williams and Craig S. Abbott, the authors of *An Introduction to Bibliographic and Textual Studies*, and their succinct summation of the nature of these two fields demonstrates that texts are neither singular nor static (5). Williams and Abbot discuss this facet of textual lives in greater detail by discussing a work’s progress towards “physical embodiment”: “Certainly the literary work begins in the mind of the author, but since that form is inaccessible, the author must set pen to paper or fingers to keyboard or must dictate for an amanuensis. Errors will result from the making of this first physical embodiment of the text (the manuscript, typescript, or digital encoding). All authors will then produce revised manuscripts, drafts, recastings, foul paper, fair copies, and the like. Eventually, if a work makes its way to the printer and publisher, further textual alteration will occur” (6). While they go on to clarify these different phases as the maturation or creation of a text, what becomes clear is that a work will typically be changed many times by an author as well as an author’s various agents—compositors, secretaries, editors, publishers, and literary executors (Williams and Abbot 7).

These different stages of transmission and physical embodiment as the objects of bibliographic and textual studies make up bibliographic and textual studies, and these multiple versions of a work also lead to understanding the significant role that an edition plays in the history of a specific novel. With varying degrees, authors have typically had some control over how their works may be printed and circulated; consider the role of the coterie in modernist literature and the role of decorative arts letterpresses during the late Victorian era.¹ Keeping the above in mind,

this chapter examines how digital bookmaking and graphic design have infused two contemporary visual editions of older, pre-digital works—Laurence Sterne’s *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759-1767) and Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1890)—with innovative aesthetic textual experimentation. In so doing, I will argue that another facet of visual writing and the visual novel is the concept of the visual edition, which seeks to further engage readers with print forms in a predominantly screen-focused culture by offering a reimagined yet recognizable classic work of literature.

While a great deal of textual scholarship goes into the creation of a “correct” text and the study of manuscripts to forge a standard scholarly edition of a work, I want to shift my own analysis to the type of editing not necessarily concerned with capturing the author’s original intentions regarding the wording of a text but rather with a creative type of editing more concerned with making a visual work. To elaborate, I turn to the words of Visual Editions, a London-based book publisher co-founded by Anna Gerber and Britt Iverson: “We champion books both on and off the screen that tell stories in a visual way, making for new kinds of reading experiences. [...] We think there is often a disparity between beautifully produced high-end books that go for £100 a pop on the one hand and cheap mass market paperbacks sold in airports on the other. And what we’re trying to do is to collapse those two extremes and make books with wonderful visual writing, beautiful production; books that are lovingly designed, designed to be read, and that those books are read by many not just by a few” (*Visual*). The works published by Visual Editions are the products of authors, artists, and designers coming together to produce works that are made in a spirit of collaboration—one between the textual and the visual. A similar publisher that focuses on avant-garde publishing is Four Corners Books, in particular
their series called the Four Corners Familiars. This series of works “features artists’ responses to classic novels and short stories. They provide a fresh look at the tradition of the illustrated novel, with each artist choosing a text to be reprinted in full alongside their newly created works” (Four). To focus on the role of publishing is not necessarily a new trend in textual criticism or book history because as Rachel Malik notes, “Publishing precedes writing and governs the possibilities of reading” (707). Williams and Abbot likewise agree “textual criticism must also deal with the relations between different states and versions of a text produced over a period of time” (12). These presses take highly canonical novels and reprint them to acclaim, producing award-winning editions, while simultaneously garnering new readerships that intentionally innovate the reading experience. For these reasons, I pinpoint Visual Editions and Four Corners Books as publishing companies keenly interested in how transforming the book can revitalize print readership and the art of the novel. Indeed, I endeavor to keep in mind, as Malik warns, that when we “attempt to think [of] the book,” we are more properly thinking about the “edition” (Malik 712).

What exactly is an “edition”? Gérard Genette observes that “nothing is more confusing than the use of the word ‘edition’: it may extend to all copies put out by the same publisher […], even if the text was modified several times during a reprinting, or it may be limited to each block of a thousand or five hundred copies of a single printing” (Genette 35). Thus, the complex nature of the publishing industry dictates some nuance in regards to word choice. With the exception of James Joyce’s Ulysses, I cite only first or standard editions of my primary texts because other (considerably different) editions of these works do not exist given that they were printed within
the last twenty years. In that sense, I rely on an even more “loose” definition of the term: “In the strict bibliographical sense, all copies of a book printed from substantially the same setting of type or form or from plates made from that type or type-image. Publishers use the term more loosely and variously, often to distinguish among copies identifiable by publishing format (such as paperback and hardback), change of publisher, textual revision, or some other feature, even if all the copies belong to the same edition in a bibliographical sense” (Williams and Abbot 145).

This characterization accounts for what we know about the text from Genette’s definition of “paratexts.” Recall that paratextual elements such as epilogues, notes, prefaces, and titles all demarcate a specific version, or edition, of a work, and publishers often decide upon these textual devices. Regarding the publisher’s peritexts, Genette suggests that “the typesetting—the choice of typeface and its arrangement on the page—is obviously the act that shapes a text into a book,” and he also remarks on how margin size, paper choice, and editorial changes can impact how we distinguish between a typesetting, a printing, or an edition (34-35). Moving beyond Genette’s understanding, Malik notes, “the edition is more specifically defined as where publishing practices—composition, editing, design, production, marketing, and distribution—intersect, cohering and/or conflicting in various ways” (717). She emphasizes a characterization of the “edition” as more than just a descriptive noun (“copies of a book”) to include its more

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abstract properties (“publishing practices”). Thus to say what does and does not fall under the concept of the edition proved complicated, I use the term to suggest a unique or different version of a text that completely remakes and/or repurposes the original text, beyond a reprinting. Hence, I claim that, while the phrases “illustrated edition” and “annotated editions” are more common, the concept of a “visual edition,” specifically those generated by contemporary art presses can be added to the current lexicon of bibliographic and textual studies. Also, I consider how visual editions transform the study of the visual novel, fictional space, and print.

In what follows, I intend to consider the novel in relation to publishing and book production because when we begin to think about publishing in relation to genre, we see that, like the concept of edition, the concept of genre is also inherently caught up in the practice of publishing. Thinking more explicitly about the visual edition allows a fuller exploration of how the genre of the novel continues to change through its exposure to other mediums. Malik rightly points out, “the role of these [publishing] processes in shaping genre is only partially and unevenly acknowledged” (725). Thus, I extend the critical apparatus of the edition as a concept pivotal to the analysis of the novel. It is thus not altogether surprising to me that I would find my way back to a novel like Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, given its proclivity for being at times generically uncategorizable and formally innovative, just as it is equally unsurprising that a publishing company intent on reimagining a classic novel would choose it. Likewise, with Wilde’s *Dorian Gray* and its meditation on the role of art in relation to morality, character, and aesthetics, it proves the one “familiar” by Four Corners Press that opens itself up to this study. The more liberal alterations made for the visual edition both hearken back to its nineteenth-century origins while distinctly staying an artifact of the contemporary moment.
Origins: Where They Started

Populated with numerous self-conscious devices that recall both the act of writing and the act of reading, Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* distinguishes itself as an experimental and postmodern despite being an original eighteenth-century publication. *Tristram Shandy* follows the conception, birth, and early life of its title subject, though even these aspects lends themselves to Sterne’s playful innovation given that Tristram ostensibly narrates these events when he could not have been alive or even self-aware of them. Interlacing this pseudo-biography of the title character are a number of interludes on topics as diverse as obstetrics to a tale focused on noses to a document excommunicating church members. Through this eclectic assortment of stories and interrogations, Sterne manages to weave together these accounts into a work known for its hallmark typographical and narrative performances. During its composition, the publishing industry showed signs of flux and high specialization, meaning that Sterne wrote during a period when concepts of the novel, the book, and the author were both underwent tremendous change, or as Shaun Regan writes, “Sterne’s authorial career witnessed not a revolution in print culture, but rather a rethinking, or discursive repositioning, of the relationships between professional authorship, textual commodification, and the consuming public” (291). Howard Anderson, editor of the Norton Critical Edition of *Tristram Shandy*, writes, that “the narrator’s insight into the ways in which our arbitrary and unexplored assumptions about fiction shape our lives” distills what the work is really about given its interrogation of the artifices that construct writing and the novel; moreover, as Anderson notes, *Tristram Shandy* “raises nearly all the questions that matter in the study of fiction in any age” (vii, viii). Some of the novel’s more noteworthy features comprise the infamous marbled
page, blackened pages, blank pages, creative use of typographical marks (particularly hyphens and asterisks), and illustrative figures. Without a doubt, these features justify the critical assessment of Sterne’s novel when thinking about fictional space and spatial form in the novel.

Edmund Burke, in a review of *Tristram Shandy* in 1760, notes, “The faults of an original work are always pardoned; and it is not surprizing [sic], that at a time, when a tame imitation makes almost the whole merit of so many books, so happy an attempt at novelty should have been so well received” (481). His praise of the work does not claim that the text’s typography and spatial form are what make it so unique, rather he locates this novelty in the work’s comedic tone, “innumerable multitude of absurdities,” and his believable characters (482).³ But why is there no reference to what today might be considered its more inventive gestures? As Will Self and Christopher Flint point out, critics should be wary of claiming Sterne’s typographical play as either unique or innovative for the eighteenth century, even though they certainly appear so in light of the standardized publishing practices developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Self writes that to argue that Sterne shows us something new and different is problematic given “that at the dawn of the novel all things were possible at once. […] Let us recall that just as in the eighteenth century orthography had yet to be standardized, so the book itself remained protean and shape-shifting […]” (Sterne, Visual 10). Arguing rather polemically against the strand of criticism that labels Sterne as the progenitor of a postmodern style, Self begs readers remember that at this period writers “forged a subtle multiplicity of ways doing

³ Of all the contemporary criticism of *Tristram Shandy* included in the Norton Critical Edition, only one reviewer overtly discusses typography in relation to printing, and even then only obliquely. John Langhorne’s review references that the fifth and sixth volume “are not without their stars and dashes” (484).
what prose fiction does best: expressing all the quirky confusing paradoxes of reflective self-consciousness and its being-in-the-world” (Sterne, Visual 10). A lengthy, critical examination by Flint in “In Other Words: Eighteenth-Century Authorship and the Ornaments of Print” remarks that it is “difficult to align the specific marks on a page with the cultural context within which those marks were produced,” recommending that when we approach a work like *Tristram Shandy* from the eighteenth century, we should bear in mind the notion of authorship (627). As both Flint and Regan show, England was underwent such pivotal cultural changes when Sterne was composing his novel challenging notions such as authorship, copyright, and identity. Thus, as Flint poignantly asks in regards to typography in *Tristram Shandy*: “Can one plagiarize an asterisk? A row of them? A paragraph of them?” (672). Nonetheless, Sterne gives the impression of self-awareness regarding this possibility because as Glyn White shares “we know the original editions were overseen, quite exactingly, by the author. In fact, in response to forgeries inspired by the success of the novel, Sterne personally signed every first edition of volumes five and six, the inscription by the author, theoretically at least, guaranteeing authenticity” (White 27). All of this concern for the text’s origin and originality appears remarkable given the various afterlives —reprintings, editions, versions, adaptations, and variations—which could not be endorsed or authenticated by the original author.

Visual Editions released their edition of *Tristram Shandy* in 2010, and according to the count made by the publisher, their edition marks the 123rd, a fact graphically depicted on the covers and in the pages of their version. Gerber and Iverson claim that *Tristram Shandy* represents “one of the most contemporary books around. When we say contemporary, we mean in terms of how it looks and reads. The thing is, though, *Shandy* has long been relegated to the
realm of cheap and nasty classic editions and has lost its magic and lustre along the way” (Visual). Working in unison with A Practice for Everyday Life (APFEL), a design firm based in the United Kingdom, Visual Editions “rescued old Shandy from the corsetry of ‘classic editions’ and given it the graphical treatment it deserves,” exults a review from Fast Company (LaBarre). APFEL’s own site, in concert with the above description by their collaborators, notes, “Sterne’s original text played with printing techniques which were available in his time, but over time and many editions it has lost much of its visual spirit and humour” (Practice). The visual treatment of Sterne’s novel in this edition displays firsthand the way in which computer technology and graphic design transform text.

To offer another example that highlights book production, I have chosen to examine a text not overtly known for nonstandard typography or design—Oscar Wilde’s The Picture of Dorian Gray—to show how the reworking of a canonical text also illuminates how a visual edition converts standard prose and type. The visual edition highlights aspects of a text, its play with sequence or character or imagery, that would not normally be obvious to readers. Dorian Gray, though presented in an altogether standard method readily used in the late Victorian period, has gone through its own trials and tribulations in regards to publishing. Originally published in Lippincott’s Magazine in June 1890, Wilde’s Gothic novella explores the concept of New Hedonism, one based on indulgence, pleasure, and debauchery, as it follows a trio of characters (Lord Henry Wotton, Basil Hallward, and Dorian Gray). Dorian, captivated by the stunning portrait of himself painted by Basil, sells his soul through a Faustian wish to remain forever beautiful and young while the portrait takes on all of the scars and imperfections from his foul, morally corrupt actions. Wilde’s tale, even before publication, received criticism primarily
from J. M. Stoddart, the editor at *Lippincott’s*, who notes that there were “a number of things which an innocent woman would make an exception to” before excising numerous passages to homosexuality and Wilde’s depiction of vice and crime among other aspects of the original version (Frankel x). Citing Joseph Bristow, editor of the Oxford University Press edition of *Dorian Gray*, Frankel quotes, “Stoddart’s emendations make it plain that certain kinds of … references to sexual passion were unacceptable to *Lippincott’s Magazine*” (Frankel 41). Once the work was edited and expanded, a novel-length version of *Dorian Gray* was published in 1891 by Ward, Lock & Co, and since that time, numerous adaptions and reissues have populated stage, screen, and print. *Dorian Gray* presents an interesting case for the study of editions and textual scholarship considering that the final version of the text was likely published without Wilde’s authorial approval, as Nicholas Frankel explains in the textual introduction to the 2011 uncensored edition of *Dorian Gray*.4

Like *Tristram Shandy* with Visual Editions, *Dorian Gray* was the first novel chosen by Four Corners Books for the release of their Familiar series—one where the publishers “features artists’ responses to classic novels and short stories” (Four). As their website explains, “They [the Familiars] provide a fresh look at the tradition of the illustrated novel, with each artist choosing a text to be reprinted in full alongside their newly created work” (Four). With art by Gareth Jones

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4 Recently, scholarship has taken a renewed interest in the July 1890 *Lippincott’s* version of *Dorian Gray*, in part because of the emergence of periodical studies and in part because of the discovery of a typescript heretofore unpublished prior to Frankel’s uncensored version of *Dorian Gray*. For more context on the differences between the novella-length and novel-length versions, which is outside the scope of this chapter’s analysis, consult Donald Lawler’s “Oscar Wilde’s First Manuscript of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*,” Elizabeth Lorang’s “*The Picture of Dorian Gray* in Context: Intertextuality and *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine*,” Kamran Ahmadgoli and Ian Small’s “The Creative Editor: Robert Ross, Oscar Wilde and the *Collected Works*, and Nicholas Frankel’s “Textual Introduction.”
and design by John Morgan, the Four Corners edition of *Dorian Gray* distorts the form of the book, with its oversized features and even its exaggerated large type font used for Wilde’s “Preface” to the 1891 book-length version of his novel. Its flimsy cover and whimsy design elements approximate, to some extent, the original form of Dorian’s publication, a late-nineteenth century periodical, even though the text inside reprints the 1891 version, rather than the 1890 periodical version. Elizabeth Lorang contends that critics who “fully remove the novel from the magazine for their investigations”—focusing on the text of the *Lippincott’s* version of *Dorian Gray* rather than its contexts—“do so to the detriment of a more complex understanding of literary texts and cultural and intellectual history” (Lorang 19). Crucial to periodical studies, Lorang concludes, are “subtle intertextual relationships and the varied ways in which a magazine’s components interact to comment on, support, interrogate, and complicate one another as well as a cultural discourse” (Lorang 33), and while numerous other works—poems, articles, and short stories—accompany the *Lippincott’s* version, the Four Corners edition injects intertexts in the form of advertisements, illustrations, and news clippings from *The Observer*, drawing upon its past in the periodical in this redesign.

“The edited text attempts to be faithful to the original edition but modernization does not allow it,” asserts Glyn White. Nonetheless, I want to interrogate in what remains of this chapter: what modernization does allow for, especially in a visual edition (29)? Though she specifically addresses *Tristram Shandy* in that quote, White’s critique of modernized versions of classic texts appears valid, considering the radical differences in printing and publishing during the twenty-first century, as opposed to prior centuries, present. Modernization irrevocably changed publishing. But in what ways has it done so? Clearly, the development of both graphic design
and publishing software transforms fictional space, primarily through their ability to manipulate typography, type setting, and text on the page. One feature of these software programs is text art, which allows designers to transform text to become both graphically and aesthetically distinct. These publishing companies under consideration collaborate with designers for that very reason—to produce visual editions. Opposed to a collected, critical, or annotated edition, a visual edition allows for readerly and editorial innovations.

Adding Textures to *Tristram Shandy*

The Visual Editions’s *Tristram Shandy* incorporates printing techniques that amplify the techniques already established by Sterne, primarily playful nonstandard typography; additionally, the designers and editors have incorporated various textures—portrayed through typography, material, and print—that augment Sterne’s preoccupation with the book as object. As Christopher Fanning writes, “Sterne will not let his reader forget that ‘texts’ (an abstract concept) are in reality concrete books, physical things that require tactile handling,” and this new visual edition of *Tristram Shandy* enhances and follows through on Sterne’s concern for the presence of the text in the reading experience (*Cambridge* 129). While these innovations are, on the one hand, crafted because of digital technology and graphic design software, they are also, on the other hand, undoubtedly influenced by methods used in sculpture and painting. The specific instances I will interrogate add textures, layers, and depths to the book in ways that transform the book object, making the work at once more visual and more self-consciously visual and material.

No where is this texture more clearly established then in Volume V in the scene that proceeds Tristram’s accidental circumcision where his father, Walter Shandy, reads from the *Tristra-pedia*, a fictional work within the novel that catalogs a system of education for Tristram.
The passage that leads into this distinctive spread reads as follows: “I have demonstrated the truth of that point, quoth my father, nodding to Yorick, most sufficiently in the preceding chapter. Now could the man in the moon be told, that a man in the earth had wrote a chapter, sufficiently demonstrating. That the secret of all health depended upon the due contention for the mastery between the radical heat and the radical moisture […]” (Sterne 409-410). Soon after, Toby, Tristram’s Uncle, and his manservant, Trim, begin to argue about this medical theory, and the pages that present this dialogue is covered in thin resin-like substance spread in a splatter pattern over the pages [Figure 31]. It is certainly a curious inclusion in the text, and frankly, seems to serve no purpose whatsoever on these pages besides to reinforce to the reader that the page itself has a texture. Hence, I view their inclusion as a form of what I label “material texture.” While they easily could approximate craters on the moon, which readers might visualize considering Walter’s reference, I argue that the printers create moisture on the page, given the medical debate presented is one between heat and moisture. Indeed, several of the remedies and conclusions presented by Walter, Toby, and Trim explicitly refer to pores, texture, and density. The following paragraph does provides a rationale for wanting to play with the idea of oil/moisture on the page, considering its depiction of oil and moisture on the skin:

Still this frame of ours was left exposed to the inimical assaults of the air without;—but this was fenced off again by a course of greasy unctions, which so fully saturated the pores of the skin, that no specula could enter;—nor could any one get out.—This put a stop to all preparation, sensible and insensible, which being the cause of so many scurvy distempers—a couple of glisters was requisite to carry off redundant humors,—and refer the system compleat. (Sterne 411)

5 “Glisters” is a type of medicine that would have been introduced into the body via an enema or suppository (OED).
secret of all health depended upon the due contention for mastery betwixt the radical heat and the radical moisture, — and that he had managed the point so well, that there was not one single word wet or dry upon radical heat or radical moisture, throughout the whole chapter,— or a single syllable in it, pro or con, directly or indirectly, upon the contention betwixt these two powers in any part of the animal economy—

“O thou eternal maker of all beings!”— he would cry, striking his breast with his right hand (in case he had one)— “Thou whose power and goodness can enlarge the faculties of thy creatures to this infinite degree of excellence and perfection, — What have we M O O N I TES done?”

CHAP. XXXIV

With two strokes, the one at Hippocrates, the other at Lord Verulam, did my father achieve it.

The stroke at the prince of physicians, with which he began, was no more than a short insult upon his sorrowful complaint of the Ars longa,— and Vita brevis. — Life short, cried my father, — and the art of healing tedious! And who are we to thank for both the one and the other, but the ignorance of quacks themselves,— and the stage-loads of chymical nostrums, and peripatetic lumber, with which in all ages, they have first flatter’d the world, and at last deceived it.

— O my lord Verulam! cried my father, turning from Hippocrates, — and making his second stroke at him, as the principal of nostrum-mongers, and the fittest to be made an example of to the rest, — What shall I say to thee, my great lord Verulam? What shall I say to thy internal spirit,— thy opium,— thy salt-petre,— thy greasy unctions,— thy daily purges,— thy nightly glisters, and succedaneums?

CHAP. XXXV

My father was never at a loss what to say to any man, upon any subject; and had the least occasion for the esordium of any man breathing: how he dealt with his lordship’s opinion, — you shall see; — but when— I know not: — we must first see what his lordship’s opinion was.

“The two great causes, which conspire with each other to shorten life, says lord Verulam, are first

“The internal spirit, which like a gentle flame, wastes the body down to death: — And secondly, the external air, that parches the body up to ashes: — which two enemies attacking us on both sides of our bodies together, at length destroy our organs, and render them unfit to carry on the functions of life.”

This being the state of the case, the road to Longevity was plain; nothing more being required, says his lordship, but to repair the waste committed by the internal spirit, by making the substance of it more thick and dense, by a regular course of opiates on one side, and by refrigerating the heat of it on the other, by three grains and a half of salt-petre every morning before you got up.

Still this fame of ours was left exposed to the inimical assaults of the air without; — but this was fenced off again by a course of greasy unctions, which so fully saturated the pores of the skin, that no spicula could enter: — nor could any one get out.

This put a stop to all perspiration, sensible and insensible, which being the cause of so many seury distempers— a course of glisters was requisite to carry off redundant humours,— and render the system compleat.

What my father had to say to my lord of Verulam’s opiates, his salt-petre, and greasy unctions and glisters, you shall read, — but not to day — or to morrow: time presses upon me, — my reader is impatient — I must get forwars. — You shall read the
What appears on the “pores” of these pages is a playful replication of the sickened skin under discussion by these characters. Moreover, the reader touches this resin-like substance on the page, to ascertain its texture because the glossy shading makes it difficult to see unless you manipulate the physical situation of reading—specifically by holding the book at different angles so that the substance catches the light—which is very different than the visible yellowish, waxy substance included in Volume VI.

Tristram’s Uncle Toby preoccupies much of the novel’s narrative, and his courtship with the Widow Wadman is one of the plots referenced multiple times by the author. When Sterne finally introduces her and intends to describe her in Volume VI, he presents an illustration in the form of two-tone blank page [Figure 32]. Sterne writes, “—And possibly, gentle reader, with such a temptation—so wouldst thou: For never did thy eyes behold, or thy concupiscence covet any thing in this world, more concupiscible than window Wadman” (483). Sterne then issues a command to the reader with directions, while simultaneously foregrounding the print medium in the hands of the reader: “To conceive this right,—call for pen and ink—here’s paper ready to your hand.—Sit down, Sir, paint her to your own mind—“ (484). Rather than the stark white, blank page traditionally used in editions of the book, the designers of Visual Editions’s incorporate an oval, waxy figure on to the facing page—providing a space for the reader to draw his or her own image of the Widow Wadman. The shape resembles the format for portraits that were painted for either miniature frames or broaches or other types of ornamental jewelry, and this represents another material texture incorporated in this edition. Like the resin from Volume V, this substance plays with the reader’s sense of touch and vision by being a distinct color that contrasts with the paper’s color and being raised off the surface of the page. Here, the reader is
Figure 32. The portrait of Widow Wadman from Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (Visual Edition).
directed by Sterne to “paint” a portrait, while also directed by the publishers to touch and feel the physical design of this edition.

Sterne’s famous direction: “———————Shut the door.———————” provides for another instance of textural play, though this time the editors have chosen one that highlights the print medium, or as I have characterized—the print texture. Here, the page is manipulated not through the inclusion of a substance other than print or ink but rather through a folding of the page [Figure 33]. In Volume I, presents the reader with Sterne’s comical, quirky form of narration, in which Tristram reveals that he will narrate the story of his birth *ab Ovo*, or from within the womb, citing Horace as his inspiration (Sterne 19). Fanning interprets this chapter as one of the meeting points between Sterne’s play with spatial form and the experience of reading by claiming that “this gesture, linking the fragmentation of narrative sequence (spatial form) and the metaphoric intimacy of a private conversation (mimetic space), is a frequent one in Sterne’s text” (438). While in other editions the command runs in continuously with the surrounding text, in this edition of *Tristram*, the command occurs on the fold of a page where the page obscures the text that divulges part of the story of Tristram’s conception. Just before the command, Sterne writes, “for in writing what I have set about, I shall confine myself neither to his [Horace’s] rules, nor to any man’s rules that ever lived. To such, however, as do not choose to go so far back into these things, I can give no better advice, than that they skip over the remaining part of this Chapter; for I declare before hand, ‘tis wrote only for the curious and inquisitive” (19). The command—“shut the door”—and the action it corresponds to—turning the page—follows these sentences, yet in the visual edition readers see the next paragraph of Sterne’s text before the command becomes visible. Moreover, even though the folded page does
To my uncle Mr. Toby Shandy do I stand indebted preceding anecdote, to whom my father, who natural philosopher, and much given to the smallest matters, had oft, and his injury; but once more particularly remember’d, upon his observing (as he call’d it) in my man, justifying the principles of gentleman shook his half of sorrow the foreboding, and other observ’d to think no he, shuck

fell out at length, that my poor mother could never hear the said clock wind up,—but the thoughts of some other things unavoidably popp’d into her head,—*et vice versâ*—which strange combination of ideas, the sagacious Locke, who certainly understood the nature of these things better than most men, affirms to have produced more wry actions than all other sources of prejudice whatsoever.

But this by the bye.

Now it appears by a memorandum in my father’s pocket-book, which now lies upon the table, “That on Lady-day, which was on the 25th of the same month in which I date my generation,—my father set upon his journey to London, with my eldest brother Bobby, to fix him at Westminster school;” and, as it appears from the same authority, “That he did not get down to his wife and family till the second week in May following.”—it

Figure 33. “Shut the door” command from Volume I, Chapter III of Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (Visual Editions). The left image is the recto page, and the right image is the verso of that same page.
obscure nearly two dozen lines of text from Sterne, it does not fully shut the door visually; rather, the playful fold both highlights the hidden and the visible, as seen in the scan of the verso side of the page at the top of Figure 3. Here, the publishers and designers of this edition of *Tristram Shandy* are playing with the medium of print, explicitly displaying its adaptability and manipulating its flexible surface. Like a key hole in a door, which both limits and reveals what lies beyond the folded page in the Visual Edition *Tristram Shandy* conceals and reveals.

The other play with print’s texture takes place in the famous missing chapter of Volume IV. Throughout Sterne’s novel, Tristram’s diversions hint to readers that he will have chapters on any number of topics from noses to button holes to verb tenses, all of which he uncovers through the work’s various digressions. But Chapter XXV is equal parts about a missing chapter and the impossibility of portraying a journey. It opens with the following paragraph:

—No doubt, Sir—there is a whole chapter wanting here—a chasm of ten pages made in the book by it—but the book binder is neither a fool, or a knave, or a puppy—nor is the book a jot more imperfect, (at least upon that score)—but, on the contrary, the book is more perfect and complete by wanting the chapter, than having it, as I shall demonstrate to your reverences in this manner—I question first by the bye, whether the same experiment might not be made as successfully upon sundry other chapters—but there is no end, an’please your reverences, in trying experiments upon chapters—we have had enough of it—So there’s an end of that matter. (333)

Tristram then discloses that the subject of the missing chapter was a “description of my father’s, my uncle Toby’s, Trim’s, and Obadiah’s setting out and journeying to the visitation at ****” (333). While in both early and scholarly editions references to this missing chapter are confined to Sterne’s text, in this visual edition of *Tristram Shandy* there are the remains of perforated pages included in the book’s binding, as if the pages themselves were literally ripped out of the novel rather than merely deleted or forgotten. The remaining coarse strips of pages
illuminate another feature of print while also providing another layer of texture to the novel. Like the folded page, these perforated remains both conceal and reveal the missing chapter. And even though the designers are clearly playing with print as a medium for his novel, they, too, rely on Sterne’s reference to the art of painting as his reasoning for removing the chapter: “—But the painting of this journey, upon reviewing it, appears to be so much above the stile and manner of any thing else I have been able to paint in this book, that it could not have remained in it, without depreciating every other scene […]” (334). Concerned with how the scene will be imagined within the reader’s mind, Sterne draws upon the language of another medium, manifesting his investment in presentation and illustration. The designers of the visual edition exploit Sterne’s interest by encouraging readers to see and touch a textural component to the work, also managing to highlight how a missing chapter might imagined with a hint of the violence involved in ripping pages from a book.

The third kind of texture—one that uses type and typography—incorporated closely relates to design concept of layers and layout and features in a faux-watermark, footnotes, and the famous black page. Frequently in the original *Tristram Shandy*, Sterne chose to merge standard and nonstandard typography in ways that would seem particularly unique to a contemporary reader not familiar with eighteenth-century printing practices. Readers of early editions of the novel would be familiar with the watermark as a standard practice (Yoklavich 511-515). Today, watermarks are not commonly found in the paper utilized for mass printing, yet the designers of this visual edition simulate the watermark in a colorful update to the text as seen in Volume I, Chapter V, specifically the oversized and colored layering of the “T” beneath a passage describing the geographical makeup of Namur [Figure 34], the land of Toby’s legendary
military exploits (Sterne 97-100). The designers playfully toy with the concept of “layout” since this typographical feature flashily transforms the space of the page while also conferring Namur’s description. The other prominent play with typographical layers has to do with the placement of “footnotes.” Sterne’s notes are not presented in their common place at the bottom of the page in the visual edition; they are placed in various alignments—top, center, bottom—in relation to the text and are also the opposite color—either black or bright orange—of the one employed in the narrative’s type. To illustrate this play with layout and type, I include this examples featured in Volume IV’s “Slawkenbergius’s Tale”—the long digressive story of a traveler with an extremely large nose [Figure 35]. As portrayed in the layout of this tale, the notes from Sterne’s novel are not what readers might think of as footnotes, rather they resemble sidenotes, and they make explicit a manipulation of layer, space, and pattern. The notes protrude on all the various levels of the narrative. Moreover the designers attempt to create the look of a found manuscript or text by presenting “Slawkenbergius’s Tale” with a different background color, though you can still clearly see the white gutters that border the reproduction of the embedded story. As readers discover this story within a story, a tale that explains why Walter is obsessed with the size of his unborn son’s nose, the designers alter the color, type, size, and color.
order of saint Francis—the nuns of mount Calvary—the Praemonstratenses—the Clunienses*—the Carthusians, and all the severer orders of nuns who lay that night in blankets or hair-cloth, were still in a worse condition than the abbess of Quedlingberg—by tumbling and tossing, and tossing and tumbling from one side of their beds to the other the whole night long—the several sisterhoods had scratch’d and mawl’d themselves all to death—they got out of their beds almost flead alive—every body thought saint Antony had visited them for probation with his fire—they had never once, in short, shut their eyes the whole night long from vespers to matins.

The nuns of saint Ursula acted the wisest—they never attempted to go to bed at all.

The dean of Strasburg, the prebendaries, the capitulars and domiciliars (capitularly assembled in the morning to consider the case of butter’d buns) all wished they had followed the nuns of saint Ursula’s example.—In the hurry and confusion every thing had been in the night before, the bakers had all forgot to lay their leaven—there were no butter’d buns to be had for breakfast in all Strasburg—the whole close of the cathedral was in one eternal commotion—such a cause of restlessness and disquietude, and such a zealous inquiry into the cause of that restlessness, had never happened in Strasburg, since Martin Luther, with his doctrines, had turned the city up-side down.

If the stranger’s nose took this liberty of thrusting itself thus into the dishes (Mr. Shandy’s compliments to orators—is very sensible that Slawkenbergius has here

*Hyfrin Slawkenbergius means the Benedictine nuns of Clerv, founded in the year 948, by Odo abbot de Clerv.
of the narrative’s presentation—suggesting that the book has inverted or reversed itself in some way.

The most distinct version of type texturing in the visual edition is the blackened page [Figure 36]. Although traditionally presented by two shaded, black rectangles meant to represent the front and back side of a page, the appearance in this version is a reproduction of all the text of the work featured prior this episode. This page appears after a reference to the parson Yorick and the narrator’s allusion to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* with the citation of “Alas, poor Yorick.” Though the blending of pages that creates this blackened text image makes it difficult to make out any words, the distinct utilization of orange text does in fact recreate Tristram’s dedication, chapter titles, and the asterisks used in the pages prior to these. But why use text rather than color to recreate the black page in this edition? One reason is that graphic design and publishing software easily produce this typographical layering that would have been far too complicated in earlier methods of book production. Another reason is because this image, one of numerous pages of text layered upon each other, brilliantly embodies the digressive element of Sterne’s novel. Whereas in his entire novel story upon story are woven together, here in this visual edition’s version of the black page, text is woven and pressed together to approximate one of the hallmark features of Sterne’s novel.

**Text and Form in the *Dorian Gray* Familiar**

When an object seems familiar to someone, this object tends to evoke feelings and thoughts that are intimate, or closely related to an experience we may have already had. A familiar object may make us more aware of the original object that it recalls. By adopting the word “familiar” for their line of reimagined classic works, Four Corners Books purposefully
Figure 36. The black pages from Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (Visual Editions).
encourages readers to examine their expectations as evidenced in the first installment in the Familiar series—Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Their visual edition of Wilde’s novel playfully resembles what readers might expect from a book, yet as bookmakers and graphic designers experiment with *Dorian Gray*’s format, this familiarity in several ways fails to remain practical, even if its design makes it visually distinct. Jan Tschichold, the famous Swiss typographer and book designer, writing in 1932, asserts, “We must now learn to make books of our own time with our own means and stop being dependent on the classical style” (Tschichold, *Asymmetric* 87), and the publishers at Four Corners embrace this concept fully by crafting a work that defies the “classical style,” while retaining its original text.

One typographical manipulation worth examining is Wilde’s “Preface”—a short authorial peritext added in the second, novel-length version of *Dorian Gray*. In a letter to the Editor of the *Daily Chronicle* dated June 1890, Wilde writes at length about the first version of his work published in *Lippincott’s Monthly*, and he suggests, “the real trouble I experience in writing the story was that of keeping the extremely obvious moral subordinate to the artistic and dramatic effect. […] The real moral of the story is that all excess, as well as all renunciation, brings its punishment, and this moral is so far artistically and deliberately suppressed that it does not enunciate its law as a general principle, but realises itself purely in the lives of individuals, and so becomes simply a dramatic element in a work of art, and not the object of the work of art itself” (Wilde, *Letters* 435). Here, Wilde both responds to and justifies the content of *Dorian Gray*, an activity he continues to do throughout his life in regards to the novel. Wilde composed a preface for *Dorian Gray*, which he published in the *Fortnightly Review* several months before the second version of the novel was published (Wilde, Norton 3). The preface—32 sentences in...
length—outlines Wilde’s aesthetic philosophy by using aphorisms and paradoxes filled with the intention, asserts Michael Patrick Gillespie, to confound equally the reader and “to be provocative” (Wilde, Norton 3).

Typically one or two pages in most editions of *Dorian Gray*, the preface is spread over 25 pages in the Familiars edition. The font and spacing of several sentences are hugely magnified so that only one sentence fits on a page, whereas other sentences are printed on both recto and verso sides of a two-page spread. The effect of this manipulation is clearly one of amplification and emphasis. By placing only one sentence on a page while also making that one sentence take up the entirety of that page space, the bookmakers force readers to focus on the importance of this sentence. One such example follows: “The moral life of man forms part of the subject-matter of the artist, but the morality of art consists in the perfect use of an imperfect medium” (Wilde, Familiars 17). This sentence, which echoes Wilde’s letter to the Editor of the *Daily Chronicle*, establishes one of the philosophical quandaries explored in the novel, particularly the relationship between Dorian’s portrait and his questionable moral character. Other sentences from the Preface are teasingly spaced on the page; some sentence are formatted with a hanging indent, creating a concrete image of a ladder or steps, while other page spreads contain sentences of different font sizes—often to exploit the paradoxical nature of Wilde’s phrasing. Moreover, the production of white space caused by the manipulation of typography leaves an abundant amount of pages blank, open, and full of potential, with the bookmaker explicitly experimenting with the fictional space of the book. Regarding this nontraditional formatting, Tschichold writes, “the right placing of words and lines is as important as the creation of significant and effective contrasts, and is an integral part of it. As type today stands by itself, without the addition of
ornament, we have become more sensitive to it not only as words and lines, but as part of the
design of a page” (Tschichold, *Asymmetric* 58). This analysis of typography holds true in regards
to the Preface, where “without the addition of ornament,” the book designers play with the
contrast between white space and black type, paradoxes, and layout. Thus, they take the
following two sentences—“The nineteenth century dislike of Realism is the rage of Caliban
seeing his own face in a glass. The nineteenth century dislike of Romanticism is the rage of
Caliban not seeing his own face in a glass.”—and place them into a two-page spread, facing each
other, juxtaposed (Wilde, *Familiars* 14-15). In some sense, this overabundance of white, blank
page space evokes how much Wilde’s paradoxical phrasing remains open to interpretation.

The other curious typographical decision presents the novel’s text in columns, though
even this choice is not a consistent decision regarding the novel’s layout. Only very few sections
of this *Familiars* edition are presented without columns, and each of these sections is formatted
with a larger font size. These changes mark the start of chapters since the bookmakers opted not
to include chapter headings, and while these highlighted sections are often just a few sentences,
the opening paragraph of Chapter XI, the chapter which describes the effects of Dorian’s
infamous book, occupies an entire page:

For years, Dorian Gray could not free himself from the influence of this book. Or
perhaps it would be more accurate to say that he never sought to free himself from
it. He procured it from Paris no less than nine large-paper copies of the first
edition, and had them bound in different colors, so that they might suit his various
moods and changing fancies of a nature over which he seemed, at times, to have
almost entirely lost control. The hero, the wonderful young Parisian in whom the
romantic and the scientific temperaments were so strangely blended, became to
him a kind of prefiguring type of himself. And, indeed, the whole book seemed to
him to contain the story of his own life, written before he had lived it. (Wilde,
*Familiars* 84).
This anonymous book, introduced in the previous chapter embodies “one of the most famous puzzles in literature,” writes Gillespie in the footnote to his critical edition, because no one has has been able to correctly identify it. Wilde writes in his personal letters that the work is “largely imaginary” (Wilde, Norton 102). It is in this chapter that Wilde discloses how Dorian has kept his portrait hidden, secretly observing “the evil and aging face on the canvas,” which is starkly different from the “fair young face that laughed back at him from the polished glass” (Wilde, Familiars 85). Obsessed with the book, he treats it as a talisman, like the portrait, which inaugurate his moral decrepitude and heinous actions, and the book’s presence in his life spurs his investigation of manifestations of beauty: perfumes, music, Mysticism, jewels, embroideries, furniture, and literature. The chapter concludes with the narrator’s analysis of how the book “poisoned” Dorian: “The Renaissance knew of strange manners of poisoning—poisoning by a helmet and a lighted torch, by an embroidered glove and a jewelled fan, by a gilded pomander and by an amber chain. Dorian Gray had been poisoned by a book. There were moments when he looked on evil simply as a mode through which he could realize his conception of the beautiful” (Wilde, Familiars 91). This chapter from Dorian Gray emphasizes how the book, as an object, can cast a spell over a reader’s life; thus, by turning this chapter’s opening paragraph into an entire page, the bookmakers of the Familiars edition are artistically and typographically highlighting Wilde’s message.

Chapter XI also features a prominent advertisement—one for “quality furniture”—introduced by the edition’s designers (Wilde, Familiars 89) [Figure 37]. Throughout the visual edition created by Four Corners, Jones and Morgan have placed pages from The Observer, a weekly Sunday newspaper published in Britain, within various chapters of their edition of
The one aspect that links each of these pages is that they all contain an advertisement for Gitanes, a French brand of cigarettes, which all featured male models [Figure 38]. Some of these pages from The Observer contain other advertisements, images, and text from articles. This particular advertisement for Totum Limited Furniture, however, is distinct in that it...
stands opposite Wilde’s text that discusses Dorian’s pursuit of beautiful objects, which includes decorative arts and furniture. This “Formula chair” that is both “Generous in size” and “Lavish in comfort” stands in direct contrast to the exquisite bedrooms of Queen Joan of Burgundy at her palace in Rheims, Catherine de Medicis’s mourning bed, and the state bed of Sobieski, the King of Poland (Wilde, Familiars 87-89). The synchronization between an advertisement for furniture and a passage characterizing how Dorian’s behavior darkens because of elaborate, baroque design draws attention to the role these peritextual artifacts play in transforming the text.

Whereas furniture can enhance the design of a room, here, illustrations and typography are enhancing the format and design of the book. Another advertisement for Totum Limited Furniture is used in Chapter VIII, though this advertisement does not directly correspond to the text on the opposing page [Figure 39]. Nonetheless, its presence evokes a particular decorative aesthetic that appeals to the Wilde’s idea that Dorian Gray is “an essay of decorative arts. It reacts against the crude banality of plain realism. It is poisonous if you like, but you cannot deny that is also perfect, and perfection is what we artists aim at,” as he writes in the letter to the Daily Chronicle (Wilde, Letters 436). Described as having “eye appeal,” the ad’s copy highlights the one-of-a-kind craftsmanship of the Alpha sofa, and the sofa—as a decorative object—is presented as an object that “reveals a scrupulous attention to quality.” In a work that accentuates the importance of objects, the inclusion of this advertisement for a high-end furniture company only further reiterates Wilde’s philosophical and literary interrogation of beautiful objects. If visual writing corresponds to “good looking” writing, as suggested by the creators of Visual Editions, here the bookmakers at Four Corners incorporate images of beautiful men, castles, and furnitures as publisher peritexts in this edition of Dorian Gray.
Figure 38. Gitanes Cigarettes advertisement. This image is representative of the homoerotic advertisements that are incorporated by the bookmakers, Gareth Jones and John Morgan, in the Four Corner Familiars edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

Figure 39. Totum Limited Furniture advertisement in the Four Corner Familiars edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. 

Thus far, I focused on the innovations to Wilde’s novel regarding the text of the work and the images incorporated into the novel by the bookmakers, but the form and shape also epitomize the distinct, dramatic alteration to this visual edition of *Dorian Gray*. Recall that I referred to the fact that in the type was set in columns. Tschichold provides the primary reason why this typesetting is called for in book design: “In books of larger format the type area may be placed differently. The conventional is not always the best here and may result in lines that are too long. Do not hesitate to use double columns: they are often much easier to read” (Tschichold, *Asymmetric* 88). Jones and Morgan of Four Corners adopt his direction; the Familiars *Dorian Gray* is, indeed, a larger format book. The size of this edition, certainly unconventional compared to contemporary printing standard, is 34 × 28.5 cm (13.38 × 11.22 inches), and this shape and size accentuates its status as an object as it resembles something more like a coffee table book or a magazine, publications often associated with décor and interiors. The nontraditional format makes the work much more impractical, according to the bookmaking aesthetics of Tschichold, enhancing its status as art. He asserts, “The format of novels is not arbitrary but is an eminently practical shape. All books which have to be mainly held in the hand rather than lie on a table, must use the normal slim format” (Tschichold, *Asymmetric* 87). Writing in *The Form of the Book*, Tschichold critiques size for both its connection to being read and its relationship to being displayed: “It isn’t only the general handiness of a book that determines its absolute width; the depth of the average bookshelf must be considered” (Tschichold, *Form* 166). The abnormal size of this edition of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* makes it an anomaly for bookshelves. Its large format and flimsy covers discourage easy shelving, while also making it subject to wear and tear when handled.
The considerably larger form of the Familiars *Dorian Gray* does provide a different reading experience. Its dimensions, texture, and paper each stress this particular edition’s nontraditional printing, if by making it more dynamic and visual, it becomes much more fragile. In *Modern Book Production* by Dorothy Harrop, she contrasts various types of binding, suggesting, “the feel of a texture in the covering material is as much a part of the design as any visual attribute” (168). She also points out the aesthetic value of paper quality: “Over and above these considerations, paper must be of a quality consistent with the type of book. Whereas ephemeral books may be printed on low grade papers, it is desirable that books with pretensions to any degree of permanence should be printed on good quality papers” (Harrop 164-165). These modifications discussed by Harrop echo the aesthetic of Tschichold, who writes, “Those who want their books to last and who want them to be found again will neither make them excessively wide nor forget to put the title on the spine” (*Form* 166). The connection between paper and binding pertain to this edition of *Dorian Gray* since its covers are printed on low quality, glossy paper, and not the thicker, embossed card stock commonly used in paperbacks. I interpret this design choice as one that best captures the fragile nature of Dorian’s character, at once so hauntingly portrayed by Basil’s painting and so easily damaged by Dorian’s Faustian wish. Every time that Dorian commits a gruesome act—from shaming his lover Sibyl to his licentious lifestyle to the murder of Basil—the portrait accumulates scars, turning the youthful image of Dorian into a hideous, scarred figure. In a peculiar parallel, the flimsy book covers become easily marked and scarred by the reader handling the book, as if the designers are specifically attempting to linking the fragility of the portrait and the book. Fragility is not necessarily what one thinks of when considering the edition or publication style of a book, but
the Four Corners’ invitation to regard the inevitable obsolescence of their edition is retained as part of its aesthetic appeal.

**Remaking the Classics**

If critics take a rather liberal approach to literary history, as advocated by Brian Richardson, they might readily understand that these novels have an uncannily contemporary feel, which in part opens them up for reimagining. The borders between the eighteenth-century realist novel and postmodern fiction are porous, just as the ones differentiating late Victorian literature and fiction of the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries. Where the origin of one literary period begins and ends is, as Richardson contends, much more open to debate than critics traditionally consider. This fact alone, however, is not why *Tristram Shandy* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* were selected among the classics to be transformed into visual editions. They were chosen by creative bookmakers because of the way in which the concept of medium, and in particular print, becomes repurposed by both its contact with other media and through the technological innovation of the periods in which they were composed. Both Sterne and Wilde published during periods when the novel was undergoing tremendous, rapid change, much like the contemporary moment in which print books are transformed because of the global move towards a screen-based culture. For Sterne, the fictional mode was taking form while concepts like authorship and the book were also being forged because of advancements in printing technology. For Wilde, fiction’s reaction and incorporation of other visual forms and mediums—drama, painting, and early cinema—continued to preoccupy the literary imagination of the late Victorian period.
These works continue to captivate the cultural, creative imagination of the literary world. Numerous reissues, reprintings, and adaptations of both *Tristram Shandy* and *Dorian Gray* populate the shelves of libraries. As Malik advocates in her critical rethinking of publishing, “The book is no longer imagined as boundary and stasis that seeks to constrain the ever-multiplying volume and movement of language, but as a site where various publishing practices—writing, editing, design, marketing, production—intersect and conflict” (Malik 710). It is at this point in her argument that Malik reminds her readers when we think about the book, we are more properly thinking about the edition. She demonstrates how various editions and adaptations of any particular work raise questions about how to envision the book as more than an object with distinct boundaries, but also as a set of processes and decisions made by authors, designers, and publishers. This emphasis on collaboration becomes pronounced in the work of a visual edition, as opposed to a visual novel, because the publishers accentuate the work of graphic designers, artists, and bookmakers plays; likewise, their contributions visually supplement to the written text of the original author, providing a strategic visual spin on the classics rather than simply reprinting a work with an updated cover or design.

As the demand for these types of niche publications, such as the visual edition or the illustrated edition, multiplies, publishers will continue to produce new, inventive ways of presenting fiction. By combining bookmaking with artmaking, these publishers and artists continue to interrogate the ways that visual mediums and forms, in particular visual ones, augment our understanding of both fiction and print culture, delaying further obsolescence of the novel.
Conclusion:
Does Print Still Matter? From Page to Screen and Back Again

People have read out loud, silently, linearly, haphazardly, attentively, with or without pens or pencils, with one hand or two, while sitting, reclining, standing, or walking, by candlelight, sunlight, or even moonlight. People have slept while appearing to read, read while appearing to sleep (children and flashlights!), and left books lying around as though they might be read soon or someday or never. Reading is a way of disciplining our minds, and it also one of the most efficient means of mental escape. — Andrew Piper, Book Was There

Because everything that matters to us happens on paper. Without paper, we are nothing. We are born, and issued with a birth certificate. We collect more of these certificates at school, and yet another when we marry, and another when we divorce, and buy a house, and when we die. We are born human, but are forever becoming paper, as paper becomes us, our artificial skin. Everything we are is paper: it is the ground of activity, the partner to all our enterprises, the key to our understanding of the past. How do we know the past? Only through paper and all its records—and through architecture, of course, though architecture, as we shall see, rather depends on paper. So. Paper wraps stone. — Ian Sansom, Paper: An Elegy

Naomi S. Baron writes that “each new technology may be Janus-faced, potentially improving and degrading the human condition,” and the focus of her essay, “Redefining Reading: The Impact of Digital Communication Media,” is the effect of contemporary “technologies of the written word”—namely the Internet, e-readers, and print—that shape how people read, write, and communicate today. Though she validates this premise through a brief discussion of manufacturing, automobiles, and calculators, her focus on communication and technology supports her claim regarding the dual nature of writing technologies: “The printing press helped spread literacy but shook the foundations of the Catholic Church. Word processing enabled the Japanese to generate text without producing each kanji stroke by stroke, but now many Japanese find themselves forgetting the stroke order. The spell checkers in word-processing programs monitor typographical errors but damped motivation to master
spelling” (Baron 193). Although primarily a sociological study of reading and writing on college campuses, Baron’s article reveals the key facets of the debate in regards to contemporary book culture: ownership, annotation, cognition, usability, emotion, aesthetics, and physicality. Baron’s focus on how readers and writers approach the written word on paper and on the screen directly relates to one of the core premises of this dissertation: when faced with the proliferation of new technologies and other mediums, the print book adapts and assimilates composition techniques and strategies from those mediums as a means to defy obsolescence and maintain its significant role in the creative and cultural imagination. Visual writing and, more specifically for the purposes of my study, the visual novel are the byproducts of this relationship between media, whether it be between print and film or print and the digital. The future of the publishing industry is at a crossroads between one field dominated by print and an emerging, exponentially expansive one dominated by the digital, and critical scholarship is now more finely attuned to this debate than ever before with essays and books published so frequently that the increased attention to this topic has produced a surplus of a material theorizing and negotiating the future of print, writing, and fiction.

In January 2013, the Modern Language Association published a collection of essays in *PMLA* (Publications of the MLA) responding to the theme of “Reading in the Digital Age.” By acknowledging this topic under the section entitled “the changing profession,” the editors of *PMLA* highlighted the most significant change in regards to how we read, write, and disseminate texts today: the ever-increasing shift from print-based mediums towards digitally-based methods of communicating. These essays ask readers to consider both how digital technologies can “contribute to a redefinition of what it means to read” and how the “late age of print” has ushered
in “new forms of textual consumption and pleasure based on random-access or hyper textual narratives in which readers could navigate at will” (Baron 193; Nakamura 238, 240). Of course, all of these essays, though focused on the act of reading, circulate around the question: does print still matter? I would expand this question by also asking the following one: how will print still continue to have a role in a digital world? My dissertation has interrogated several novelists that struggle with this question, specifically how fiction is transformed by its interaction with other visual media, and their writing responds with a resounding affirmation. Yes, print still does matter, and print books can and will continue to evolve in relation to the needs and demands of the reading public as evidenced by their cultivation of visual writing in their novels. A. S. Byatt, John Dos Passos, Steven Hall, James Joyce, Laurence Sterne, and Oscar Wilde utilize visual writing as a means of experimenting with language and print in such a way as to explore the limits of literature during their respective periods. They clearly did not abandon print and its potential. As Jacques Derrida writes in *Paper Machine*, “To say farewell to paper, today, would be rather like deciding one fine day to stop speaking because you had learned to write” Derrida 64). Similarly, Ian Sansom advocates for the necessity of respecting the significant role that paper plays in culture and thus, by association, print culture, as suggested in the introduction, “Respecting Paper,” to his book *Paper: An Elegy* where he writes that “everything that matters to us happens on paper” (xix). But what of the apparent death knell of paper as readers move to the digital? The Pew Center for Research has found that even though “the proportion of American who read e-book is growing […] few have completely replaced print books for electronic versions” (1). Their study, conducted over the course of three-and-a-half years and published in January of 2014, notes that, while tablet and e-readership is on the rise, “print remains the
foundation of Americans’ reading habits” (7). Andrew Piper points out the debates and concerns over the printed novel’s fate in the midst of emerging technologies is not new:

We take little notice that we have said all of this before. Four hundred years ago in Spain people read too many romances (Don Quixote), three hundred years ago in London too many people wrote crap (Grub Street), two hundred years ago in Germany reading had turned into a madness (the so-called Lesewut), and one hundred years ago there was the telephone. We have worried that one day there would be more authors than readers (in 1788), that self-publishing would save, and then kill, reading (in 1773), and that no one would have time to read books anymore (in 1855). Everything that has been said about life in an online world has already been said about books. (Piper xi)

Despite this cyclical recurrence of “threats” to print culture and to the value of books, novelists continue to find new and interesting methods to craft readerships and texts alike. Authors are inspired by technology and innovating printing technologies and, in turn, continue to manipulate fictional space, print, and the book as an object to engage readers anew, similar to how the Internet and e-readers have transformed how people read, write, and even think.

If media-specific analysis preoccupies contemporary literary scholarship and textual studies, what then is the exact object of analysis? To answer that question, I want to begin with answers from the two scholars that I think are most vocal about this issue in relation to the novel—N. Katherine Hayles and Jessica Pressman. Hayles notes the “epochal shift from print to digital texts has been under way for some time. Indeed, print books are now so interpenetrated with digital media at every stage of their production that they may more appropriately be considered an output from digital texts than a separate medium” (Hayles, “Combining” 226). In their recent collection *Comparative Textual Media: Transforming the Humanities in a Postprint Era*, Hayles and Pressman contend that “as the era of print is passing, it is possible once again to see print in a comparative context with other textual media, including the scroll, the manuscript
codex, the early print codex, the variations of book forms produced by changes from letter press to offset to digital publishing mediums, and born-digital forms such as electronic literature and computer games” (Comparative 1). It is no surprise that their scholarship focuses on, in Pressman’s words, “cutting-edge, avant-garde literature that shares a commitment to pushing literature’s boundaries by experimenting with its media” (“Conclusion” 256). These literary works exemplify visual writing. By self-consciously crafting books that reveal the possibilities of fictional space, the novelists I have discussed refuse to take the print medium for granted and instead produce texts that challenge the limits of the medium. Fictional space, in particular the material space of the page, becomes the concrete, visible representation of the nontraditional text that often accompanies the transformation of print, specifically of a text that demands a reader’s engagement with the space and form of the novel. Hayles, similarly, finds that these types of novels “engage in strategies that entice readers to become intimate with the novels’ bodies through physical manipulations of their printed forms. These manipulations go beyond the automatic turning of pages, as if these books were determined to reawaken passion by introducing novelty into what have become routine physical encounters” (Hayles, “Combining” 227). Taking into account the media-specific analysis advocated by Hayles and Pressman, I want to discuss in the rest of this conclusion where I think the study of the visual novel should and must go next by briefly considering how creative works have moved from page to screen and back again.

As I suggested in my chapter on literary modernism, the medium of print has always been pivotal to medium of film. Print culture, writing, and literary works have inspired countless movies and televisions shows; moreover, in its very inception, silent films relied upon reading
and language such as visual cues and signals as a form of exposition and narrative. Recall the words of Virginia Woolf, “All the famous novels of the world, with their well-known characters and their famous scenes, only asked, it seemed, to be put on the films. […] The cinema fell upon its prey with immense rapacity, and to the moment largely subsists upon the body of its unfortunate victim” (269). Though she clearly seems disgusted and bemused by this association between literature and film, Woolf recognizes, through her predator-prey analogy, how the two have functioned since they were first connected. To that extent, directors not only relied upon literary works as the inspiration of their films, but they called upon screenwriters to craft scripts that would be used for both the acting captured on film and the intertitles featured in their movies. The utilization of intertitles and dialogue cards in silent cinema demonstrates that, even in the early years of cinema, typography and written text were crucial. This use of written text in film, however, is not just relegated to early cinema; for instance the infamous scrolling text used at the opening of George Lucas’s Star Wars saga or the use of epigraphs in movies.

Cinematographers and directors have also found other ways to include written text and print culture. Take for example two films adapted from literature: Robert Stevenson’s Jane Eyre (1943) and Baz Luhrmann’s The Great Gatsby (2013). In both instances, the films use a primary character, Jane Eyre and Nick Carraway respectively, to provide a voice-over narration while also showing these characters in the process of writing out the story that is depicted visually. Throughout both films, silhouettes of pages and written text are superimposed onto screen, and the filmmakers’ treatment of written text and the act of writing in these two examples suggests that underpins the visual and audible content of the films.
The movie screen, however, is not the only screen to feature adaptations of the novel. While my own focus in the analysis of visual writing has been on works published in print and the novel, further studies of the topic should consider electronic literature. These studies must also take into consideration the differences between literary works uploaded as e-content versus adaptations of canonical works reimagined for the computer or electronic reading devices. On the one hand, that literature simply rendered in electronic form is not necessarily important to the study of visual writing. On the other hand, what is worthy of note is how digital databases are opening up a vast wealth of print material previously relegated to the archive. These works are often uploaded with a straightforward missing of providing access to readers, and to some extent may fall outside of the purview of an analysis of visual writing, though they are important for thinking about the connection between print and the digital. At present, the three main e-readers—iPad, Kindle, and Nook—each have a visual effect feature that simulates page turning, and besides this element, electronic publishing follows a rather standard formatting similar to standard, contemporary printing. As Ellen McCracken writes, “At this moment in history, a new electronic literature that seeks widespread mass consumption and encourages extensive readership of literary texts precedes and supersedes the radically experimental electronic literary

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1 A prime example is the Modernist Journal Project, a joint project of Brown University and The University of Tulsa, that is a major resource for periodical literature during the modernist period. Their “primary mission is to produce digital editions of culturally significant magazines from around the early 20th century and make them freely available to the public,” and this project is only one of several such programs (Modernist). Another prominent example of note is the Emily Dickinson Archive that launched in late 2013 and gave readers access to her manuscripts housed at Harvard’s Houghton Library (Ireland). These are just two examples of online archives that are giving readers access to primary texts such as periodicals and poems; in addition, numerous databases are opening up archival manuscripts and typescripts previously housed in university and private holdings.
forms for which the public is not entirely ready” (106). I support McCracken’s thesis, especially given that the emergence of electronic literature that gained some prominence in the 1990s slowly waned as an interest in uploading works that already existed in print form begin to dominate. Hypertext fiction, a genre of electronic literature characterized by the use of hypertext links to navigate content, is the more avant-garde, experimental literary form that McCracken references, and one key text in that mode is Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl* (1995). Attentive to literary history, Jackson’s work adapts Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and L. Frank Baum’s *The Patchwork Girl* (1913) to craft a narrative that uses visual images of the female body in conjunction with text to give the reader the power to navigate Jackson’s text at will. Paul Hackman’s reading of Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl* suggests Jackson “posit[s] a more complicated relationship” between print and hypertext than early critics suggested (87). I choose to highlight Jackson’s work because it represents an adaptation from page to screen, showing how novels previously published in print could be reimagined or reinvented on screen, and it would certainly factor into a more expansive examination of the visual novel. *Patchwork Girl* would also work well in a study of the visual novel than I devote to here. In this sense, like the primary works I examined in this dissertation, visual art and illustrations innovate and complicate the relationship between written text and image and the reading experience.

Can a literary work exist between print and the digital? According to Amaranth Borsuk and Brad Bouse, the answer is yes as evidenced in their collaborative work *Between Page and*...

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2 Paul Hackman’s analysis of Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl* also polemically interrogates McCracken’s assertion. Hackman establishes in his essay’s thesis that “the overly enthusiastic proclamations of the early and mid nineties about the future of hypertext literature contribute to the standard reading of *Patchwork Girl* […] However, fifteen years after the first generation of hypertext novels emerged, hypertext literature remains on the fringe of literary studies” (85).
Screen. Here are the creators on their unique design: “An unlikely marriage of print and digital, *Between Page and Screen* chronicles a love affair between two characters, P and S. The book has no words, only inscrutable black and white geometric patterns that, when coupled with a webcam, conjure the written word. Reflected on the screen, the reader sees him or herself with open book in hand, language springing alive and shape-shifting with each turn of the page” (Borsuk and Bouse, Web). Though the form is a combination of concrete, visual, and conceptual poetry, it has amazing potential for the future of fiction and bookmaking. This interplay between page and screen is truly captivating, in which the poem is presented translucently over the image of the black-and-white square printed on the page, all of which is subject to how the reader-viewer holds the book in relation to the screen. The effectual collapse between the two—written word and image—suggests the co-dependency with which our culture views the page and the screen; they are parasitically linked to each other much like how Woolf characterizes the connection between literature and film. In one letter, P suggests as much while also playfully referencing the effect of this peculiar liminal text:

> Dear S,
> A screen is a shield, but also a veil—
> it’s sheer and can be shorn. There’s a neat gap between these covers, a gate agape, through which you’ve slipped your tang. Paper cuts too, Swordsmith. Let’s name this pagan pageant, these rows of lines or vines that link us together.
> —P (Borusk and Bouse, *Between*)

The usage of “veil,” “sheer,” and “gap” hint towards the multiple ways that *Between the Page and Screen* reveals the ephemeral nature of the liminal space between print and the digital, a
space that allows these characters to exist and also one that defines our contemporary moment. Borusk and Bouse also have numerous squares that produce visuals of rotating and scrolling texts, while others produce words that transform depending upon the distance the reader-viewer holds the book from the webcam. This playful manipulation of the situation of reading suggests that how we read, how we hold texts, and how quickly we progress through book is what visual writing attempts to deconstruct.

If for the majority of the twentieth century literary works journeyed from page to screen, with the advent of personal computers and the Internet texts migrated in the opposite direction—from screen to page. In my chapter on Steven Hall’s *The Raw Shark Texts* (2005), I note this type of adaptation. Hall’s novel is deeply indebted to a variety of films, which both overtly and obscurely contribute to the novel’s plot and, much like Borusk and Bouse’s work, exists in print, digital, and ephemeral/liminal mediums. Without a doubt, the single most important literary work to emerge in the last twenty years in regards to this transition from screen to page is Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves* (2000). Literature today continually “finds new sources of inspiration from digital technologies and reading practices,” as Pressman writes in regards to the future of American fiction (“Conclusion” 256). This inspiration could in part be because of how new media, in particular the Internet, is described using the language of old media; the Internet is made up of “web pages” filled with “text” and “illustrations” that users navigate by using a

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3 Merely transcribing one of the concrete poems or describing what one of these visual texts appears to be is extremely difficult. Because the work manifests itself in relation to how the reader-viewer hold the text in relation to the screen, it is more accurate to claim that *Between Page and the Screen* is constantly in flux. For a better approximation of what the reading experience is like, consult the book trailer on the text’s homepage: www.betweenpageandscreen.com.
“scroll” bar (Liu 12-13). Regardless, Brian W. Chanen recognizes that the methods in which electronic literature encourages new ways of navigating text can also apply to print texts, especially ones that animate and transform the reading experience by using nonstandard typography and layout such as *House of Leaves*. For that reason, Chanen asserts a valid claim for thinking about the visual novel and print in relation to the digital screen: “the hyperlinked, networked structure of the digital environment has influenced the structure of print fiction and the ways in which a reader is encouraged to approach a text” (164).

*House of Leaves* is an exemplary multimedia creative project that illustrates the significant composition techniques of the visual novel and the multimodal text. Danielewski started the *House of Leaves* online, finding a website to host his novel since that route to publication was far easier than obtaining a publishing contract. As *House of Leaves* moved from screen to page, the work began to take on multiple dimensions, namely it became the centerpiece of an elaborate multimedia project. During the same year that *House of Leaves* was published, its satellite projects were also launched including: *Haunted*, a CD by Danielewski’s sister, Poe, which recasts various stories through song; a newly produced website sponsored by the book’s publisher, Pantheon Books; the launch of Bulletin Board, an online web discussion forum for readers to share theories and interpretations of the novel; and *The Whalestoe Letters*, an appendix from Danielewski’s full length novel. The multimodality and the layering of the novel, which is composed of The Navidson Record, Zampanò’s manuscript, Johnny Truant’s nontraditional/narrative footnotes, and the publisher’s paratexts also exploit this interplay between audio, digital, and print media. All of these elements within the text experiment with the book as an object while also highlighting the print text’s connection to the digital. For instance, every
appearance of the word “House” is colored blue regardless of the language in which is it written, the color associated with hyperlinked text on the Internet. Also, how readers progress through *House of Leaves* resembles how individuals navigate webpages. Do you read all of the Zampanò’s writing before Truant’s, or simultaneously? Do you decode the text’s messages like the Pelafina’s code in the letter dated May 8, 1987, or leave it a mystery? And what about Chapter IX, the novel’s most typographically experimental and distinct, specifically do readers navigate it linearly if they can manage to find its beginning and end points? The Internet has neither beginning nor end and is filled with limitless potential, exponentially expanding, just like the Navidson house on Ash Tree Lane that haunts these texts. Pressman asserts in her analysis on this “networked” element of Danielewski’s project that these parlour tricks of print alter the traditional reading process: “The reader hopscotches across pages and points of view, layers of footnotes and different fonts, decoding a novel that relishes a print fetish while revealing how literature and its readers encounter and evolve in relation to digital media” (“Reading” 107). The fetishization of print culture in *House of Leaves* anticipates the far distant future of literature by suggesting that, culturally, we are at the dawn of a period in which print and paper will play different roles. They will be enshrined in museums or recycled for other purposes or only used by the old breed. Danielewski’s writing both exploits the fragile space of the novel through the tradition-shattering manipulation of type and modality while also revealing how physical spaces of the real world haunt people.

With writing and publishing software more easily reproduced in the digital age and used more than ink and paper, authors are finding new ways to expand or transform their writing processes by using these programs. And while readers have just as much exposure to these
software platforms, they are rarely mentioned in literature today outside of providing a plot
device or as a means for characters to communicate. The future study of visual writing and the
visual novel must take into account how these different software programs transform how
authors structure narrative now that they utilize them to create stories. One primary example of
this particular move from screen to page is Jennifer Egan’s *A Visit from the Goon Squad* (2010),
specifically the twelfth chapter which is presented entirely through the form of a 78 slide
PowerPoint presentation. “Great Rock and Roll Pauses” is a presentation created by twelve-year-
old Alison Blake, in which she compares her everyday life to moments in rock music history.
Because PowerPoint “only allows for the creation of moments, without connective tissue,” Egan
had to think more self-consciously about her writing process since her exposure to the software
was limited to “corporate documents;” here is Egan on her composition technique used in this
chapter: “I’d list what seemed to me the essential component parts of that moment as a series of
bullet points. Then I would study those bullet points and try to understand their relationship to
each other: was it cause-and-effect? Was it circular? Was it a counterpoint? An evolution?
Having identified the relationships of the parts to each other, I would choose (or, when I really
got comfortable, *create*) a graphic structure to house the bullet points that would clearly manifest
their relationship” (Lee). Egan’s usage of these slide notes halts the reading process and compels
readers to process the narrative in a completely new way—specifically, readers are forced to
navigate this chapter by providing some of the causal links and transitions not included because
of the chapter’s modality. Readers may also view the presentation as designed by Alison on
Egan’s website; the distinctive formatting of the PowerPoint show, such as musical
accompaniment and stylized slide transitions, give the impression that Alison, and by proxy Egan, wanted a more multimodal and multimedia method of communicating her personal history.

Print does still matter. The role that print, paper, and ink play in society is important and will continue to remain a pivotal touchstone in the creative imagination, despite the exponential proliferation of electronic technology, digital reading devices, and new methods of disseminating the written word and images. To that extent, the critical community should consider the breadth of contemporary research that reaches beyond literary critical boundaries to account for how the reading brain and culture are transformed by the medium of print, visual communication, and digital interfaces. Throughout this dissertation, I have referenced some emerging critical paradigms, particularly in the work of N. Katherine Hayles and Jessica Pressman. Two other critics, the narratologist Marie-Laure Ryan and visual studies scholar Johanna Drucker, have also accounted for the way that visual technologies such as gaming devices, databases, and computer interfaces have contributed to both narrative story world building (Ryan) and visual forms of knowledge production (Drucker). Critics will also have to take into account the scholarship on the print medium’s past and digital future including Ian Sansom’s Paper: An Elegy, Andrew Piper’s Book Was There: Reading in Electronic Times, Robert Darnton’s The Case for Books: Past, Present, and Future, Philip Hensher’s Missing Ink: The Lost Art of Handwriting, and Nicholas A. Basbanes’s On Paper. Cognitive studies and neuroscience research on the reading brain will also be important such as the inroads made by Maryanne Wolf’s Proust and the Squid: The Story and the Science of the Reading Brain, Stanislas Dehaene’s Reading in the Brain: The Science of How We Read, and Eli Pariser’s The Filter Bubble: How the New Personalized Web is Changing What We Read and How We Think. And finally, studies in new media will be pivotal in
understanding the cultural shift away from print culture. Lev Manovich places “new media” at the intersection of social media, user-generated content, narratology, textual studies, and visual studies and claims that this shift towards the digital continues to change our relationship to how we create, access, and disseminate literature, art, music, and more (32-33). Besides Manovich and his oeuvre, three recent monographs in new media scholarship—Matthew Kirschenbaum’s *Mechanisms: New Media and the Forensic Imagination*, Stephen Ramsay’s *Reading Machines: Toward an Algorithmic Criticism*, and Lawrence Lessig’s *Free Culture: The Nature and Future of Creativity*—examine how changes in technology are transforming how society stores information, how to use existing text analysis in relationship to digital humanities, and how free access of information on the Internet both limits and liberates creativity.

The act of reading will always play a prominent role in society. As Andrew Piper writes, “The question is not one of ‘versus,’ of two single antagonists squaring off in a ring; rather, the question is far more ecological in nature. How will these two very different species and their many varieties coexist within the greater ecosystem known as reading?” (xi). I have suggested that part of how print will continue to respond to the incursion of the digital media and screen culture is by the emergence and adoption of visual writing strategies, and I return again to quote from Basil Hallward talking to his friend, Lord Henry Wotton, in Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray*: “I sometimes think, Harry, that there are only two eras of importance in the world’s history. The first is the appearance of a new medium for art, and the second is the appearance of a new personality for art also” (Wilde, Norton 13). When the emergence of new technologies of new methods of creating art happen to transform the predominant forms of cultural and creative production, the older media will react and adapt, and the visual novel is one
such adaptation. My goal in elucidating this tradition of visual writing throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first century is precisely because of contemporary publishing’s transformation. My own fascination with literature emerges precisely during this period where paper and print culture are undergoing a transformation precisely because emerging technology. The visual novel’s nonstandard design, both within the pages of a work and as an overall design feature, continually asserts its material uniqueness and presence as an innovative work.
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