Visual

in

Contemporary

Prose Fiction

Gaps, Gestures, Images

Simon

Barton

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For Toby and Hannah

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1
An Introduction to Visual Devices in Contemporary Prose Fiction

1.1 Introduction

From the rubrication that can be found in illuminated medieval manuscripts to Laurence Sterne's challenges to the emerging expectations of the novel form in the eighteenth century, and from the 'making new' of the Modernists to the formal experiments associated with Postmodernism in the twentieth century, the page of a book has always been a surface whose capacity for conveying information might be adjusted or extended. We only need to look at the possible font choices of any word-processing program to see how many options a writer now has to subtly alter the initial perception of their text and meaning. Relatively cheap contemporary digital publication software now allows for simple and quick manipulation of text and the page. The advent of new digital technologies gives increased access to unusual page design (though still determined by what a computer allows) and a number of contemporary authors have chosen to actively re-imagine the traditional layout of text on a page, the structures of their narratives and, by extension, subsequent reading processes.

Visual (or 'graphic') devices in novels can multiply, support, or trouble, possible interpretations of their narratives, expanding the potential significations of the words on the page. What is most interesting is how these visual devices can challenge the reader or enhance the feeling of interactivity, yet it is something that has been rarely commented upon in the critical arena until relatively recently (see Glyn White, 2005, p. 1 and Alison Gibbons, 2016, 2012). The visual devices in the works of prose that will be examined in detail in this book all have one thing in common: they have all been critically marginalised in the past, often being deemed as being too 'difficult' or, worse, labelled 'gimmicky'.

In contrast to this, many of these 'multimodal' (van Leeuwen and Kress, 2001, p. 1) and ergodic texts receive positive reactions from readers, sometimes gaining 'cult' status, and, in the case of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) and Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts* (2007), becoming brief best-sellers. With reference to *House of Leaves* but also applicable to many other graphically innovative novels, Poyner states, 'The positive reaction [to these texts]…suggests the degree to which readers' tastes have already been transformed by exposure to the devices, texture and rhetoric of contemporary graphic culture' (2003, p. 143). The contemporary reader has no problem navigating disruptions to conventional page layout. In fact, many readers now actively pursue texts that challenge and alter their preconceptions of how a page of text should traditionally 'look'.

Multimodality is a particularly relevant term when approaching such texts, because, as Norgaard asserts, 'In Kress and Van Leeuwen's view, even printed discourse is multimodal and ideally should be analysed accordingly…much contemporary communication consists of a complex interplay of different modes – such as sound, gesture, music, visual images, written and spoken language' (2009b, p.142). It is worth pursuing the implications that disruptions to the conventional page have on the reading process. The works featured as examples in this monograph will sometimes be referred to as having a 'high modality', meaning that they feature many potentially different modes of producing meaning, often through overtly visual aspects of the page. In *Ways of Seeing* (1972), John Berger says 'Seeing comes before words' (p. 1). The readers of the pages of novels see the page *before* they read the words. This is a fundamental observation that prompts refined study of the effects that unconventional pages have on the reader.

1.2   Aims and Structure

This book intends to make a sustained examination of three different types of visual device: textual gaps, textual gestures and visual images. Each example featured in this book can be found on the page(s) of works of fiction by British and American authors in works of printed, contemporary prose fiction. It will analyse such visual devices from a reader's perspective, paying particular attention to narrative context and the differing interpretations made possible by similar visual devices.

Glyn White defines 'graphic devices' (visual devices by another name) as any occurrences that '[do] not wholly follow the graphic conventions that arrange words on a page, and pages in a book, in the usual neutral

way' (2005, p. 1). Visual devices can disrupt the reading process in varied ways, what this work intends to explore are the effects that different types of visual device can elicit during it.

Thus, the three main aims for this study may be summarised as follows:

1. To consider the different effects that unconventional visual devices have on the reading process.
2. To analyse, develop and discuss a critical vocabulary for the analysis of works of prose fiction containing unconventional visual devices.
3. To demonstrate the utility of this new vocabulary with analysis of relevant works of contemporary prose fiction.

This introduction highlights the diverse critical issues that surround these areas, from the relationship between the reader and text to the form of the book and Saussurean and Derridean linguistics. It provides a rationale for the choice to feature works by certain authors and to exclude others, and attempts to fill in any gaps in current knowledge of this area. The structure of this book is straightforward, unlike many of the idiosyncratic fictional works that feature as examples within it.

The subsequent chapters focus in detail on examples of visual devices in the works of prose fiction, but this introduction (and by extension, this book) broadly concerns four major areas:

1. The reader and their interaction with the graphic surface of the page.
2. The form of the book, including typography, images and other paratextual elements.
3. Theoretical approaches to text (the linguistic sign).
4. The issues of Representation and Graphic Mimesis.

The main focus and central aspect of this study is how the reader approaches visual devices in contemporary prose fiction. This is the first and central aspect to this study and always takes precedence over the other four aspects. The form of the book is connected to the first aspect as it is the form that dictates the (implied) reader's cognitive response to the book. The second, third and fourth chapters explore the implications that gaps, textual arrangements (or gestures) and images have on the reading process. The third aspect is really the foundation of the study and will be explored in more detail throughout this introduction, especially in relation to semiotics and the materiality of text and the book as object. The fourth and final area, representation and mimesis,

is highly important to this work because many of the visual devices that appear on the pages of prose fiction have a representational role to play. For example, at times, the texts that are used as examples here attempt a variety of different representations, such as the representation of sight and the representation of intellectual activity or thought. They attempt to give the reader a more accurate representation of characters' actions, physical and mental. All these devices have a representational role to play; it is up to the reader to understand what they represent.

This book contains three large chapters (Chapters 2, 3 and 4) and two case studies (Chapters 5 and 6), followed by some conclusions (Chapter 7). The three main chapters focus on particular types of visual devices (textual gaps, textual gestures and images respectively) and then analyse them with close readings of a variety of contemporary texts in order to demonstrate the viability of the new critical vocabulary and the implications that they have on the reader. The two case studies apply all the devices discussed in the three main chapters to two unconventional, graphically innovative, and previously critically marginalised novels, Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing: A Real Fictitious Discourse* (1992) and William H. Gass's *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* (1968), in order to demonstrate their effectiveness for close reading and further literary study. There is a distinct lack of current critical material on these two novels, especially material that acknowledges the implications that their numerous visual devices have on their reader(s).

Chapter 2 of this book ('Reading Textual Gaps') explores a variety of examples of textual gaps, lacunae and aporia in works of contemporary prose fiction. It aims to categorise similar types of textual gap and highlight the different effects that they have on the reader. These 'gaps' are approached by breaking them down into four different but common types: extended or additional blank spaces, missing content, blocks of monotone colour and physical holes cut into the page(s). The chapter discusses representation and new visual verisimiliar narrative techniques that portray conscious and unconscious thought. For example, textual gaps found in the middle of sentences and in-between the words that form a first person interior monologue can represent the pauses in thought that are common in the psychological realism or the inward turn favoured by some of the Modernists of the early twentieth century. Gaps have always been present on the graphic surface of the page, after all, 'what most frequently interrupts written language is space' (Lennard in Bray et al., 2000, p. 3) – a shrewd and uncommon observation that gives room for the analysis of the space that is so apparent on a page of prose. On a traditional page, gaps can

usually be found in the margins, in-between words and letters, at the end of chapters and on lines that feature dialogue. On graphically innovative pages gaps can be used in all sorts of idiosyncratic ways. In B. S. Johnson's *Albert Angelo* (1964) and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* (2011), there are incisions made into the page(s), creating gaps as holes that completely remove text from lines but have a secondary effect of showing text on pages underneath that hole. Johnson's earlier novel, *Travelling People* (1963) and Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing* feature large blocks of monotone colour that completely remove any of the potential for text to be placed on their pages. Johnson's *Trawl* (1966), Christine Brooke-Rose's *Thru* (1975) and Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000), feature large extended gaps of blank space between words that extend the conventional short gap found in traditional novels and challenge the reader's preconceptions of how a line of text should appear on the page. This chapter remains focused on the representational implications of textual gaps, and how the reader finds meaning from them. In some instances gaps between words on the page can represent punctuation that may otherwise be missing (see Lennard in Bray et al., 2000). Many of the novels featured in Chapter 2 extend conventional gaps, use ellipses, and change the layout of narrative in ways that incorporate blank space, and could all be argued to be types of punctuation.

Chapter 3 ('Textual Gestures: Iconic Text and Narrative') is concerned with unconventional textual arrangements that can also visually or graphically gesture towards events and objects that can be found in the textual narrative. After looking at a variety of textual gestures from novels such as Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992), Graham Rawle's *Woman's World* (2005) and Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts* (2007), this visual device is separated into three different types: (i) iconic textual images or arrangements, (ii) narrative textual images or arrangements and (iii) iconic narrative. *The Raw Shark Texts* has many examples of all three types and is used throughout this chapter as a constant to show the scope of different textual arrangements that can be found. Van Leeuwen (2005) called for a grammar of typography and the aim of Chapter 3 is to contextualise various instances of unconventional arrangements and then provide a framework with which to examine them. At times, the typographic arrangement of text on the page can simply be supplementary and illustrative, or representative, and sometimes it can even replace the main textual narrative.

In *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, Scott McCloud notes, 'Letters are static images…when they're arranged in a deliberate sequence we call them words' (1993, p. 8). This statement could be expanded

and amended to read 'words are static images, when they are arranged in deliberate sequence we call them sentences, and so on with paragraphs…'. Understanding the inherent visual nature of the written sign is vital to the understanding of the textual gestures created by typography. It is the arrangement of text on the page that the reader first 'sees', after all, 'seeing comes before words' (Berger, 1972, p. 1). If the text on the page is arranged in a way that also evokes something else, such as a boat (see *Double or Nothing*, 1998, p. 137.1), it is that 'thing' that the reader initially 'sees' before they approach the narrative. Textual gestures as iconic or narrative textual images or arrangements are more than just experimental, idiosyncratic, difficult, or worse, simply 'postmodern'. They can increase the range of interpretative possibilities and assist in generating meaning for the reader.

Chapter 4 ('Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative: Images on the Pages of Prose Fiction'), in contrast to the previous chapter, deals with visual images that are not created by the arrangement of text on the page: photography, illustration and diagrams. The key area in this chapter is the relationship between words and pictures and the representational difficulties inherent in both of these concepts. W.J.T. Mitchell says that 'the "differences" between images and language are not merely formal matters: they are, in practice, linked to things like the difference between the (speaking) self and the (seen) other; between telling and showing; between "hearsay" and "eyewitness" testimony; between words (heard, quoted, inscribed); between sensory channels, traditions of representation, and modes of experience' (1994, p. 5). When visual images are placed on the page alongside words the semiotic nature of the sign is brought into question and by extension, so is mimesis. The focus of this chapter is on how the reader approaches visual images alongside textual narrative, what they represent and how meaning is generated from the combination of words and pictures. Thus, it looks to a medium that also features static words and pictures for assistance – the graphic novel and comic art, and two of its most important critical thinkers, Scott McCloud and Will Eisner. Beginning with a short analysis of the pages of two seminal yet different graphic novels – *Watchmen* (Moore, 1986–87) and *Blankets* (Thompson, 2003) – this chapter demonstrates how analysis of this medium can inform analysis of a variety of different word and picture combinations in prose fiction.

Will Eisner (2008a) defined comics as 'Sequential Art'. Illustrations in previous works of prose fiction have often been singular and non-sequential. They often took the form of a wood cut or black and white drawing, not always relevant or specific to the novel that it was

illustrating. In contrast to that, some works of fiction feature multiple visual images in sequence, not necessarily with another visual image, as would be in the case of Eisner's own comics, but rather with the text that accompanies it, forming a juxtaposition of words and images without a weighting of more importance for either form. Lennard's (2000) short analysis of graphic novels compares the reading of a page in a graphic novel as more akin to the reading of a poem than prose because of the eye movements the reader makes (saccades). At times, images on the pages of prose fiction can either supplement the main textual narrative or replace it entirely.

Eisner explores the difficulties of writing for comics and the problems of using imagery as a substitute for language in *Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative*:

> Imagery used as a language has some drawbacks. It is the element of comics that has always provoked resistance to its acceptance as serious reading. Critics also sometimes accuse it of inhibiting imagination. Static images have limitations. They do not articulate abstractions or complex thought easily. But images define in absolute terms. They are specific. Images in print or film transmit with the speed of sight. (2008b, p. 10)

The novels featured in Chapter 4 attempt to navigate around these limitations. The abstractions or complexities of thought are communicated more effectively via a combination of words and pictures in these works. The words support the pictures and the pictures support the words in a symbiotic relationship. The pictures allow the writer to communicate in another way that may allow their vision to be better understood by the reader, turning from verbal storytelling and narrative towards graphic storytelling and visual narrative.

In *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art*, Scott McCloud notes that:

> traditional thinking has long held that truly great works of art and literature are only possible when the two are kept at arm's length. Words and pictures together are considered, at best, a diversion for the masses, at worst a product of crass commercialism. (1993, p. 140)

Aiming to refine Eisner's previous terminology, McCloud calls the comic book, 'juxtaposed sequential visual art' (p. 8). His focus on the combination of words and stationary images make his comments particularly appropriate for use in this analysis of visual devices. Comics

and the novels discussed in this book both use or establish a relation-ship between words and pictures. One of the aims of Chapter 4 is to contextualise the importance of comics in a contemporary literary environment before testing comic book theory on a number of pages of prose fictions that also use pictures. A synthesis of comic book theory and literary theory allows for a more detailed understanding of graphic/visual narrative and a new way of looking at prose fictions that use pictures to support the textual narrative.

The remainder of this introductory chapter briefly discusses the scope of the book (1.3), including a discussion on period, a rationale and contextualisation of the study (1.4), the significance of the reader and their relationship with text (1.5), the changing form of the novel (1.6), before finally discussing typographic representation and mimesis (1.7).

1.3   Scope

The presence of the book, and the material artefact's effects on the reading process, is fundamental to understanding the purpose of this monograph. The intent is to generate a new critical framework for ana-lysing typographically unconventional prose fiction and to explore the characteristics of this form. This book is partly a response to what Lynne Diamond-Nigh calls the 'communicative power' of the visual sign noted in her essay, 'Gray's Anatomy: When Words and Images Collide':

> Recently, I had the good fortune to spend an evening with Ronald Sukenick, the American surfictionist and critic. The conversation turned to a discussion of the reemergence of the importance of the visual arts in contemporary literature: collaborations of French new novelists with artists, paintings that had generated entire novels in France and Latin America, the typographical manipulations of the American surfictionists. He expounded the idea that this focus on the visual was the culmination of the diffusion and decay of the linguistic sign, the natural end point of an evolution manifested in the minimalization (the word is mine) of the word and the meta-morphosis of its communicative power from a linguistic to a visual sign. (1995, p. 179)

I do not agree that visual devices are a result of the 'decay of the linguistic sign'. Unconventional pages represent quite the opposite of decay, demonstrating the potential of the linguistic sign as a graphic mark as well as a representational tool. White says, 'the reader must access the

text through the graphic surface' (2005, p. 36), and argues that this is something that Barthes (1977) originally ignored in his analysis of text (2005, p. 39). The graphic surface of the page is first the location that the reader finds meaning. It is easy to forget that text has materiality and a visual sense that the reader accesses before they generate any meaning from the textual narrative. This book intends to build upon previous work in this area by exploring how visual devices can disrupt and enhance the reading process by representing the complexity of thought.

There is a significant demand for a solid critical vocabulary in this emergent area. Terence Hawkes' comments in his preface to Roger Sabin's *Adult Comics* express his desire for a relevant, and new, critical vocabulary. He says:

> How can we recognise or deal with the new? Any equipment we bring to the task will have been designed to engage with the old: it will look for and identify extensions and developments of what we already know. To some degree the unprecedented will always be unthinkable. (2002, p. ix)

Hawkes highlights one of the main reasons why analysis of texts with visual devices is rare, and why often, where there is analysis, it does not address these devices: because critics do not have relevant terminology with which to deal with them. Instead, critics borrow terms from related disciplines and hope that they remain relevant. Early film criticism used literary critical terms before developing to the extent that the discipline gained (or finally appropriated) its own critical language. Many contemporary works of prose fiction that include illustrations, unconventional typography and photographs amongst the textual narrative are only ever partially dealt with because of an absence of appropriate terminology in literary studies.

Novels with unusual visual devices are increasingly found throughout contemporary fiction, regardless of the race, gender or geographical location of its practitioners. Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) became an instant *New York Times* best-seller upon its publication in the year 2000 and Reif Larsen achieved a similar success with *The Selected Works of T. S. Spivet* in 2009. Both are novels with a strong 'visual' sense. It is therefore time for mainstream literary criticism to start taking notice of these devices and begin trying to understand their purposes, effects, and relevance to a contemporary reader of prose fiction. One reason for the use of such devices, and one that will become apparent during the course of this book, could be that a visual device may add

an extra layer or mode of signification to the semantic content of a novel, further increasing the double meanings of the linguistic sign. Another could be its usefulness for writers in attempting to represent the complexities of internal realities: for example, why would a character's thought be represented in a conventionally structured paragraph? Visual devices are one way of attempting to portray the fragmented and non-chronological way in which cognition operates. In many ways they are an extension of stylistic literary choices from earlier in the twentieth century, such as stream of consciousness, though they pre-date even modernism's stylistic and formal experimentations. First and foremost, visual devices on the pages of prose fiction help to present and supplement linguistic representation and the generation of meaning.

The French *nouvelle roman* and Oulipo movements during the 1960s and 70s challenged the form of the novel as much as the novels featured in this book. Alain Robbe-Grillet's *In the Labyrinth* (1959) and Georges Perec's *Life: A User's Manual* (1987) from this period are two novels that help to illustrate this move towards a desire for a new type of novel. Both are outside the scope of this book which focuses on texts written and designed for reading in English. The choice to use only British and American works of prose fiction has been made for two central reasons: firstly, to present analyses of these devices in these works of prose within a certain and defined scope, and secondly to avoid any possible misinterpretations with works that are in translation. Critical studies that study these devices in works in other languages should be encouraged, for this book can only offer a restricted, not an exhaustive, look at these visual devices.

Critical works (such as McHale, 1987) have often avoided or quickly dismissed the graphic elements of novels and it has already been suggested that it is the lack of critical terminology that makes critics avoid or marginalise such visceral aspects of the page (see also White, 2005, p. 2). This book aims to begin and assist with the development of such terms by comparing visual devices in the context of the narratives that include them and the effect that they have on the reading process. This critical language will have to work across the boundaries of a variety of theoretical approaches to text. Poststructuralist conceptions of text (Derrida, Barthes) and the much earlier work of the Russian Formalists (Shklovsky, Eichenbaum) are two such approaches, but it is also worth looking further afield to criticism of comic books or graphic novels (Eisner, McCloud) as mentioned earlier, a type of text that utilises a combination of words and pictures and has also been critically marginalised and often dismissed in a similar way.

Poetry does not fall within the scope of this book. This is a deliberate and considered choice. There has already been a significant amount of academic scholarship on the concrete poetry and calligrams of poets such as Mallarmé and Apollinaire in, for example, Johanna Drucker's informative *The Visible Word* (1994) and Richard Bradford's *Graphic Poetics: Poetry as Visual Art* (2011). To widen the scope of this book to poetry would dilute the argument as the formal context of prose is vitally important in the analysis of its visual devices; it is their effect on narrative that is most interesting here. Parallels can be drawn between the analysis of poetry and the work on textual arrangements that can be found in Chapter 3. Overall, this book wishes to demonstrate that the visual elements of some novels can be considered in the same depth as those in poetry.

Nevertheless, there is no intention to argue that the texts covered here are, in any way, 'better' than any other types of literary text. There are no comparisons of value to be made in this study. Elements of all the novels featured here can be found in earlier novels. These texts draw attention to the potential of the page in the novel form. The novels used here are not a revolution that shakes the foundation of literature or literary studies but they *are* worth the academic scholarship that they have previously been denied in some quarters. They deserve more than being marginalised as (incorrectly assumed) 'difficult' texts because they help us to better understand the reading process, the form of the book and its relationship to narrative.

To encompass the topic means looking at the current state of literature whilst acknowledging that it does not appear in a visual vacuum (books have always looked different from period to period because of changing printing techniques). We should avoid tying works of fiction that feature unusual visual devices to any particular critical period or movement, since, as we shall see, they tend to appear throughout the history of the novel, though our focus here is on contemporary prose fiction. The aim here is to make new additions to the critical vocabulary that will help to analyse these works and the devices they contain and only a synthesis of a variety of different approaches will allow this. Many of the texts featured in this book have been marginalised in the past, particularly works produced when the cultural and academic climate was unfavourable to them.

All of the examples of prose fiction discussed in my analysis have been published between the 1960s to the present day – a period of time often labelled as postmodern. While this study draws upon works from much earlier periods at times, the intention is to look at the concept

of visual devices and their effect on the reader, not to make a chrono-logical survey of them. Similar devices found in novels published two hundred years earlier may be drawn upon in order to strengthen the development of the critical vocabulary here and to show that visual devices are definitely *not* just simply a symptom of postmodern ludic experiments.

These novels are not necessarily more 'active' or 'interactive' than other texts. The reader navigates these texts in a subtly different way than usual but do not assume that this navigation is in any way more challenging than texts that do not feature unconventional visual devices.

A search for a new cultural paradigm is reductive and unnecessary, particularly in the wake of postmodernism. Critical analysis of the page does not require anything but a reader's interpretative skills. Whether a text is postmodern, digimodern, modernist, intermodernist, meta-modernist or realist, suggests nothing except the concepts and features associated with these. They do not help with the reading, analysis and interpretation of the text that concerns us going in to this study. This stance matches that of Alison Gibbons', who states:

> I am reluctant to see [visual texts and devices] as part of the literary movement of postmodernism and/or the epoch of postmodernity. As I see it, the turn of the millennium as well as the events of September 11, 2001, are the impetus for a paradigm shift, a fundamental change in the way we see the world and our place within it. As such, literature, including multimodal printed literature…reflects such a change. (2012, p. 3)

The previously mentioned critical paradigms and periods tend to ignore the graphic surface of the page in their analysis of literature, yet texts like Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759–67), James McNeill Whistler's *The Gentle Art of Making Enemies* (1890) and Gertrude Stein's *Tender Buttons* (1914) to name but three, were all published over the last two hundred years (and at least eighty years before the advent of postmodernism) and all require an acknowledgement of the unusual presentation of their pages before reading can take place.

1.4   Contexts

Despite the intention not to correlate the use of graphically innova-tive fiction, or more specifically, visual devices, with literary periods, or movements, some awareness and discussion of the Modernist and Late

Modernist/Postmodernist historical settings is warranted. It is worth considering the artistic and cultural conditions that have shaped the reconfigurations of the idiosyncratic use of the graphic surface of the page in prose fiction, particularly the shifts in convention and form that affect the Late Modern/Postmodern period in which the majority of the texts studied in this book were published.

This book will often approach visual devices by considering how they disrupt or destabilise the conventional presentation of a page in prose fiction. The reader of graphically innovative fiction can only understand or ascribe this designation with some awareness of the artistic and cultural conditions that were prevalent at the time of each individual novel's production, particularly when exploring how visual devices can 'disrupt' and destabilise the 'conventional' presentation of the page and by extension, the reading process. Many visual devices can evolve into or actively produce their own conventions of reception and appreciation; or else they can solicit a certain kind of readership or 'following' which is already alert to the conventions of what might have previously seemed to be transgressive, difficult or hermeneutically resistant texts. This section discusses the different contexts in which our key texts may be read and how they relate to our preconceptions about what literary experimentation involves.

1.4.1   Twentieth Century Literary Innovation

Modern artistic experimentation in the novel form begins in earnest in the Modernist period (c. 1890–1945). Often regarded as a reaction to the conventional forms of the Realist fiction of the nineteenth century and as a symptom of rapid technological advances such as the aeroplane and the motor car, early twentieth-century Modernism embraced technological change and (directly and indirectly) endeavoured to pursue the Imagists' maxim: 'Make it New'. Many developments of graphic innovation can be found in the posters and works of the time that experimented with typography.

After Modernism, post-war *avant-garde* writers such as B. S. Johnson, Alan Burns, Ann Quin and Christine Brooke-Rose attempted to pick up where the Modernists left off and developed the presentation of narrative on the page further. Johnson's works and Brooke-Rose's *Thru* are used in this book to show some of the challenges to novelistic tradition that were being made at the time. This period also witnesses the Oulipo (Potential Literature/Literature of Potential) and *nouvelle roman* movements in France, each one attempting to make the novel new for their time by pursuing experimentation at the *avant garde* of literature.

It is important to note that nearly all these post-war writers resisted the term *avant garde*, often struggled to gain a large readership and their graphic experimentation with the page was mostly rejected by the cultural and artistic hegemony of the time. The shift in formal innovation in the novel can also be linked to the theoretical development from Structuralism into Poststructuralism in the 1960s. The novels published in the 1940s, 50s and 60s often appear to be engaging with Structuralist ideas, the shift to the deconstructive poststructuralist approach to language in the late 60s was mirrored in the deconstruction of the conventional page and the move towards transgressive writing (for example in works by Raymond Queneau and Philippe Sollers) that Julia Kristeva notes is the default state of 'practice': 'The moment of transgression is the key moment of practice: we can speak of practice wherever there is a transgression of systematicity (in Blonsky, 1985, p. 217).

The period commonly known as Late Modern or Postmodern (late 1970s to present day), provides more examples of writers attempting to disrupt the conventional page in the novel form. The advent of digital typographic and printing technologies opened up many more opportunities for graphic innovation, particularly with the availability of desktop publishing in the 1990s and 2000s. With novels like Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) and Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident with the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003) came a new shift in the literary *avant garde* and the cultural attitude towards graphically innovative fiction that has continued with the publication of Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* (2005), J.J. Abrams' and Doug Dorst's *S* (2013) and Reif Larsen's *The Selected Works of T.S. Spivet: A Novel* (2009). All of these novels utilise the potential of the graphic surface of the page for new ways of presenting text and narrative to the reader and all became best-sellers (albeit briefly in some cases) or cult hits upon their respective publications, suggesting a shift in acceptance of such experimentation unheard of in the 1950s and 60s.

1.4.2   Printing Technology and Conventions

The starting point for analysis of visually innovative fictions and devices is how the particular example disrupts conventional reading and the conventional typographic placement of text on the graphic surface of the page. Technological improvements support conventional forms by speeding up or otherwise making more economical established printing practices but they also create new possibilities of innovation and experimentation (ultimately democratising this pursuit). It is thus worth considering the changes in printing technologies during the late

1800s to the present in relation to print conventions and divergences from them.

Until 1885, hand composition and letterpress printing were the main means of producing printed books throughout the Western world (Haslam, 2006, p. 210). This was eventually replaced by a type of printing known as offset lithography (1960s), a type of planographic printing. Planographic printing 'refers to any printing process that involves the ink sitting on the surface of the plate' (ibid, p. 210). Lithography transfers the ink directly from the surface of the plate to the surface of the paper and is by far the most common form of printing used today. By the beginning of the twentieth century, offset lithography was more efficient than letterpress machines and was ideally suited to the reproduction of images. Lettering and engraving were often reproduced lithographically throughout the 1800s, but books, being predominantly text-based, were not commonly reproduced using offset lithography until the 1960s. The years 1900–60 saw huge developments in typesetting lithography. Importantly, designers were often forced to consider text and image as separate elements because of the way each was reproduced, a distinction that the more recent texts in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries can disregard.

> Letterpress represented the principle technology for reproducing words, and lithography and gravure the most precise way of reproducing images. This division saw books printed using combinations of processes for different sections. Designers had to plan the text and image elements of the page around the reproduction methods of the period, and this clearly affected every aspect of a book's layout. (Haslam, 2006, p. 212)

In the past, graphic experimentation was difficult to achieve because of the pressures on the author by the publishing house and, more specifically, the printers. While in the vast majority of cases, the author of a novel often has very little expertise with printing technologies and leaves design decisions to the designer employed by the publisher, the author who intends to use visual devices in fiction has to work around the limitations that are present depending on the time that the author is writing. Since the 1990s, authors often have easy access to digital printing programmes and can now directly set their own type, using programs like PageMaker, Quark or InDesign.

While many authors have used these new technologies to follow established design conventions for themselves, others have seen

opportunities to make their texts distinctively unconventional. To identify an unconventional page will require defining what should be expected from 'normal' devices on a conventional page in a novel. For the purpose of this book, a conventional page of text is one that features lines of text running horizontally across the page with accepted 'normal' epitextual and peritextual devices such as page numbers and section headings appearing where they ought to (Genette, 1997). The verso and recto (left and right) pages of a conventional book will each have a 'head' and a 'foot' that may contain information such as chapter title or author's name. The main body of the text on each page will lie between the fore-edge and back margins and between the head and the foot of the page. The text on the graphic surface of the page will usually be in a predetermined typesize (except for chapter titles), and there will be a predetermined line-spacing and line-length.

While variations among standard publishing fonts might not affect the impression, substantial deviations from conventional page design could be said to disrupt or destabilise conventional reading processes as the reader who is accustomed to conventional pages will need to adjust their method of reading to suit the new design. As is often the case in many of the novels featured as examples in this book, each page can differ in design from the previous one, forcing the reader to repeatedly adjust their process of reading as they progress through the novel, and not allowing the book to generate stable page conventions (except those of non-conventionality).

The impetus to innovate using available technology creates, over time, a strand of literature flouting mainstream printing conventions and building on past divergences from them. While some of the readers of Johnson's *Albert Angelo* found the challenges to conventional page design hard to understand and comprehend in 1964, the readers of more recent novels such as *House of Leaves* seem more able to deal with its graphically innovative pages because they have possibly encountered similar devices in earlier works (perhaps in *Albert Angelo*). The conventions of the past (nineteenth century) have been disrupted and in their place more recent works (post-World War II) have generated their own conventions that are then disrupted by the innovations in the most recent novels (1990s–2000s). Novels such as *House of Leaves* and *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* developed such a following that their previously unique devices have become conventions that novels such as Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts* (2007) can use and explicitly acknowledge as inspiration. In fact, Steven Hall has drawn attention to his use of the popular Mark Z. Danielewski internet forum that is used

to decode and pursue new reading strategies for *House of Leaves, The Fifty Year Sword* and *Only Revolutions* (see http://forums.steven-hall.org/yaf_postst130_Steven-Hall-QandA.aspx, for one such instance). Visual devices can evolve into or actively produce their own conventions of reception and appreciation; or else they can produce a certain kind of readership that is already alert to the conventions of what may have previously been dismissed as transgressive or difficult texts.

1.4.3   Readers and their Limitations

It should be explicitly stated that the model reader used in the analysis here is a Western reader who reads from left to right down the page. Non-Western readers would potentially approach the page in a different way that would subsequently affect their reaction to the text. Furthermore, no quantitative data has been used to determine reactions from a cross-section of readers. Though valid, a data-led approach is not essential to this study and thus, it will also avoid cognitive poetics. Reader Reception Theory (or Audience Theory) is unnecessary for this type of narratological study, though Hans-Robert Jauss's theory (1982) is still useful. For approaches collecting reader data the reader of this book is directed towards Peter Stockwell (2009) and Alison Gibbons (2012). Cognitive poetics is a useful theoretical foundation and much of the subsequent analysis is interested 'in relating the structure of a work of art to psychological effect and cognitive experience' (Gibbons, 2010, p. 6).

The methodical approach throughout this book assumes that, as Currie states: 'reading, however objective and scientific, [is] constructed [by] its object' (1998, pp. 2–3). This model reader is an active, literate reader who attempts and who is capable of finding narrative meaning from visual devices on the graphic surface of the page in prose fiction. The usage of the term 'reader' 'will [like Gibbons] therefore reference a sophisticated implied reader, but one that, crucially, is seen to physically engage with the novel in an actualised way' (2012, p. 4).

The key to this book is the effect(s) and affect(s) of visual devices and the immersive and emotional responses that some of the novels featured can elicit. It has been suggested that the texts used as examples in this book do not necessarily produce a more active reading experience than conventional novels. However, the visual devices present on the pages in these texts *can* assist with the reader's immersion within the narrative and they can also help to elicit an emotional response in ways that a conventionally structured page cannot. To use *House of Leaves* as an example, the reader is encouraged to turn the novel around in their hands as they read it, mirroring the environment (a labyrinth) that the

main character is exploring and possibly assisting in the reader's immersion in the text. In B. S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1969), the narrator, and by extension, the reader, learns of the death of an important character from a single sheet of paper with only a single short paragraph placed upon it. This undoubtedly has an emotional impact on the reader (see White, 2005, pp. 116–17). In Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing,* when the reader realises that the symbols X*X*X*X represent the narrator's (and author's) deceased family who were exterminated in Auschwitz another emotional reaction is generated. These emotional reactions are acknowledged in the analysis of these texts while remaining focused on the devices' connections to the narrative.

1.5   The Reader and Visual Devices

The remainder of this book focuses on the relationship that the reader has with the visual devices in multimodal, ergodic and graphically innovative contemporary novels. The first question that many readers ask themselves upon opening the covers of works of graphically innovative fiction is 'How do I read this?', or, as White says, 'How…is the reader to respond to the text?' (2005, p. 37). Ultimately, the graphic surface of the page must be considered when dealing with the reader because 'it must be processed for us to engage with the text at all' (White, 2005, p. 39).

If, according to Barthes, to read is to find meanings, how does the reader of a graphically innovative text find meaning and, more explicitly, do these type of texts provide more or different meanings than say, the conventional realist (or readerly) text? Visual devices, such as textual gaps and unconventional textual arrangements, pluralise readings, simultaneously enhancing possible interpretations.

Barthes says 'To give a text an Author is to impose a limit on that text, to furnish it with a final signified, to close the writing' (1977, p. 147). What Barthes is alluding to is the freedom that the reader gains when the focus is removed from an authorial explanation of the text. Like Barthes, this book wishes to largely ignore the role of the writer in this study, for this analysis is interested in two things: the visual devices on the graphic surface of the page and possible interpretations of them. Thus, the focus is moved from a single, ultimate meaning towards a multiplicity of interpretations, 'In the multiplicity of writing, everything is to be *disentangled*, nothing *deciphered*' (ibid, p. 147). This book proposes to disentangle so-called 'difficult' multimodal, or visual texts.

Traditional literary criticism has always ignored (or always put into the background) the physical form of the book and its pages. The

following diagram could be implemented as a more accurate and radical approach to texts that utilise the graphic surface:

Reader – Book – Page – Visual Devices – Linguistic Signifiers – Meaning

By ignoring the initial observation that the reader makes and the challenge of the graphic surface of each page, critics have missed an important aspect of the reading process that can generate meaning before the linguistic signifiers enter the equation –the graphic surface of the page. This diagram chooses to highlight the significance of the reader, the book and the page before the attainment of meaning. Visual devices can work in tandem with the linguistic signifiers in order to provide separate representational meaning to the reader.

Johanna Drucker (1994) shows her own interest in the 'visual materiality' of written forms of language when she says, 'I believe that the issue of visual materiality pertains in the case of all written forms of language and that acknowledging this is central to placing visual language within the historical context of its production' (p. 3). Written forms of language possess a materiality that spoken language lacks. Therefore, works of prose fiction have a materiality intrinsic not just in the book form but also the text that appears between their covers:

> The application of [Saussure's] work to the very specific realm of the *image of language*, its limitations in addressing the visual aspects of typographic work, can be useful in shedding light on the inherent differences between visual and verbal representation in semiotic terms…Saussure had indicated that he believed a bias existed *in favour of* writing because of the way the graphic image strikes the eye as a permanent, solid object and makes a more lasting impression than that of spoken sounds. (ibid, p. 17)

Written and spoken words *are* of course, different. We must acknowledge that writing is only a part of language, but not, according to Saussure, something that 'obscures language'. Saussure (and later, Barthes), as Drucker announces, neglects the image of language. White also comments on this:

> Linguistics-based analysis routinely ignores the material aspect of any text, despite the fact that it is this materiality, the process of publication, that gives the text its communicative power through distance and time and allows it to be discussed by critics. (2005, p. 39)

It is this physical context that must be approached before any analysis of the narrative content and it is for this reason that this study will approach the 'look' of the page before it is read.

This book proposes a way of looking at literature that incorporates the *reader*, the *text*, the *semantic context* and the *material presence* and *physical form* of the *print-based book* and how they all play a key role in the process of reading. Form here is to be defined as constituting the book itself and everything that Gerard Genette (1997) would include in making the book – the peritexts and the epitexts – the pages, the covers, the textual content, the blank spaces, the peripheral related works and suggested possible images, visual and metaphorical, contained within. A move towards increased interactivity and self-reflexive recognition of the unexplored abilities of the form is a positive move for literature.

1.6   Experiments with Form

Philip Tew states: 'Formal experimentation serves to function as an ongoing perceptual recognition of the nature of things, for reality and consequently truth lie at the heart of the enterprise that moves toward a perception of the concrete and material' (2001, p. 11). B. S. Johnson begins the 'Introduction' to *Aren't You Rather Young to Be Writing your Memoirs* (1973) by referring to the advent of the first cinema in Ireland in 1909, opened by James Joyce, and he stresses the ramifications it had for the contemporary novelist. In this example, 'Joyce saw very early on that film must usurp some of the prerogatives [of the novel]' (p. 11). He continues 'It is a matter of realising that the novel is an evolving form, not a static one, of accepting that for practical purposes where Joyce left off should ever since have been regarded as the starting point' (pp. 12–13). Johnson regarded Joyce's works as the foundation of twentieth-century literature that challenged the conventions that had become associated with the nineteenth-century novel, conventions that he dismissed as irrelevant in contemporary society.

The novels featured in this book all share a common interest in distancing themselves from traditional, realist forms, at times exposing and parodying many of the traits associated with it, 'No matter how good the writers are who attempt it, [the nineteenth-century novel] cannot be made to work for our time, and the writing of it is anachronistic, invalid, irrelevant and perverse' (ibid, p. 14). Building upon this, Johnson identifies the problem with fiction and its conventional form, 'life does not tell stories. Life is chaotic, fluid, and random; it leaves myriads of ends untied, untidily' (ibid, p. 14). Practitioners of realist, 'Neo-Dickensian' fiction were contributing nothing to the evolution of

the contemporary novel. Art must imitate life and the realist forms are not accurate enough to do so. Many of the novels analysed in this book attempt to complicate the interpretation of the written sign, highlighting the disconnect between spoken and written language, and written language and images, and attempting to provide new reading experiences that may better represent 'reality'.

In the first half of the twentieth century the Russian Formalist critic Viktor Shklovsky's 'Art as Technique' (1917) stated:

> art exists that one may recover the sensation of life; it exists to make one feel things, to make the stone *stony*. The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived and not as they are known. The technique of art is to make objects 'unfamiliar,' to make forms difficult, to increase the difficulty and length of perception because the process of perception is an aesthetic end in itself and must be prolonged. (in Rivkin and Ryan, 2002, p. 18)

The myriad of different page designs and visual devices in the works that are used as examples in this book demonstrate a constant drive to find new forms and new ways of representing narrative in fiction, though we look at only three types of visual device in this study (these three types are expanded to include several 'sub-types), there are many more that remain to be analysed, such as the use of coloured text (see Faulkner's intentions for *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and the first edition of Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000) for examples). The reader of graphically innovative fiction has to overcome many hurdles that the reader of a traditionally structured text does not. This has the effect of prolonging perception; it makes the book and the text on the page 'unfamiliar'. Re-contextualising the written word can have a powerful impact on a reader. By incorporating unconventional textual arrangements and disruptive images on the page of a novel, the author allows the reader to consider the implications of the relationship between word and image.

Unconventional forms become 'a means of directing questions back upon the author's own ability to provoke his audience into reading creatively' (David James in Tew and White, 2007, p. 29). Not only do these texts prolong perception but by doing so, they require a more creative reader, one who needs to interact with the text in new ways. With reference to B. S. Johnson's *Albert Angelo*, James stresses the importance of this move towards reader interaction,

> For readers today, Johnson's bequest is that we remain cognizant of this interaction between soma and graphic symbol, touch and

> typeface. 'Disintegration' compels us to think about how reading has less to do with witnessing events unfold than with interpretation as an event in its own right. To Johnson, readers should ideally aspire to the acute self-consciousness which he himself achieves. (ibid, p. 31)

The idea of interpretation being an 'event in its own right' is of particular interest here. Readers of graphically innovative texts need to desire interaction with the surface of the page and consider multiple interpretations of it. The twenty-first century reader has never been more self-conscious, the literary reader even more so, able to make connections between the text they are reading and a multitude of other texts, always conscious of the difficulty of representation through the written sign. They wish to consider multiple interpretations of the text. Readers are often completely aware that they are reading a book and so therefore it is permissible to expose the mechanism (form) of a novel in the narrative.

1.7   Typography and Representation

Johanna Drucker asserts, 'The most potent aspect of typography's form – its refusal to resolve into either a visual or a verbal mode – raises issues which have not, I think, been fully explored in theoretical terms' (1994, p. 4). Drucker has already partly achieved this in her book, but this study intends to expand upon these issues and move towards other critically neglected aspects of the page that refuse to be 'resolved into either a visual or a verbal mode'. Drucker accepts that critical interest in poetics and materiality at the time of her publication (1994) had increased but that her intention 'has been to make a start at defining an adequate theoretical basis specifically concerned with the analysis of typographic practice' (ibid, p. 4).

The visual artistry of prose can be used to challenge typographic conventions and assist representation. The interest in the visual sign and its location on the graphic surface of the page can drastically alter representation and interpretation. White says: 'I would like to call approaches to literary representation through the graphic surface *graphic mimesis*' (2005, p. 91). 'Graphic mimesis' is representation that occurs directly on the graphic surface of the page through the implementation of a visual device in a print book. It can point the reader towards the physical artefact's manifestation that they hold in their hands and provide a more effective representation of the complexities of internal realities. This is a fundamental technique and explains how typographic layout

can result in multiple interpretations: combining the semantic content and narrative and the visual image that it may be arranged to depict.

One of the most important things to note during this argument is the context in which these devices are presented. Visual devices *must* be analysed contextually, as any attempt to include such a device for purely aesthetic purposes would be irrelevant for representation purposes. These devices appear to function in ways that meaningfully enhance or develop the narrative and the reading process. To succeed in enhancing the interpretation of a fiction, the device must be supplementary, or even, interdependent with the narrative. Drucker says that,

> straddling the border between these [*art and literature*] realms, typographic experiment embodies the synaesthetic investigations of many early twentieth century artists and poets. The challenge put forth by these complex aesthetical projects was to develop a critical method which was not derived exclusively from either literary criticism or visual arts theory and which would build on the sources and positions that had informed the original typographic work. (1994, p. 2)

Again, this quotation refers to the novel's inability to distinguish between the verbal and visual modes, instead creating hybrid forms that prompt the reader to question the value of both words and pictures. As such, looking to literary criticism exclusively for a methodology on which to base this work is a limited strategy. When visual devices work most effectively, they are able to communicate ideas visually and verbally at the same time, multiplying and extending possible interpretations of the written signifier. Drucker expands on this,

> Writing, then, though the very basis of linguistic study, was considered insignificant and invisible [in the nineteenth century], as beneath mention or notice. The indispensable adjunct to linguistic scholarship, without which there would have been no object of study, writing went unnamed and unrecognized. Not only were the forms and material properties of writing, or even of written texts, not a distinct object of inquiry, but its very *existence*, the *fact* that it served as language went unacknowledged. (1994, p. 13)

The word 'text' has origins in materiality, from the word 'texture' or 'to weave' (see White, 2011 and Stockwell, 2009). It is very important that we understand that text has a materiality, just like an acknowledgement that the book is a material object is now fundamental in understanding the reading process and our relationship with literature.

The visual devices on the pages of the works of prose fiction that feature as examples later in this book can be a representation of many things, but rarely spoken language (though, by extension, of course, they are). They are often representations of internal consciousness and occasionally a graphically mimetic representation of the character's external environment.

The unconventional presentation of text often makes interpretation doubly difficult, expanding possible interpretations of the signs present. At times, though, unconventional textual arrangements can actually assist interpretation by providing a visual image along with the signs that constitute it, demonstrating the breaking of distinctions between word and image.

Drucker suggests that:

> Typography can be analysed in semiotic terms, especially in the broader terms set by the Prague School semioticians, with its stress on the social and historical limitations imposed on a sign system. Even though semiotics is a useful descriptive tool for typographic analysis, it remains locked into its own conceptual limitations. (1994, p. 35)

Semiotics is a useful framework for the analysis of visual material on the printed page, though it is only briefly to be used during the analysis of works in this book. What we must take from this is the difficulty that written language has in representation. One of the reasons for graphic experimentation on the page is a pursuit of better representation.

One critical cul-de-sac that needs to be avoided in this book is the emphasis on defamiliarisation of the book as an object that McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987) often uses. McHale suggests that visual devices force the reader to realise the shift in ontological status and this questions the limitations and freedoms that the printed book allows the writer as a vehicle for the typographic placement of text. White (2005) argues that it does so much more than this. This book is interested in representation and the possibilities that visual devices allow for the representation of internal and external realities. It is not enough to state that experiments with the textual surface of the page in prose create an awareness of the book as an object; we must go further than this. The presence of the material artefact is one contributory factor to the range of complexity of what a book actually is to the reader. Textual manipulation of the graphic surface does create an awareness of the book as object. Yet just as an awareness of the text allows the reader to recognise the presence of the materiality of the book, the critic must acknowledge

that the reader and their book are embedded in a 'complex environ-ment in which the text is received, read and reacted to' (White, 2005, p. 1). The aim of a visual device is not necessarily to defamiliarise or to provoke an ontological awareness of the book. This is an effect of the reading process of any novel. The novels featured here provoke a new understanding of the possibilities of textual narrative but they remain concerned with the traditional ideas of representation and story-telling.

It is important that the critic engages with the visual aspects of the graphic surface of the page in literature, as it is the part they tackle first. The visual devices *form* the narrative and dictate how we interpret it.

1.8   Conclusions

The books that are subsequently discussed do not follow the 'conven-tions that arrange text, the printed word, on a page in a book in the traditional, neutral way' (White, 2005, p. 1). These books prioritise the visual possibilities of the graphic surface of the page through the employ-ment of typographic experimentation. It seems to be a flaw in literary poetics to marginalise the physical form of the object that is being addressed. What is particularly interesting about the texts featured in this book is the way that they elude categorisation in twentieth and twenty-first century criticism. Many theories such as semiotics, cognitive poetics and reader response initially appear relevant but none allow the critic to adequately examine and analyse the innovative qualities. In order to analyse novels we must continue to develop new ways of approaching them that incorporate their visual nature, the construc-tion of the print-based book, their typographical experiments, semiot-ics, reader-response theory, form, and narratology and (post and meta) modernisms. In addition we must closely explore everything that makes the texts included in this book distinctive in their own particular ways. They are a combination of all these different areas and it would be a fundamental injustice to them if we excluded looking at any of the inno-vations that they employ. Many of the novels analysed here are often inherently theoretical in their design because they enlighten the reader to literary theory's fictional characteristics and the constraints and pos-sibilities of the textual form.

By continuing a dialogue with form, graphically innovative texts do not use, or create, sustained conventions. Instead, they continually change and keep the novel in a transient, shifting state by constantly changing its boundaries and always challenging preconceived notions of truths associated with the form. The visually suggestive typography

and illustrations in the works featured as examples here are a symptom of contemporary literature evolving by developing and enhancing its visual possibilities in order to incorporate itself amongst other, visually led cultural forms that dominate contemporary society. That is not to say that the novel has become, or should become identical to cinema or television; rather, that it has assimilated some of their qualities in order to effectively present itself to a contemporary audience. The novels analysed in this book represent the constant search for more accurate representation of realities, through a constantly fluid experimentation and a desire to repeatedly challenge existing and potentially exhausted literary forms. The reader must also evolve and adapt in tandem with these texts and it is the interpretation of the effects the page may have on them that are the main focus of this book.

2
Reading Textual Gaps

2.1 Introduction

Gaps, lacunae and aporia are ever-present factors during the reading process of prose fiction, so much so that they are all automatically dealt with by the reader with no disruption to the textual narrative. According to J. A. Cuddon, aporia is 'a kind of impasse or insoluble conflict between rhetoric and thought. *Aporia* suggests the "gap" or lacuna between what a text means to say and what it is construed to mean' (1999, p. 50). Aporia is usually figurative in prose fiction, the reader uses their imagination to, for example, picture the appearance of a character or setting or make connections between events. The reader has always had to fill in these gaps. Meir Sternberg says, 'The literary work consists of bits and fragments to be linked and pieced together in the process of reading: it establishes a system of gaps that must be filled in' (1987, p. 186). This system of gaps is thus a common characteristic of all prose fiction. Equally, blank space (literal gaps in between the text on the page) has always been a common feature on the page, in between words, in the margins, and at the end of chapters. In contrast to figurative aporia and conventional gaps, the main focus of this chapter is on visual devices that can be defined as being *intentional textual gaps*, or rather, gaps that can be found on unconventional places on the graphic surface of the page rather than conventional and figurative gaps that are 'filled-in' by the reader during the conventional reading process. The key distinction here is that intentional textual gaps fulfil a particular representational role while conventional aporia are an 'unseen' part of the reader's comprehension of narrative.

How do we, as readers, fill in conventional aporia? Do we use our imaginations to hypothesise about the main character's back-story, or

do we use what we find in the narrative to make realistic judgements about them? Sternberg says that 'gap-filling may be performed in a wild or misguided or tendentious fashion…but to gain cogency, a hypothesis must be legitimised by the text' (ibid, p. 187). How does the reader find meaning from the page of a conventional novel? Meaning, after all, can only come after the reader has 'filled-in' the gaps in the narrative. Sternberg says:

> To understand a literary work, we have to answer, in the course of reading, a series of such questions as: What is happening or has happened, and why? What connects the present event or situation to what went before, and how do both relate to what will probably come after? What are the features, motives, or designs of this or that character? How does he view his [sic] fellow characters? And what norms govern the existence and conduct of all? It is the set of answers given that enables the reader to reconstruct the field of reality devised by the text, to make sense of the represented world. Yet a close look at the text will reveal how few of the answers have been explicitly provided there: it is the reader himself [sic] who has supplied them, some temporarily, partially, or tentatively, and some wholly and finally. (1987, p. 186)

Like the conventional aporia that Sternberg discusses and like all the visual devices analysed in this book, an intentional textual gap on the surface of the page must make sense in context with the main textual narrative. The reader can only find legitimate meaning from it if it is confirmed by narrative. Intentional textual gaps can represent missing content and pauses in thought depending on the context of the narrative and the narrative voice.

   The questions asked by the reader implied by Sternberg's comments above are still operational in works that feature textual gaps. The main two questions to be asked in this chapter are 'How does the reader "read" an intentional textual gap?' and 'What does the gap represent?' Intentional textual gaps provide a different challenge to the reading process, forcing the reader to question the time they should take reading these gaps and hypothesising the possible contextual reasons for their appearance. They are *not*, however, more difficult to read than 'regular' aporia and still abide by the following statement from Sternberg:

> This gap-filling ranges from simple linkages of elements, which the reader performs automatically, to intricate networks that are figured

out consciously, laboriously, hesitantly, and with constant modifica-
tions in the light of additional information disclosed in the later
stages of reading. (ibid, p. 186)

The reader of a novel that features textual gaps on the page must still
be aware of narrative context, the narrative voice and the motivations
of the characters. We find that many of the examples of textual gaps
featured in this chapter are part of first-person narratives and thus, one
reason for their inclusion could be to represent the gaps in thought and
the lack of speech or dialogue. Intentional textual gaps are often addi-
tional or extended blank white space on the page, though they can also
be sections of tone (black or grey) and sometimes they are represented
by different marks on the page or the crossing out of whole sentences or
paragraphs, that of course, still can be seen and therefore 'read' by the
reader (an example of Derridean *sous rature*). In very rare instances, gaps
can be actual holes cut into the page(s) of the novel, dismembering the
page and sometimes allowing the reader to see the textual narrative on
the surface of the page behind the hole.

   It is worth reiterating how crucial it is that visual devices, not only
intentional textual gaps, exist within the context of the narrative of
which they are a part. The significance of these works and the devices
that they use lies within the devices being a part of the author's original
artistic and aesthetic vision. While the novels that are discussed in this
chapter are by no means the first books to feature textual gaps, they are
completely the work of the single author who designs and sets out his
pages. These devices *are* an equivalent part of the work and they *are not*
simply supplementary to the main narrative; they *form* an equivalent
part of the main narrative in these works. In this way they are different
to the textual gestures and visual images that are explored in Chapters 3
and 4. They are as important to the interpretation of the narrative as
the words on the page.

2.2   Aims and Structure

The main purpose of this chapter is to analyse the different repre-
sentations and manifestations of textual gaps on the graphic surface
from a reader's perspective. This will feature examples of textual gaps
from works of prose as chronologically diverse as *The Life and Opinions
of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759–66), *Trawl* (1966), *House Mother
Normal* (1971), *Double or Nothing* (1992) and *House of Leaves* (2000) in
order to conduct this analysis. The aim here is to discover, analyse and

contextualise different types of textual gap by exploring the effects they have on the reading process. Two different but equally important aspects are employed when analysing each example:

1. How does the page differ from a conventional page?
2. How disruptive is this type of gap to the conventional reading process?

To achieve these aims this chapter is split into four main sections, each one dealing with a different type of gap:

1. Textual gaps as extended or additional blank space (2.3)
2. Textual gaps representing missing content (2.4)
3. Textual (un)gaps as blocks of monotone colour (2.5)
4. Textual gaps as physical holes in the page (2.6)

The first types of gap are by far the most common in prose fiction: the use of extended or additional gaps between words and sentences that often represent pauses in thought in the internal monologues of the character. Gaps between words on the page have always been present in works of fiction, and indeed, are present in this work of literary criticism. When the gap between words and sentences is

    extended the reader must seek to understand the role that the gap represents. This questioning, like the other devices in this study, must look first at the context of the narrative. The reader is forced to ask questions such as 'Does the gap represent missing narrative?' or 'If there is no missing narrative does the gap represent a pause for thought?' Textual gaps as blank space have a number of uses that will be explored in this chapter.

    The second type of textual gap is often similar in effect to the blank space type, yet it seems distinct enough to warrant its own study here. Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* features a large amount of missing narrative, represented at different times by gaps between parentheses, crossed-out sentences and words, replacement letters such as repeated X's and lines that denote missing pages from a fictional original manuscript. The reader must uncover who is responsible for this missing narrative and why there are different ways of representing it. As always the main question must be 'how does the missing content fit the context of the narrative and how does the reader gain meaning from it?' It is, after all, difficult to gain meaning from narrative that is missing. A book devoid of words has no narrative. In *House of Leaves* this device is used to support the illusion of verisimilitude, in Beckett's *Watt* (1953), the device is used to demonstrate the incompleteness of the narrative and the ineptitude of the implied editor of the novel. The reader also has to

consider why blank space, monotone colour or even physical holes in the page have not been used in these examples.

Examples of the third type of intentional textual gap are present in Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759–69), Federman's *Double or Nothing* (1992) and Johnson's *Travelling People* (1963). The former infamously uses black monotone on two pages after the death of Parson Yorick while the latter features a similar, yet markedly different use of grey monotone (and eventual black tone) in between an internal monologue. This type of intentional textual gap removes the potential for placement of text on that section of the page, requiring the reader to find meaning for the block of tone. The examples from Sterne and Johnson mentioned above have two different effects on the reader, they disallow any conventional reading of text and they prompt the reader to find reasons for their inclusion – the death of a character in the former and the loss of consciousness and the subsequent death of a character in the latter. This gap is not really a gap at all (more of an (un)gap), but it does preclude the placement of text.

The fourth section looks at B. S. Johnson's *Albert Angelo* (1964) and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* (2010). Johnson's and Safran Foer's texts have holes cut into the pages of the book, allowing the reader to foresee future events in the narrative and highlighting the physical nature of the page and the book that contains them. Like the monotone colour type of (un)gap, these holes prevent any text from being placed on that section of the page but in contrast to that type, the hole can allow the reader to see the text on the pages underneath. This is an aspect of this type of gap that is utilised to full effect in *Albert Angelo* and *Tree of Codes*. The physical holes do not appear to fulfil a representational role but they do highlight the materiality of the surface of the page and stress the importance of the physical artefact in the generation of meaning.

There are, of course, many more examples of intentional textual gaps in works of prose fiction and though some of the examples featured in this section of this study don't always fit exactly into one type, extensive study has found that most intentional textual gaps fit into the four different types explained above. The following sections (2.3–2.6) explore each type of intentional textual gap on the pages of several novels.

2.3   Textual Gaps as Extended or Additional Blank Spaces

This type of gap often appears as extended or additional gaps of blank space in-between words in sentences. Extended or additional blank spaces are fairly common in graphically innovative texts such as B. S. Johnson's

Travelling People and Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*. This type of gap is also the most simple to read, the reader just skips to the next word or paragraph. They represent minor disruptions but are frequent in number. In contrast to the physical holes examined in Section 2.6, gaps as blank space used in these novels have a representational role and they often appear to represent the gaps in thought and speech in a visual way. Blank space often acts as punctuation in narratives that lack traditional punctuation marks. They often punctuate interior monologues and streams of consciousness and represent pauses in thought.

B. S. Johnson's fourth novel, *House Mother Normal* (1971) represents a continuation of the absence of dialogue and a more realistic depiction of gaps in oral speech through the use of blank space on the graphic surface of the page that are often apparent in B. S. Johnson's novels. The reader encounters the potential of white non-textual space. Philip Tew provides a useful synopsis of the text's effectiveness:

> *House Mother Normal* (1971) […] presents both structure and narrative as an intertwined experience where both its theme and approach create for the reader an invitation in effect to tease the full meaning from the text as an ongoing process. (2001, p. 44)

The narrative occurs in a nursing home for the elderly that is presided over by the notorious and eponymous House Mother. The novel is split into nine sections, each one presenting the reader with a twenty-one page interior monologue from each of the eight patients and the twenty-two page narrative of the House Mother at the end of the novel. Each narrative presents the same events, over the same period of time from the nine different perspectives, questioning the temporality of reading and the techniques that can be used to hasten and slow down the reading process. Each line of each page of each narrator can be placed 'on top of' each other to form the complete narrative of *House Mother Normal.* Each patient's narrative is introduced by an initial page of facts that contain the following categories: Name, Age, Marital Status, Sight, Hearing, Touch, Taste, Smell, Movement, CQ Count and the patient's pathology. The CQ Count is the most telling for the context of the content of the following twenty-one pages for each of the narratives. It is a method commonly used to measure senility and dementia by asking a series of ten simple questions such as, 'What year is this? Who is on the throne, king or queen?' A character with a CQ count of 10 is likely to have a coherent monologue. Conversely, a character with a CQ count

of 0 has a fragmentary, incoherent narrative with barely any text and an abundance of blank textual space.

Unlike in Johnson's earlier novel, *Travelling People* (1963), lapses of consciousness, so familiar with sufferers of dementia, are mimetically represented by blank pages with little or no text on them, rather than black and grey pages that replace traditional conventions of paragraphs containing text. This is also used to represent typical breaks in actual conversation and moments when a character is listening to another. The reader can recognise the deterioration of the patient's mental states through the interpretation and navigation of the textual gaps and unconventional typographic layout of the text on the page. At other times, the gaps represent the times that one or more of the other eight narrators are speaking and thus represent the current narrator listening to another character. When text appears on the same lines concurrent with other narrators in different sections, the current narrator is either thinking about what that other character is saying or is speaking at the same time as the other narrator. This is a fairly unique device in prose fiction (though Johnson made an earlier attempt in *Albert Angelo*) highlighting the textual space of the page and questioning chronological ordering of traditional novels. The reader of *House Mother Normal* must constantly flick back and forth through the pages of the novel in order to understand the meaning of the blank space, and they must try to understand whether the current narrator is either listening to another character, thinking about another character's dialogue or is suffering from dementia and simply cannot or does not want to speak at this point in the synchronous narrative. Each line of each narrator's twenty-one pages mirrors each line of all the other narrator's twenty-one pages. The reader must understand this technique in order to generate meaning from the narrative and understand the representational use of blank space in the novel.

Sarah Lamson, the first patient in *House Mother Normal*, has an almost entirely coherent and conventionally structured narrative in contrast to George Hedbury or Rosetta Stanton. Page 2 (p. 140 in the *B. S. Johnson Omnibus,* 2004) of George's narrative only features the words 'Lame', 'source' and 'unfr', the last being only a fragment of a word.

Pages 18, 19, 20 (pp. 156, 157, 158) of the same section (George's) are left completely blank, only for the final page of his narrative to state 'No, it doesn't matter' (p. 159), and nothing else. Rosetta's section follows George's and is superficially very similar in appearance, yet Rosetta's words appear jumbled, though on closer inspection the reader discovers they are in Welsh. Like George's section, the section features several

blank pages, but this time there are five, unlike George's three. Pages 17, 18, 19, 20 and 21 (pp. 177, 178, 179, 180, 181) are all completely blank, even the final page does not feature the statement 'No, it doesn't matter', that has become a convention with every other patient so far.

It happens that Rosetta is also the final patient in the narrative and therefore she represents the most mentally debilitated character. The final blank pages appear after she has a moment of lucidity on pages 15–16 of her section (pp. 176–77). She states (Figure 2.1).

Note the gaps in-between Rosetta's utterances. The reader finds an effective representation of Rosetta's fragmented mental system. This is then followed by a fragmented and stretched statement that upon closer inspection reads, 'No, I do not get any lighter, Ivy, I intend not to get anything anymore. No mor' (p. 176). The reader's potential interpretations are stripped back and the structure of the page dictates and possibly minimises multiple understandings. The subject matter (two senile old people) could be depicted in a third-person narrative, describing their actions and their supposed mental states; yet the stream of consciousness that *House Mother Normal* takes as a form directly includes the reader in the character's internal machinations. This minimises interpretations and effectively provides the reader with the only way they can truly know these characters, by placing them inside their minds and then ensuring that the depiction of their internal monologues accurately portrays their thinking through challenges to typical conventions of the novel. This extended and additional blank space allows the reader to obtain a representation of these extreme mental states and the complexity of internal reality.

House Mother Normal is one of the most successful texts at realising and representing the complexity, or rather simplicities for some of the patients, of the internal state and the simultaneous thoughts and dialogue of several characters at once. The novel as an artistic form supposedly prevails in its representation of internal forms, yet *House Mother Normal* was one of the first to actively explore the potential of the printed page and the text that is placed on it and how the page can be used to emulate certain extreme mental states, or to just simply represent one character listening to another character found somewhere else in the novel. This novel is very effective at representing the deterioration of the mind and its complexities. Even Sarah Lamson's section that appears at the start of the novel and therefore represents the most mentally 'aware' of the characters, features some form of graphic mimesis, particularly lacunae between sentences and statements that could
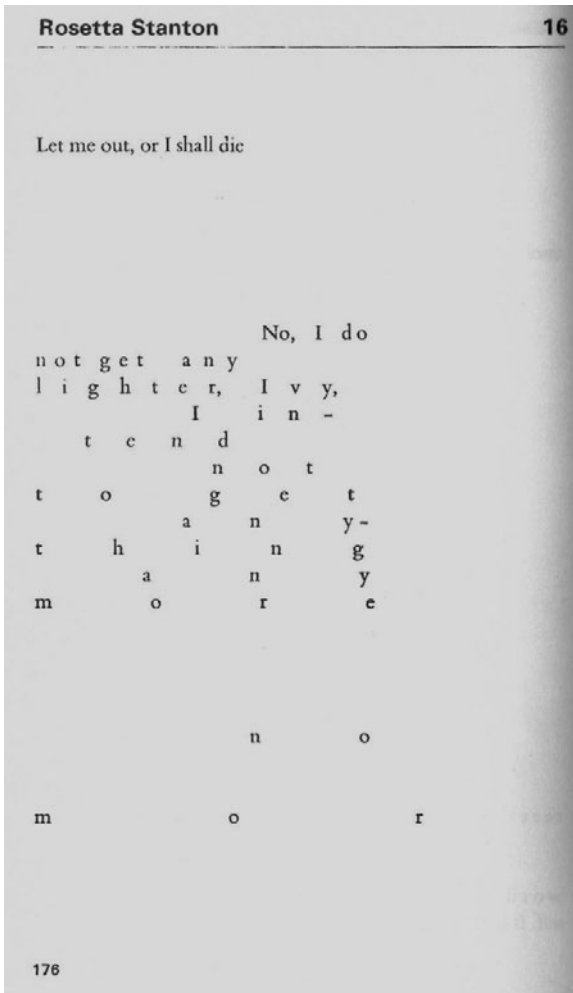
Rosetta Stanton   **16**

Let me out, or I shall die

No, I do
not get any
lighter, Ivy,
            I in -
   t   e   n   d
                  n   o   t
t   o   g   e   t
               a   n   y -
t   h   i   n   g
            a   n   y
m   o   r   e

                        n   o

m   o   r

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Figure 2.1 B. S. Johnson (2004 [originally 1971]), *House Mother Normal* in
B. S. Johnson Omnibus, p. 176

be seen to represent the workings of the mind in between utterances.
Dialogue in reality and mental states are never linear and structured
like a traditional page of narrative. Instead, a person thinks, repeats,
skips, digresses, and leaves actual gaps between comments to allow for

poignancy. A typical section of narrative from Sarah's chapter appears like this:

> Little bottles, what are they?

> Soak the labels off, I bet.   Use the bowl from
> the sink, I'll stand them in that, in water, would
> some soap help? *Do you want me to keep the labels?*

> My nails are broken, have been for years,
> but give the bottles a good old soak and they'll come
> off. *Shall I use a knife?* (p. 13)

Upon closer inspection and with further study of the novel, the gaps in this example don't represent pauses in thought at all. Instead, they represent Sarah listening to the House Mother while she is doing the washing up, though the reader only learns this towards the end of the novel when they read the House Mother's section and note that on the 'same' page, the extended blank spaces on Sarah's page are 'filled' by the House Mother's dialogue. This is an effective device: the blank space defamiliarises the reader from the text and forces them to take a more intensive read to ensure that they do not miss any vital narrative details. The extended blank spaces between words add an extra dimension to the interpretation of the page, one that more accurately depicts the scene in Sarah's mind and the events happening in the nursing home at that specific time in the narrative. The novel is ripe for a re-reading that allows the reader to understand *who* fills the others' blank spaces. Only by understanding when a character is thinking or listening can the reader really gain meaning from this unconventional narrative.

Johnson's fifth novel, *The Unfortunates* (1969), also presents the reader with frequent textual gaps or breaks in sections of dialogue and chronological time that makes way for considerations of interior concepts of time. The most prominent type of intentional textual gap in *The Unfortunates* is the use of extended blank space between words (ignoring the literal gap that the unconventional form of the novel takes – presented loose leaf in a box, in twenty-nine different sections that the reader is prompted to shuffle before reading – see Section 2.6). The section entitled 'FIRST' (and the first that the reader must read according to instructions found on the inner wall of the box) provides an example of extended blank space:

> I know this city! How did I not realize when he said, Go and do
> City this week, that it was this city?   Tony.   His

cheeks sallowed and collapsed round the insinuated bones, the gums shrivelled, was it, or shrunken, his teeth now standing free of each other in the unnatural half yawn of his mouth…because of what the treatment had done to his saliva glands, how it had finished them.   Him (FIRST, 1999, p. 1)

The reader notices that there are three extended blank spaces between words in this example, one between 'city?', 'Tony' and 'His' and the final one after 'them' and before 'Him' which comes at the end of this first paragraph in the novel. The first two gaps undoubtedly give significance to the introduction of the subject, that is, Tony. His name stands out in between the absence of text that surrounds it. The reader could interpret this as an interesting method of providing emphasis and significance to a linguistic signifier. While these gaps *do* represent the natural pauses in thought, they also acknowledge their materiality on the page and the effect that placing one word in between two gaps of blank space will have on the reading process. These gaps also provide the reader with the significance and emphasis that the narrator placed on his friend. The narrator pauses and thinks, then sounds his name, and this then triggers a harrowingly realistic description of Tony's physical state at that time, followed by another gap to allow for poignancy. The narrator represents his own thought process here, wondering what word to use for maximum impact and then deciding to use the word 'Him', rather than his name again. Instead of writing this and placing it on the page conventionally, 'how it had finished them. Him', the blank space that the narrator leaves simultaneously represents the actual writing of the novel, gives emphasis to the word, 'Him' and represents the internal time it takes to think of what word to write next, introducing the importance of time into the novel. It is important to note that there is nothing missing in between these words, and the text is not under erasure, the narrator (and implied author) just does not deem it necessary to set text in a conventional, neutral way, and so makes the most out of the potential of the graphic surface.

Johnson's *Trawl* (1966), expands this technique of measuring silence with marks that denote the length of each gap. *Trawl* implements textual gaps for measuring the silences that should naturally occur in a stream of consciousness. It also earns its inclusion in this study for its representation of internal consciousness and, for the representation of the temporal aspect of the act of writing and, importantly, reading. *Trawl* takes a stream of consciousness form with little or no paragraphing and describes the narrator's journey on a fishing trawler in the North and

Barents seas that he uses to make a conscious effort to describe some of his earliest memories and how his character had been formed as a result. Combining scenes in the present, with detail about the trawler and its crew with lengthy sections about his evacuation during the war as a child, his early sexual experiences and his admiration for his wife, Virginia, or 'Ginnie' as the narrator calls her, *Trawl* represents one of the most effective representations of interior states. The following passage opens the novel:

> I . . always with I . . one starts from . . one and I share the same character . . are one . . . . . . one always starts with I . . one . . . . . alone . . . . sole . . . . .single . . . . I (2004, p. 7)

This is the first time that the reader encounters *Trawl's* unique way of including gaps as extended blank spaces that separate words and sentences, except that these gaps, unlike the gaps seen in *The Unfortunates* and *House Mother Normal* (both novels were written later in Johnson's career), are different. The gaps in *Trawl* are represented by a number of periods, directly representing the length of time that has passed between each thought/utterance. For example, the first gap between 'I' and 'always with I', is represented with two dots. Later in the paragraph, the single word 'sole' is separated from 'single' with eleven dots, thus ensuring the reader understands the difference in the time that it took to think of each word. The subject itself is also mirrored with this style, as the narrator is putting an emphasis on the individual 'I' and he does this by having the words that signify this, alone, and separated from the other words. This adds an extra layer of signification to the word 'sole', in a similar way to the isolation of the name 'Tony' in the First section of *The Unfortunates*, found in the example above. The word, 'sole', represents the definition to be by one's self, or on one's own, and the placement of the dots and the gap in-between it and the word 'single' adds to the meaning of isolation, for the word itself is isolated from the other words in the paragraph. Textual gaps as extended or additional blank spaces appear to be a unique way of emphasising the double-meaning and interpretations of the written sign. The reader finds a similar example on page 25:

> So where has all that taken me? . . . . Nowhere . . . . . Where I was before? . . Perhaps. . . . . . Nowhere. . . . . Here.

The word 'Here' serves a double purpose, it is both representative of the current page and placement of that word on this page and it also represents the place that the narrator has got to in his mind, yet another

example of how this implementation of gaps and placement of text can extend the meaning of words and contexts. The gaps in this novel represent the silence in a way that allows the reader to measure the length of them in a way that the uninterrupted blank space in *House Mother Normal* and *The Unfortunates* does not. This section of the narrative replicates the complexity of thought, something that is not linear and chronological, but instead, fragmentary and multi-dimensional. This short paragraph also represents the sudden shift from memories of the painful past back into the present and the use of gaps could also represent this sudden, startling return to present consciousness, thus, signifying an internal ontological shift in status within the narrative. This device of interpreting quick thoughts can also be found on page 109:

> Oooooooooaaaaaah . . . . . worn edge . . . . . mahogany . . . . .
> worn . . edge . . mahogany . . ooooah . . . . . careful . . carefully lift
> head . . aaaaah . . not so bad, not so badly . . the head . . this morning .
> . if it is the morning

This is an effective way of mimetically representing quick, sensory statements that allows for an extra layer of understanding to onomatopoeia by emphasising the movements and feelings of the narrator. This would be a difficult section to represent with a conventionally structured page but textual gaps find a more accurate way of portraying the pain and lapses of coherent thought that the narrator may have experienced. The reader is forced to read the section as the narrator experiences it and is subsequently drawn into the painful event. The device is only a slight disruption to conventional reading practices, allowing the reader to quickly read these quick, short comments. The periods punctuate the gaps and the words. Earlier in the text, on page 21, at the top of the page, the reader finds an uncharacteristic (for this novel) break in paragraphs that also breaks the narrative flow. The last two words of this paragraph are 'Why? Why?' (p. 21), which are then followed by two lines of empty, blank space and then the new paragraph begins with 'Why do I trawl the delicate mesh of my mind over the snagged and broken floor of my past? . . . . . In order to live, the question does not need to be asked, for me' (p. 21). This gap allows space for poignancy and encourages the reader to join the narrator in contemplation and speculation as to his motives for writing this narrative. It is then answered, after another quick self-reflexive question, when he deems that the question does not even need to be asked, for the reasoning behind his journey on the trawler is for his own kind of therapy that allows him to remove himself from the complexities of his life back at home.

On page 38 of *Trawl* the reader finds another rare new paragraph beginning, this time related to the author's sleep. As an internal monologue, like in Johnson's earlier *Travelling People*, this drifting out of consciousness into the subconscious is represented by a gap in the narrative, but not as a block of tone. These gaps are actual absences of text; there is nothing in their place, unlike the dots that represent thought during the conscious narrative. This can also be found on page 95 after we read, 'Back, where I was, where I am. Sleep. . . Long sleep'. This is then followed by his awakening back into the present on the trawler.

A similar representational use of extended blank space can be found in Johnson's final novel, *See the Old Lady Decently* (1975). The reader notices the sudden absence of the narrator's daughter on page 57:

> Suddenly she leaves the room, not saying *Night Night*, and the loss is
> noticeable. I call her, she does not return. The loss is

Before analysing this quote, it is worth considering Philip Tew's approach to the same novel:

> Not uncharacteristically in Johnson's work, the narrative lapses into silence once more, foregrounding by a device the failures of expression and language in among the experience of life that overwhelms the desire to contain. (2001, p. 64)

Tew enlightens the reader on another possible reason for these gaps. He comments on the failure of expression and language to portray strong feelings and, as such, the usefulness of a textual gap for poignancy and the absence of a worthwhile word. Notably this is simply a gap, or an absence of text. There are no periods or brackets to represent this gap like in *Trawl*, for example. The extended blank space between the words is then strengthened and given context, at least in the first sentence, with the word 'noticeable'. This is then followed, later on the same page by:

> Another child had – but this is a distraction, the reader must be allowed to
> I must be allowed to continue with the important thing: creating
> a fiction. (Johnson, 1975, p. 57)

The narrator deliberates whether or not to allow the reader in to his fiction and the worthiness of his 'distraction'. The blank space represents the narrator's thoughts before he decides that it is much more relevant for him to continue writing. Following the trend that has developed

through this chapter, the reader notices that this text uses first-person narration, thus giving the gaps a representational use. This representation of the inner workings of the narrator's mind draws the reader closer to the narrator. The blank space in *See the Old Lady Decently* also 'measures silence' in a similar way to the previous examples in this section, the textual space on the page is directly linked to the gap in thought of the narrator. The gaps in this novel disrupt and challenge the reader to question the potential of the page and the significance of leaving text off the page.

Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* demonstrates a different representational use of intentional textual gaps, one that completely removes any text from the page. This singularly blank page in *House of Leaves* can be found on page 310 of the novel. The chapter in which it appears has developed a trend of fewer text on the pages as the reader proceeds through it. Page 307 only features the words 'The film runs out here,' placed on the bottom right hand corner of the page followed by an intentionally fractured statement at the bottom of page 308 that runs on from the previous page, 'leaving   nothing   else   behind but   an   unremarkable' (note the gaps). Page 309 continues the sentence that began on page 307 with just one single word just above the centre of the page, 'white'. Page 310 is completely blank apart from the page number and then page 311 ends the sentence with the word 'screen', again in the centre of the page. The final page of the chapter, page 312, has only an enlarged period, or dot, on the graphic surface of the page. The sentence therefore reads (across multiple pages), 'The film runs out here, leaving nothing else behind but an unremarkable white screen'. The blank page on 310 is the antithesis (of sorts) of Johnson's and Sterne's usage of black and grey tone in their novels featured later in this chapter. The outcome of the page for the reader is similar to the reading of Johnson's and Sterne's examples but rather than the presence of tone, *House of Leaves* simply leaves a complete absence of text. Text is purposefully left off it. The white screen of Will Navidson's documentary film (the subject of much of the narrative) is represented as a white, empty page in the book. The reader does not learn that it is a white screen until they have 'read' the empty page on 310 and then the following page 311 that states 'screen'.

Alison Gibbons states that 'the multimodal attributes of *House of Leaves* are vital both to its narrative and to the reader's cognitive experience of the novel' (2012, p. 46). *House of Leaves'* assimilation and remediation of visual media such as cinema is never more obvious than on this page. It is apparent that the most effective way of representing

the end of the film, even a fictional one such as this in a book, is to use a device such as this blank space in which the turning of the pages resembles the last frames of the film running through the projector. It is worth noting that the book cannot provide a reader with a visual representation of the moving image but here is startling at its attempt to provide the reader with a representation of a still (missing) 'image'. This type of visual device replaces textual narrative with a visual representation of an image, even though the narrative at this point in *House of Leaves* is attempting to represent the end (and lack of image) of the film to the reader. Film is broken down into its smallest possible form, the film cel, and a representation of these cels are portrayed by each page. The reader must draw upon their own knowledge of the cinematic form in order to 'complete' the text, something that is obviously problematic if they have no prior knowledge of the language of the form. Still, this type of blank space has the potential for representation. The white screen in the (fictional) documentary film is represented by the white page, narrowing the gap between the narrator, the narrative and the reader.

Intentional textual gaps as extended or additional blank spaces can represent a number of things, from the complexities of thought in a first-person narrative to a replication of an image that a character in the narrative sees. This is a visual device that assists immersion. The reader is drawn closer into the text, experiencing what the character experiences to some degree. This type of intentional textual gap effectively measures silence that occurs in conversations and in the thought processes of the narrator(s).

The next type of textual gap does not necessarily have a physical presence (or absence) on the page like the blank spaces on the pages of the previous examples. Instead it has more in common with the holes that are cut into the pages of *Albert Angelo* and *Tree of Codes*. The missing content that is possibly represented by the holes in these two novels is approached again by the gaps in the next section.

2.4   Textual Gaps that Represent Missing Content or Narrative

Intentional textual gaps that appear as representations of missing content on the pages of novels are different to the blank space that represents silence between thoughts or that help to form a larger textual arrangement. This type of intentional textual gap is rare, unlike the blank space in the previous section and it works in connection

with the context of the narrative. These gaps do not represent lapses of consciousness or silence. Several examples from *House of Leaves* and *Watt* will be used to demonstrate the affect of this type of textual gap on the reader.

In *House of Leaves*, the narrative uses textual gaps that show a visual incompleteness of the fictional primary narrative by the character, Zampanó. This is the text that the reader reads first on the majority of the pages in the novel and I would argue that the gaps in this narrative are included in order to prolong the mystery and to provoke speculation about the narrative. This requires some further contextual explanation. *House of Leaves* features four distinct narrative frames/levels. The first frame is a collection of notes and manuscripts that the second frame's narrator finds at the start of their narrative. This chest of notes details a proposed thesis about a series of documentary films by a blind, old man named Zampanó. The second person in the story, Johnny Truant finds these notes when he moves into his new apartment. He subsequently becomes obsessed in organising Zampanó's notes into a coherent narrative, forming the main narrative of the novel that the reader 'sees', entitled 'The Navidson Record'. Truant's narrative introduces the novel and continues in the footnotes alongside Zampanó's main narrative (Zampanó's in Times New Roman and `Truant's in Courier font`). The third narrative layer takes the form of Truant's deceased mother's letters to her son from her time in the Whalestoe Institute for Mental Health. This narrative is found in one of the many appendices to the main 'The Navidson Record' section of the novel (pp. 537–662). The fourth frame is written infrequently by the diegetic editors of the book that the reader holds, questioning and critiquing some of the comments made by Truant in the footnotes (and potentially (fictionally) responsible for the 'finished', edited book that the reader holds). This intramural narrative setup is a requirement for the reader's understanding of the novel and warrants discussion here. *House of Leaves* relies heavily upon its unusual combination of narrative frames to create a sense of mystery and incompleteness. The title page of the novel reflects this intramural setup, suggesting that the novel is the product of Zampanó but with 'introduction and notes by Johnny Truant'. The actual author's name is lacking from this page. Danielewski appears on the page preceding this 'fictional' title page. It appears that he seems to want to distance himself from the other narratives. While never anything other than a work of fiction, this title page provides an illusion that it *really* could be that Danielewski actually found this text and Zampanó and Truant are the *real* authors of this work, potentially adding a fifth narrative frame to the novel.

The 'main' narrative is incomplete from the start of events in Johnny Truant's 'secondary' narrative. We are told, by Truant, that his friend Lude lives in an apartment block in Los Angeles. At the beginning of Truant's monologue, Lude points Truant in the direction of one of his neighbour's apartments as a possible place to live, citing that an old man used to live there who has recently died in unforeseen circumstances. Truant enters Zampanó's apartment and discovers the following scene:

```
All the windows were nailed shut and sealed with
caulking. The front entrance and courtyard doors all
storm proofed. Even the vents were covered with duct
tape[…]Sure enough, just as my friend had described,
on the floor, in fact practically dead center, were
the four marks, all of them longer than a hand, jag-
ged bits of wood clawed up by something neither of us
cared to imagine. (p. xvi)
```

Truant sets up an almost typical horror-genre introduction, replete with the missing monster who has apparently taken his first victim. The narrative continues to undermine this genre stereotype throughout the text because neither Navidson, Truant, Zampanó nor the reader ever encounters any monster, yet there is always the suggestion of one just on the 'margins' of the narrative. What is important to my argument about the textual gaps that represent missing narrative content is the discovery of the existence of the scraps of paper and manuscripts that form the main narrative.

Zampanó's original manuscript's incompleteness is the reason for the textual gaps that form a significant part of the pages of novel. Truant tells the reader about the original form of the 'Navidson Record' in this passage. He is honest about his desire to connect these scraps, reams and fragments into a coherent narrative, though he knows not why he desires to do so. It is therefore Truant, not Zampanó, who is the ultimate creator of 'The Navidson Record' narrative that the reader encounters after this introductory section. The incompleteness of Zampanó's notes is the reason for the appearance of intentional textual gaps later in the novel.

A good example of a chapter that features this missing text in *House of Leaves* is Chapter XIII, entitled '~~The Minotaur~~'. Notice that the reader finds that this title is under erasure, it has a line checked through it as if either Zampanó or Truant deemed it irrelevant or wished to hide it. Still, the reader can see it like any other word and it is in fact emphasised by this very erasure. This is an unusual device and it simultaneously

discourages and encourages the reader to pay special attention to it, especially in this novel when what is missing is often more important than what is present. Alison Gibbons argues that 'Placing something under erasure creates a 'double play', obliterating the word yet simultaneously allowing it to be read, undoing and challenging its authority while acknowledging its significance' (2006, p. 1). This 'double-play' is reflected in the multiplying of significations that visual devices create during the reading process. The reader both sees and is told not to see the chapter title. This is not an intentional textual gap as such but it does include content that has originally been deleted or 'scribbled out' by the original writer.

The labyrinth myth features prevalently in the narrative and the always elusive monster's roar is frequently attributed to a Minotaur that must live at the centre of the labyrinth in Will Navidson's house (the protagonist and creator of the documentary films that Zampanó writes about). The documentaries allegedly (for the films, like the novel, *House of Leaves*, are purely fictional) show the Navidson's new house develop a new door on a wall in the front room that leads to an ever-changing labyrinth that Navidson and his friends explore. The characters in the documentaries that form the basis for 'The Navidson Record' and the reader never encounter such a creature, perhaps because Navidson's labyrinth lacks a centre. The roar is later attributed to the metamorphosing of the labyrinth's structure. The film apparently shows the explorers of the labyrinth becoming lost due to its constantly changing topography. The crossed-out sections earlier in the narrative are given more significance when we later find that much text is missing from Zampanó's original notes and instead replaced by Truant as parentheses and X's. We are told in Truant's footnote 276 on page 323 that:

```
Some kind of ash landed on the following pages, in
some places burning away small holes, in other places
eradicating large chunks of text. Rather than try
to reconstruct what was destroyed I decided to just
bracket the gaps – [ ]
```

The reader first encounters this type of textual gap on page 327 after Truant's lengthy musing on the possibilities of the aforementioned ash. Here this device can be compared with the use of the absence of text to measure silence and the omission of text in *Trawl, House Mother Normal* and *The Unfortunates*. In a similar way, the reader gains a sense of the length of time between each letter and word by using these parentheses.

The textual space of the page that is left blank in this example suggests how many letters are missing. For example, the first instance, 'incl[]es' can easily be made to say 'includes' if we reinstate the 'd' that he omits. This hypothesis would make sense in context with the rest of the sentence. Later in the statement, we encounter an entire missing word. The hypothesising reader could interpret this word to be 'come' by looking at the distance between the brackets and the words in context with the sentence. The sentence would then state, 'Through hard work, luck, or theft, Flint managed to *come* across some of the notes…', which makes sense. Later, the reader could fill in the missing 'I' and 'e' of 'br[ ]f' and there seems to be enough space for 'clinical' in the gap for the missing word before 'depression'. Truant states that he chooses to use these brackets rather than attempt to fill them in. We could say he does this to give the reader a more realistic depiction of the way in which Truant discovers the manuscript. It is also an effective way of measuring these gaps. In contrast to the textual gaps as blank space in the previous section, these gaps do not represent pauses in thought, but rather the missing content of a fictional original manuscript. This minor disruption to the reading process is easily overcome and becomes a puzzle for the reader to interact with. The reader is brought closer to the discoveries of Truant by allowing them to experience a representation of what he finds in Zampanó's box of notes. This technique also has a secondary effect of slowing down the reading of the page and forcing the reader to hypothesise in order to decode the narrative. Because *House of Leaves* has a narrative that relies upon its mystery to ensure that the reader continues, these bracketed absences of text also enhance this theme.

These bracketed absences continue throughout this chapter of *House of Leaves* but are then joined by another noteworthy device that represents missing manuscript and text:

> In Holloway's XXXXXXX, the relationship ended because he didn't [sic] the Varsity football squad. By his own admission he was never any good at 'team sports.' Her interest in him faded and she soon beg[ ] dating the starting tackle, leaving Holloway broken hearted with an increased sen[ ]e of [illegible] and inadequacy.

Upon referring to footnote 279 that follows these X's, Truant tells the reader that 'These Xs indicate text was inked out – not burned' (p. 328). In this single chapter the reader has found two different representations of missing content. They are represented differently by Truant because they have been caused by two different effects on

the manuscript, the first by ash that has burnt through the pages of Zampanó's original notes and the second by ink and is represented by X's. It is worth noting that unlike *Albert Angelo* and *Tree of Codes*, the first type of missing content is not replicated with physical holes but the parentheses '[]' fulfil the same role as them.

The structure of 'The Navidson Record' in *House of Leaves* is academic and scholarly and it is not trying to mimetically reproduce the complexities of an internal reality, rather it is attempting to provide a facsimile of found documentation (mimesis of product). These X's are also significant because unlike the bracketed gaps in the previous example, these X's prevent any text from being printed on to the page in that section. This is not an example of an absence of text (for text still appears on the page) or an absence of dialogue or exposition; it is a replacement for text that is implemented in order to frustrate the reader by omitting possibly vital details about the narrative. It is also worth noting that these 'gaps' of missing text/narrative also have a side effect of enhancing the sense of interactivity between the reader and the book. The reader must engage with this book in ways that are uncommon in traditional realist fiction. It creates an illusion or an emulation of allowing the reader to 'create' or at least 'fill-in' (returning to Sternberg's statements at the beginning of this chapter) various sections of the narrative, drawing them deeper into the fiction and blurring the lines between them and the character of Truant who is paralleling the reader's attempts at completing the text.

As Chapter XIII of *House of Leaves* continues, the bracketed gaps and X's increase in number. Truant, unable to locate the documentary films that Zampanó writes about, is becoming increasingly frustrated and unhinged. The documentary at this point concerns 'The Hol[ ]y Tape' (a pun on the initials of the book that the reader holds in their hands and of the 'holy, sacred text', or rather the '[w]hole text' that the reader finds missing). We are told that:

- The opening card displays a quote from Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*: 'The dreamer in his corner wrote off the world in a detailed daydream that destroyed, one by one, all the objects in the world'
- There are thirteen parts. [   ]
- They are separated by 3 seconds of white frame (p. 333)

For the reader, space has become one of the primary themes during the reading of this narrative. The space inside the Navidson's house that is

in a constant infinitesimal flux, and the idea of spatial awareness is also extended to the concept of textual space: the space on the page that is devoted to the printed text. After the bullet point 'There are thirteen parts', there is a gap before a bracketed absence that contains no clues as to what word(s) it originally included. In fact, it seems more than likely that there was never any text here in the first place (in context with the narrative) and this was a page of manuscript that was unfortunate enough to be burnt with the ash that Truant mentions. This provides the reader with an interesting consideration: do the bracketed sections persuade the reader to believe they are missing vital text or is it simply a representational tool for measuring the size of the burn holes? The absence of the Navidson's house in the narrative is mirrored on the graphic surface of the page. Absence appears to be given a 'presence' here. It would appear that, like the measurements of silence within the mind discussed in the previous sections, *House of Leaves* uses these devices to measure gaps in the text, be it with bracketed sections, replacement X's or simply with sections that contain no printed text at all.

Chapter XV in *House of Leaves* contains the transcript of Will Navidson's wife Karen's short film, 'What Some Have Thought' (pp. 354–65). It is on page 354 when the reader discovers another example of a gaping absence of text on the page. Here another device for representing missing text appears in an underline in footnote 325:

> Interestingly enough neither _____ nor _____, both of whom actually saw the hallway, ever provided any comments. Perhaps
> XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
> XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
> XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
> XXXXXX…
> (p. 354)

These X's (representing inked out text in Zampanó's original manuscript) continue for another sixteen lines, at the end of which is a link to footnote 326 which is directly underneath this section. Again, Truant writes this footnote. He says: 'Crossed out with what looked suspiciously like black crayon and tar' (ibid, p. 354). The boundaries between the reader and the narrative are blurred by implementing this immersive device. The underscored blanks that appear in the above quote are not such an uncommon device in literature. Many authors have chosen to leave the names of various peripheral characters

blank which has an effect of adding a realistic integrity to the narrative. Leaving the names of these characters blank, albeit with an underscored line instead of a name, is a device that provides anonymity for these people. In a novel such as *House of Leaves* this fictional anonymity works in the novel's favour due to the narrative's desire to only provide pseudonyms for the characters, and by leaving these names blank this idea is strengthened. It would appear that the names are chosen for their semiotic suggestions rather than nomenclature.

It is worth noting the importance of how the spatial manipulations in *House of Leaves* parallel the emotional and mental states of the characters that appear not only in 'The Navidson Record' but also Truant and his mother, the third narrative frame: Pelafina. We are told the Navidson's move to the house on Ash Tree Lane in Virginia, in order to bond as a family unit. Navidson has travelled all over the world as a photojournalist, not always shooting the beauty of nature but, rather, the poverty and despair of certain war-torn nations. It is one such photograph, the photograph of 'Delial', a recurrent mystery in the narrative, that is eventually solved towards the end. The reader finally 'encounters' this 'image' on page 421 and finds that it is missing or rather, absent. The reader never gets to view the photograph that has proven to be so fundamental to one of the major characters. Like so many of the other important sections of Zampanó's narrative, Truant and thus, the reader, never gets to 'see' or 'read' the complete text. The anonymous Editors, another narrative voice in the text, comment upon its absence in an accompanying footnote (p. 416). They say, 'Presumably Zampanó's blindness prevented him from providing an actual diagram of the Delial photograph. – Ed' (p. 421). Contextually, this works for the narrative but is at odds with the earlier narrative that also features square brackets to represent holes burnt into Zampanó's notes by ash. The reader is well aware by now that Zampanó was supposedly blind late in his life and thus, the actual visual image would not be available for him to 'see'. This gives the reader a sense of truth, of Zampanó's reality and the irrelevance of such an image to a blind person. The reader is persuaded to believe that Zampanó is the author of this narrative layer. Still, importantly, this image is fundamental for portraying the character of Will Navidson and such an omission would prove very problematic in a real academic thesis. This omission does have an effect though. The parallels between Will Navidson and Kevin Carter, the deceased real photojournalist, have been accumulating throughout the narrative. Carter is never strictly referred to but the comparisons between Navidson and him are strengthened initially when the reader discovers that Navidson

won the Pulitzer Prize for this image of Delial, not unlike Carter's own Pulitzer Prize winning photograph of a dying Sudanese girl who is being stalked by a vulture. On the page before this missing image, Zampanó provides the reader with a description of it:

> In the photograph, the vulture sits behind Delial, frame left, slightly out of focus, primary feathers beginning to feel the air as it prepares for flight. Near the centre, in crisp focus, squats Delial, bone dangling in her tawny almost inhuman fingers, her lips a crawl of insects, her eyes swollen with sand. Illness and hunger are on her but Death is still a few paces behind, perched on a rocky mound, talons fully extended, black eyes focused on Famine's daughter. (p. 420)

This intensely visual description of the photograph suggests a couple of the device's effects. Firstly, it immediately draws comparisons with Carter's own famous photograph to the reader who is aware of his work. Secondly it accentuates the main effect of this text. The significance of the printed word and the importance of the codex form of the novel are constantly referred to throughout this novel. Because a novel is inherently textual, the missing image device may be a comment on the irrelevance of an image after the description on the previous page. The novel is a textual vehicle and it should be quality prose, not image, that takes precedence on the page. It could also be a comment on the irrelevance of an image to portray such horror. The original Carter photograph is relatively easy to find on the Internet should the reader wish to make the connections and search for it. Because this image already exists, it is described instead, in intense detail, with photographic terms like 'frame left', to emphasise the importance of the signifier in printed fiction. Whilst this book is saturated with graphic devices and typographical playfulness, they never take over the text; this is not a picture book or a graphic novel, it is a work of prose and a celebration of the possibilities of the form in an increasingly visual culture. The reader of this text must draw upon their knowledge of other forms in order to fill in the blanks. The typical aporia of more conventionally structured narratives and books is replaced with a visual aporia that is used to represent fictional omissions from this fictional narrative.

Space is a prominent theme throughout *House of Leaves*. The textual space on the page is manipulated to provide a representation of the metamorphosis of the Navidsons' house. The title of the book, *House of Leaves*, is itself a metaphor for the printed, codex form. Leaves of paper are enclosed and contained within two bound covers, the house. In *House of Leaves* the reader encounters varying layers of fiction and

subsequent layers of possible interpretations because of the disruptions to the graphic surface of the page. As well as being a text with multiple narrators and narrative hierarchies, the ontological layers or levels offered by the inclusion of textual gaps and typographic manipulation to the textual space of the page ultimately enhance the reading process by multiplying the possible interpretations of the narrative. As well as providing a more effective means of representing Zampanó's tattered and torn manuscript, these devices automatically provoke speculation upon the meanings of their inclusion. The materiality of the page and the book is also brought into question. Truant is attempting to deal with material objects, pages, stamps and post-it notes that form Zampanó's notes. Rather than represent the holes, ink and black crayon or tar that litter Zampanó's original work with holes, ink or black crayon or tar, the reader is only given representations of this missing content. In context with the narrative this still works. The only narrative content that the reader can assess is the narrative on the pages of the copy of *House of Leaves* that they hold. It does not matter what the original material was like for the representations of it suffice and convey a sense of it.

Johnny Truant's status as a reader *and* the creator of the narrative mirrors the reader's experience with the book. This metafictional technique of using a character who is reading the text, albeit in this case not the same one as the actual reader, is a device that allows the reader to relate to his character and the events that occur within his narrative (in the footnotes). This device also gives fidelity to 'The Navidson Record' narrative because of the use of these visual devices. The omissions are devices that blur the boundaries between the reader and the fictional reality that they are attempting to immerse themselves in. Truant mirrors this action by becoming so immersed inside a fictitious text (the thesis about a fictional documentary film) that he starts to experience some of the same phenomena that Navidson also experienced in his (fictional) house. At the end of Truant's narrative his apartment is covered in measuring tape and he has boarded up his windows in preparation for an attack. He has stockpiled weapons to face this creature and he is convinced that the physical dimensions of his apartment are in flux. Graphic or visual mimesis is used to provide the illusion of reality to these series of fictional realities that are encompassed within the book. In her article 'House of Leaves: Reading the Networked Novel', Jessica Pressman argues:

> Whether or not the film is fake or Pelafina is the fictional author of the narratives, it is the reading process and practice that matters. Truant and the reader have learned to read across and around the

information network, and that is the important 'consequence' of *House of Leaves*. (p. 6)

House of Leaves is a successful contemporary work of fiction because, despite the ambiguities and mysteries of the narratives that the book contains, it is really the reading process that is being critiqued by the author. *House of Leaves* exposes the possibilities of the printed book as a vehicle for text and for reading by challenging the conventional graphic layout of the page. The reader of this text is given an experience that is challenging but enlightening.

The textual gaps that appear to represent missing content in *House of Leaves* can occasionally seem reminiscent of the purposefully missing content in Samuel Beckett's *Watt* (1963 [originally 1953]). On page 27 the reader finds the following omission from the narrative:

> He could not see the stands, the grand, the members', the people's so   ?   when empty with their white and red, for they were too far off. (p. 27)

As a combination of a textual gap as missing content and a textual gap as an extended blank space, this example demonstrates the notification of a missing word by a question mark placed in between the blank space by the fictional editor of the text. The textual gaps in *Watt* are attributed to the implied author's incomplete manuscript and litter the text. The reader finds two more similar gaps three pages later in the narrative:

> And it is to be supposed that God, always favourable to the McCanns of   ?   , guided her hand, for the stone fell on Watt's hat and struck it from his head, to the ground.[…] This was indeed a providential escape, for had the stone fallen on an ear, or on the back of the neck, as it might so easily have done, as it so nearly did, why then a wound had perhaps been opened, never again to close, never, never again to close, for Watt had a poor healing skin, and perhaps his blood was deficient in   ?   . (p. 30)

The blank spaces are always of a similar length on the textual surface of the page but they all represent single missing words, left out of the final submitted manuscript. Later in the novel the description of frogs croaking outside of Mr Knott's house is completely replaced by mostly blank space and representational words and hyphens. This 'frog chorus' continues for the next two pages, removing any description and text other than the 'Krek's' and 'Krak's' of the frogs. The gap between each noise is represented by dashes, identical in length, measuring the silence and acting as rhythmic notation. The reader gains no narrative from this

section but the narrator deems it necessary to disrupt the conventional presentation of the page.

Towards the end of *Watt* the narrative is broken by another gap that represents missing content. Mr Gorman and Mr Nolan are having a conversation until half way down the page the reader sees the following:

> Perhaps you are right, said Mr Gorman.
>   (Hiatus in MS.)
> Yet we cannot leave him there like that, said Mr Gorman. The five-fifty-five will be upon us – he consulted his watch – in thirty-seven and . . . (Hiatus in MS.) . . . in a lower voice, And the six-four will follow hard behind. (p. 238)

The two hiatuses on this page represent the trailing off of dialogue and the implied author's removal of what he deems to be insignificant narrative. The gaps on this page, like the X's and parentheses in *House of Leaves*, represent the illusion of missing content and narrative. Content that may otherwise prove useful for the generation of meaning by the reader is omitted, complicating the relationship between the narrator, the implied author and the editor.

Intentional textual gaps as missing content or narrative seem to share similarities with both the extended blank spaces in section 2.3 but unlike physical holes cut into the page (see 2.6), textual gaps as missing content are always used for representational purposes, (not) showing the reader what the narrator also cannot see.

2.5   Textual (Un)Gaps as Blocks of Monotone Colour

This section discusses the use of monotone colour and tone as a type of textual (un)gap in Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman,* B. S. Johnson's *Travelling People* (1963) and Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing* (1992). The three primary texts that are used in this section demonstrate the range of history between similar types of textual gap, over two hundred years, furthering the point made in the introduction that visual devices have always been an aspect of prose fiction and are not strictly associated with Modernist and Postmodernist 'experimental' literature. Each instance of this type of textual (un)gap in the three novels is used in a subtly different way, despite their invocation of Sterne's original use of the device in *Tristram Shandy*.

This type of gap is problematic because despite its affect(s) on the reader, it is not a gap in the same way as the extended or additional blank spaces or the contextual missing content found in the previous two sections of this chapter. It is an anti-gap of sorts (or referred to as an

(un)gap from here onwards), blocking the potential for the placement of text on the page but manifesting as something concrete on it (and so, not a gap in the same way as the blank space is a gap), usually blocks of monotone tone (black or grey).

Johnson's first novel, *Travelling People* (1963), follows the character Henry Henry (a naming theme that is repeated in Johnson's next novel, *Albert Angelo*). Henry leaves university after his finals, hitchhikes to Dublin and subsequently meets a man named Trevor who offers him a summer job at the Stromboli Country Club in Wales. The novel, through a variety of different multimodal forms such as script and diary entries, charts the humorous events of the summer from (mostly) Henry's perspective. Johnson's passion for visual experiments and his admiration of Sterne is apparent towards the end of *Travelling People* (pp. 211–27) when one of the main characters, the owner of the country club where the novel is mainly set, Maurie Bunde, suffers a heart attack, subsequently followed by another, fatal, one while swimming. The reader may note that the subsequent sections of grey tone, just like the black page(s) in *Tristram Shandy*, are not really gaps at all but instead a section of the page that disallows any inclusion of text. The reader sees Maurie's initial loss of consciousness as a grey page with no text and then his later, fatal, loss by a black page that draws similarities to the death of Yorick in *Tristram Shandy.* Note that this reference has become one of the most common observations about this book, yet it remains one of the most unexplored devices due to the unwillingness for critics to pursue the reasoning behind its inclusion, or at least its connection to the reading process. White says:

> Maurie suffers a fatal heart attack while demanding manual satisfaction from his mistress Kim. This is followed by two and a half entirely black pages. Contemporary critics were quick to spot the reference to Sterne's black page in *Tristram Shandy* (1985: 61–2). Unfortunately most seem to have contented themselves with this without examining how Johnson's use of the device differs from that of Sterne...We need to look a little closer at what is involved here. (2005, p. 92)

The reader first comes across the grey pages on page 211 (half a page), at the bottom, then to a full page on page 212, and then they retreat to the bottom of the page on 213 (two-thirds of the page). If the reader 'sees' the page before they read the words on it, the reader of this page is immediately drawn to the tone rather than the words on page 213. In contrast to the textual arrangements and the images in Chapters 3 and 4, the reader

gains no secondary signification from this device; its purpose is to represent Maurie's initial loss of consciousness. After page 213, Maurie regains his consciousness, continues his internal monologue and then on page 224 he has a final, fatal heart attack. The rest of page 224 is solid black tone, page 225 is fully covered in black tone (in the original first edition hardback this page was a separate sheet of black paper, distinct from the other pages of the novel, with a different texture) and so is page 226. Maurie never regains consciousness after this and 227 is the beginning of 'Chapter 8: A perhaps...' The initial visual difference that the reader notes between this gap and the famous example in *Tristram Shandy* is in the colour of tone used. Johnson uses grey tone before Maurie's final demise represented by the solid black tone. The grey tone is interesting because it varies in pattern. Pages 211 and 212 represent the first lapse of consciousness and the tone is reminiscent of the 'white noise' on an old, untuned television channel. His second lapse of consciousness on page 213 is represented by grey wavy lines suggesting that this blank is different to the one that Maurie experiences on the previous two pages.

A more telling difference between Sterne's and Johnson's device can be found in the narration itself. Maurie's chapter is written in a first person stream of consciousness and the reader is placed directly into the narrator's thought processes. So, what better way to mimetically represent a lapse of consciousness than by disposing of text and including the black sections that represent an empty nothingness (no-thought)? It is important to note that the decision to represent this using grey and black is significantly different than just leaving a white textual gap, because, 'This is certainly not a *blank page*. Quite the opposite in fact, since, although there is nothing to read, nothing may be written here either, unlike the gaps in the text representing sleep and dialogue' (White, 2005, p. 92). Maurie has died, he no longer possesses any mental capacity and he can no longer generate any thoughts. As a textual being, this can only be represented by an omission of text; this *has* to be represented by a black section that absolutely will not allow any text to be placed there. The black pages in *Travelling People* take up more pages than the two in *Tristram Shandy* as well. This is different to the effect of Sterne's device. The black page in *Tristram Shandy* is, instead, a tribute to the death of Yorick and a device that allows the reader to ponder the nature and impact of his death over the time it takes them to turn over the two pages. White also suggests that it is

an attempt to convey, as completely as possible, the mimetic representation of a character's thoughts through the medium of the

book. Unlike Sterne's black page, which forms a memorial tribute to Yorick, this black page represents, in graphic mimesis, the state of death itself. For all the novel's satire of Maurie's upper-class views and bisexuality, the black page here is a bleak moment that we bypass guiltily, with relief. (2005, p. 92)

A similar device to the grey pages used in *Travelling People* is used at the beginning of Federman's *Double or Nothing*. The pages directly after the dedication pages are covered in grey tone, though this device in *Double or Nothing* is not contained within the main narrative like it is in *Travelling People*. Instead, this monotone textual gap appears before the narrative begins and acts as a method of separation and an announcement of the beginning of the main narrative. This is then problematised by the following page containing just the sentence: 'THIS IS NOT THE BEGINNING' (that bears some similarity with 'This is not for you' at the beginning of *House of Leaves*). After the initial 'Introduction' or 'Prologue', the reader is confronted with another two grey pages, acting as a separation device between the sections of the narrative (This categorising is again problematic due to the unconventional pagination of these pages, starting at 0 and progressing 00, 000, 0000 and so on). Despite initially appearing quite similar in effect to the gaps as monotone colour in *Tristram Shandy* and *Travelling People*, this time the gap represents nothing in the narrative. Instead it acts as a demarcation of the difference between the introduction section of the novel and the narrative on the following pages, written by the second person of the narrative's four main frames. These two pages are identical in tone to the two pages that also precede the introductory ('THIS IS NOT THE BEGINNING') section of the novel. This example only represents the separation of two different sections of the novel, not the death or lapse of consciousness of one of the main characters, but it has a similar effect on the reader. No text can be placed on these two pages due to the grey tone that fills each page. This textual gap literally represents nothing and it differentiates structural blankness from where intentional blankness is found in *Double or Nothing*.

Textual (un)gaps as monotone blocks can vary depending on the narrative voice and the events happening in the narrative. At times they can represent the infinite blackness of death, or merely the loss of consciousness. At others they separate sections of narrative, replacing the blank space that traditionally features at the end of chapters before the start of the new one on a new page. All the examples featured in this section have one thing in common: where they appear, they can only preclude or block the conventional placement of text.

2.6   Textual Gaps as Physical Holes Cut into Pages

This section will focus on two examples of a specific textual gap in Johnson's *Albert Angelo* (1964) and *The Unfortunates*, and Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* (2010). There are similarities between this type of gap and the previous one in section 2.5 because they both remove the potential for printing text (narrative) on the page. This type of gap is also very rare, only these two novels have examples of it and have been published forty-seven years apart. Both these novels have actual holes cut into various pages, allowing the reader to see the pages, and the text that lays on them, underneath.

  Johnson's second novel, *Albert Angelo*, is semi-autobiographical, taking the experiences that the author had as a jobbing supply teacher in London that he used in order to fund his writing career, and using them to create a narrative about the main protagonist, Albert Albert. The text is comprised of five different parts: 'Prologue', 'Exposition', 'Development', 'Disintegration' and a 'Coda'. There are twenty-seven sections within these parts that are separated by a line of five asterisks underneath the text and most use a different narrative style or method, much like the differences in style of the chapters in his previous novel, *Travelling People*. *Albert Angelo* is saturated with various visual devices that often rearrange the textual surface of the page in innovative ways in order to portray various representations of reality. *Albert Angelo* features one of the most interesting uses of textual gaps out of all the breadth of his work, when, 'Under the line of asterisks, indicating the start of a new section, a text-width hole is cut in pages 149–52 revealing the penultimate three lines of page 153...the device allows the reader to see violence ahead' (White, 2005, p. 100). Johnson (or the printer on his behalf), makes a direct incision into the graphic surface of two pages, creating a proleptic hole in four of the pages. This device, unique in fiction until only recently (the aforementioned *Tree of Codes*), allows the reader to see into the future at the expense of the removal of a section of the current page. No text can be placed where the holes are, creating a physical gap on the page. Once the reader reaches page 153, they discover that they have not really seen into the future of this narrative at all, they discover that it is a death completely out of context, it documents the murder of poet and playwright Christopher Marlowe instead, as told by Albert after lunch in a garden with friends. This device prompts anxiety and anticipation of the death of Albert, but the reader is forced to wait longer in the text for that event to occur, and when it does, the text does not provide any device to allow them to read it before it happens. In fact, Albert's death/murder by the school children

is dealt with in a relatively short section at the end of the novel. This type of textual gap is one of the most shocking for the reader. Cutting directly into the surface of the page and removing the potential for text stresses the materiality of the page and the book and its importance to the reader. This device cannot be shown by an image of the page here. It is a three-dimensional effect that questions the potential of the printed page. Johnson engages with the purpose of this device in a debate in *Aren't You Rather Young to Be Writing your Memoirs* (1973):

> When a future event must be revealed, I could (and can; can you?) think of no way nearer to the truth and more effective than to cut a section through those pages intervening so that the event may be read in its place but before the reader reaches that place. (p. 23)

This is of course problematic, since Johnson's 'future event' is a ruse, a trick played on his reader. In the case of *Albert Angelo*, the reader is left to decide if a simple digression or flashforward would have sufficed in place of the cut out section. But in this case, surely it would be wrong to feature a digression in order to tell the future? David James says that this example, 'exemplifies Johnson's effort to coerce his readers to "think a little further" about the cognitive roles they assume when reading narrative fiction' (in Tew and White, 2009, p. 28), forcing them to become more 'active' and engage with enhanced interpretation that is at odds with some ultra-descriptive nineteenth-century realist fiction. The reader's active engagement in relation to the holes in *Albert Angelo* still requires them to read the page, but it does prompt a moment of self-reflexivity in the reader, requiring them to reconsider their expectations of how a page should look and subsequently how they should read a page with a hole cut into it. The obvious thing for the reader to do is to ignore the holes and just read the text 'through' them, like a normal page.

This type of textual gap reaffirms that the reading of any novel is an event, something that the reader must engage with. James states that the reading of the holes in *Albert Angelo* foregrounds the event of interpretation:

> For readers today, Johnson's bequest is that we remain cognizant of this interaction between soma and graphic symbol, touch and typeface. 'Disintegration' compels us to think about how reading has less to do with witnessing events unfold than with the interpretation as an event in its own right. (ibid, p. 31)

What is important to this study and in particular, this chapter, is the self-awareness of the reader in addressing the interaction that occurs when reading graphically innovative works. Physical holes, and by extension, all textual gaps and visual devices, enhance and multiply interpretations of the narrative and by doing so, foreground the act of reader interpretation, allowing for unique reading experiences that prompt the reader to question the process.

As an example of an intentional textual gap, the holes in *Albert Angelo*, like the gaps in the previous section, are rather problematic. There are no actual textual gaps as such because the reader can see, and read three lines of text from page 153. However, there is an actual physical gap in the page, cut into each copy in the printing process, and in doing so, representing the ultimate textual gap by removing the capability for the inclusion of text on the four pages prior to the section of text the reader sees through the space:

> What 'Disintegration' does do is make us reconsider what we have read and focuses the reader's attention upon his or her own hypotheses, and, since we do not wish to discard them having come this far, how they might be changed, adapted and readjusted to the new situation. All that 'Disintegration' does (as prefigured by the device of the holed pages) is exaggerate, and so call attention to, the working of this process. (White, 2005, p. 104)

This gap does not attempt a new way of representation, nor does it represent or replace conventional punctuation like some of the extended and additional blank spaces in section 2.3. The hole defamiliarises the reader, usually accustomed to reading complete pages, and it 'calls attention to the working of this process'. It allows the reader to question the role that the page plays in the reading process, and by extension, the original writing process.

Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* (2011) is another unusual novel that features holes cut into every page. The narrative requires the reader to read 'through' the pages much like in Johnson's text, but this novel differs due to the sheer amount of holes that have been cut into not just two, but every single page of the book, creating a palimpsest of different words depending on the reader's location in the narrative. In a material sense, like *The Unfortunates*, this creates a very fragile seeming object with the reader taking special care not to rip any of the pages in the book. The novel has been made by cutting holes into the pages of Bruno Schulz's *The Street of Crocodiles* (1934) in order to create a new narrative.

Comparisons can be drawn between this novel and Tom Philips' *A Humument* (1970–present). Both novels directly alter an older text and both are palimpsests. Philips applies paint to the pages of Mallock's *A Human Document* to (re-)create his text, Safran Foer cuts into each page of Schulz's novel.

   Tree of Codes is very difficult to read and requires an interactive reader who can proactively fill in the gaps. The reader, upon opening the book, is initially resistant to such a disruption to the way conventional novels are presented. Interestingly, the verso pages are always completely blank in *Tree of Codes*, with text appearing only on the recto pages of the book. The reader of this novel has to constantly look for connections between words and formulate sentences using words from the page that they are reading and sometimes several pages in front of it. This type of visual device emphasises the reading methods that a reader of any text often takes for granted, that is, the constant hypothesising and the resultant anxiety that any reader must take part in by reading a work of print-based fiction. This device mimetically represents this process, rather than the working of a character's internal consciousnesses that some of the novels in this study spend so much time representing. This device also exposes the act of reading and in doing so, draws attention to the physical form of the book and the capabilities it has beyond the placement of text on its pages in order to tell a narrative. In comparison with *Albert Angelo*, the reader of *Tree of Codes* finds generating meaning from the page to be far more difficult. The device is not (falsely) prophetic, like in *Albert Angelo*, and the reader must try different combinations of words to gain meaning from the new narrative. The reader of *Tree of Codes* asks themselves, 'Do I just read the remaining words on each individual page?', or 'Do I read "through" the pages and form the narrative from what I can see?'. This questioning raises awareness of the cognition required to read a text and stands in contrast with the reading of conventional novels.

   If we take the first page of *Tree of Codes* as an example of this we find that the reader attempting to read the page according to the first question above finds no words at all on that individual page, it is the only page in the novel to feature no text. The reader attempting to read the narrative according to the second question finds the following narrative:

   He brhoass, back rising and fall the mother and I wanting to s. over a keyboardless day. The normous r of grpaving stone had their eyes half-closed. Everyone clumsy gesture. Whole generations wore his

fallen asleep the children greeted each other with jar masks painted on their faces pain. With we pass; they smiled at each other's secret of The sleeping smiles.

This nearly incoherent narrative is everything the reader can see through the holes cut into the first page. The incoherency prompts the reader to attempt a third method of finding the narrative on the page. This time we will try to just read the text that can found on the second page (p. 8) through the holes of the first page (p. 7):

Ss, wanting to the had their eyes half-closed. Everyone wore his children greeted each other with masks painted on their faces; they smiled at each other's smiles.

This is still fairly incoherent, especially at the start of the page. It would appear that the first page's main affect is to shock the reader and allow them to 'see' through several pages. This initial disruption requires the reader to begin formulating an interpretive technique for generating the narrative in this novel. If the reader turns the page and only reads the text that remains on the second page (p. 8), they find that it reads more coherently:

The passersby had the eyes half-closed. Everyone wore his mask. Children greeted each other with masks painted on their faces; they smiled at each other's smiles.

Finally the reader finds coherency and generates meaning from the semantically correct narrative above. Following the same method, the following page (p. 9), reads as follows, 'Growing in this emptiness, wanting to resemble the reflections, whole generations had fallen asleep'. The text on the pages underneath seems to attempt to simultaneously throw the reader off the main narrative and provide extra meaning through the addition of words on following pages that match the narrative on the page in question. It is purposefully disruptive, reducing the amount of text that appears on the page and by extension, reducing the length of the novel, despite initially appearing to be a fairly long text. The form of this novel often makes understanding what text appears on the current page difficult. When the novel is held in the reader's hands the text that appears through the holes is difficult to distinguish between the text that only appears on that particular page. Only when the reader holds each single leaf of paper does the 'proper' narrative become apparent. This example

demonstrates how difficult it is for the reader to find meaning from this text and it is by far the most disruptive to the reading process of all the novels in this chapter, though less so when the reader understands the method needed to generate the narrative.

A gap of this type functions in a dramatically different way in *The Unfortunates*. This novel remains one of the most unique experiments in twentieth-century fiction, matched only by Marc Saporta's *Composition No. 1* (1962 [2011]). Removing one of the most restrictive and conventional functions of the novel – the covers and binding, the randomised narrative, formed by using twenty-nine individually bound sections that can be shuffled at will by the reader, ensures that 'the text *will* be different for each individual reader' (White, 2005, p. 116). This initially shocking ergodic device; the removal of the covers that traditionally bind a novel, has a comparable (though slightly different) effect to the physical holes cut into the pages of *Albert Angelo*. Rather than fulfilling a representational role, like the monotone blocks in *Tristram Shandy* and *Travelling People*, and the textual gaps in *House Mother Normal*, this unusual form that this novel takes challenges the reader to consider how the materiality of the book affects the reading process and the effects that a reader has on the creation of narrative.

Despite *The Unfortunates* losing its covers that would traditionally bind it (a rather large formal textual gap as a physical hole, we might say), it still retains a case of sorts, the box itself. The box coincidently resembles the covers of a bound book; a notion that slightly problematises and dilutes the significance of the move, yet the individually bound sections contained within the box still challenge our preconceived notions of how a book should traditionally *look*. Judith Mackrell also criticises the success of the experiment, she says: 'neither the form nor the material of the novel offers more than a superficial experience of indeterminancy' (1985, p. 55). This is incorrect, though I do agree that the indeterminancy is partially illusory, I would like to suggest that this is all that it needs to be. The reader expects a novel and one that is readable. To undo linearity would be to create an unreadable mess. In many ways, the challenge to linearity that performs a central role of *House Mother Normal* is started in this novel. In *The Unfortunates*, the challenge to teleology is always surpassed by the narrator's need to tell his late friend Tony's story.

The form of *The Unfortunates* makes it particularly difficult to approach as a reader. Theoretically, each individual reader will have a different reading experience, confounding the narratologist and the reader-response critic. The model reader used in this study will potentially have

a different experience when reading this novel to a different model reader. Mackrell paraphrases Iser, 'The work is, therefore, "realized" or "concretised" by the act of reading – "the convergence of text and reader brings the literary work into existence"' (ibid, p. 56). The plurality of possible readings is exploited and expanded, yet the inclusion of the first and last chapters at least provide the reader with a stable introduction and conclusion. Previous critics approaching this novel have used a system of quoting the first three words of a bound section, followed by its page number. It is also worthwhile noting here that each section varies in its pagination.

The Unfortunates also raises debate about how re-reading affects the act of reading, 'A re-reading of *The Unfortunates*, like a re-reading of any text, will involve the realisation of a different "time sequence" from that established by the first reading' (Mitchell in Tew and White, 2009, p. 56). *The Unfortunates* complicates this by being 'unbound'. The narrative and order of reading is changed by shuffling the sections. Therefore, any re-reading would require the reader to read the novel in the exact same sequence, something that this novel advises against.

The removal of one of the main components of the literary form, the covers and binding, is an initially startling and innovative move that according to White (2005) allows the reader to start questioning the materiality of the object that they are holding and the significance that it has previously played in the reading of a text, 'the limits of the bound book are exceeded by this novel and, while we might reflect on the book as artefact when we next read one, *The Unfortunates* is something different' (p. 116). The text *is* something different because it has no literary equivalents other than Marc Saporta's previously mentioned *Composition No. 1*, a text that even goes as far to remove the covers and bindings of sections and leave the loose-leaves as the novel, thereby complicating the notion and definition of a print-based 'book' by not having the front and rear covers associated with the form (though it must be noted that Visual Editions' 2011 re-publication of *Composition No. 1* is contained in a similar box to *The Unfortunates*). Johnson's return to the traditional bound book in his subsequent novels suggests that the project was not entirely financially or artistically successful, something that can pose as an answer to critics that question his lack of formal homogeneity, the publishers would not allow any more similar experiments.

To take an example from *The Unfortunates*, that demonstrates the affect that its unique form can have on the reader, and uses the graphic surface for full dramatic effect, it is worth considering the section that begins, 'June rang on…'. This is one of only six sections of the

twenty-nine in this book that is only one page long. This page has, by far, the least amount of text on it of any of the pages in *The Unfortunates*. The reader holds this single, unbound page and recognises the material fragility of it. The object, the page that is, usually contained within covers, seems so small and delicate in this instance. The narrative on this page deals with the occasion of Tony's death. This was something that we discover the narrator missed narrowly, as we are told that, 'there was no need for us to come down now, on Sunday, for he had died that evening, had not recovered consciousness that morning from his sleep' (ibid). This short paragraph leaves the rest of the page completely blank apart from the page number at the centre of the bottom of the page and the printer's icon at the top of the page. The reader is left to feel as empty as the narrator himself must have felt. Instead of the black page left as a tribute by Tristram for Yorick, or the black pages that signify Maurie's death in *Travelling People*, the reader finds the rest of this page to be completely white, emphasising the narrator's stunned silence and representing the emptiness left behind. The reader doesn't receive the narrative from Tony's perspective, so the black tone that represents Maurie's loss of consciousness and eventual death in *Travelling People* is irrelevant for this example. The reader of this page of *The Unfortunates* is left with a method for measuring this silence, in this instance, a respectful silence of remembrance for the author's friend. The form of this section of the narrative, as a formal hole, is used here to signify the insignificance of words to portray the emotion felt by an individual after somebody close to them dies. The paragraph features no gaps within it, yet the remaining absence of text after it and on the back of the page, and its disconnection with the rest of the book when the reader holds it, has no need to comment upon the randomness and fragmentary characteristics of internal reality, the narrator seems to remember the instant he received June's phone call exactly and transcribes it as such. The materiality of the object that the reader holds signifies the fragility of life and the reader is left to consider the potential and the affect of such a unique presentation.

Textual gaps as physical holes are one of the most surprising types of visual device for the reader to find. This is because, traditionally, the page of a book is a physical space for the placement of text and, occasionally, illustrations. A hole cut into the page, or the removal of the pages from the covers of the book, seems like an attack on the form itself, disrupting and defamiliarising the reading process and removing the possibility for the placement of text on that section of the page. The reader is forced to question the materiality of the book and the

paratextual elements that give it form. Attacks on the pages of *Albert Angelo, The Unfortunates* and *Tree of Codes* become a type of dismemberment of the physical book and not knowing what depth to read at in *Tree of Codes* also becomes not knowing what order to read in as well. The physical gaps in *Albert Angelo, The Unfortunates* and *Tree of Codes* don't always fulfil a representational role and they don't always mimic events in the narrative. *The Unfortunates* is the exception to this, 'sifting' through the sections that make up the novel and the single page that tells the narrator, and the reader, of Tony's death represents the fragmented and delicate nature of life itself.

2.7   Conclusions

There are a few implications left to consider after this exploration of the different types of intentional textual gaps. It is worth returning to the two core questions of this chapter:

1. How does the page differ from a conventional page?
2. How disruptive is this type of intentional textual gap to the conventional reading process?

Firstly, we must acknowledge that intentional textual gaps occur on the graphic surface of the page. Unlike the other types of visual device, intentional textual gaps represent the absence of content as opposed to representations of events in the narrative, though they may still have a representational role to play. Gaps can be used to measure the moments of silence and the pauses in between utterances, thereby providing the reader with a more realistic depiction of internal realities and sections of dialogue between characters (in *Trawl* and *House Mother Normal* for example). The gaps can be used as a substitute for something else: they are often used to represent a fictional missing section or word of an original metafictional manuscript (in *House of Leaves*). They can play a part in the unconventional placement of text on the page, occasionally for the representation of an image, and they provide the author with a method of visually emulating internal or external realities. The omission of a name or a gap in the place of an expected name can provide the author with a device to suggest anonymity to that character. These devices also act as a way of enhancing speculation and interaction between the reader and the text. Some gaps show the novel's possibilities for representing internal consciousnesses, and the gaps in *House of Leaves* provide an emulation, or gesture towards the fictional 'found' text (offering a mimesis of product).

Intentional textual gaps can be used to effectively represent internal realities within internal monologues in fictions, and are used in more conventional third-person narratives. In these cases, these devices provide a way for an author to increase the immersion and interactivity of the reader by helping to blur the lines between the reader's ontological reality and the fictional reality that they are engaging with whilst reading the text. What is most apparent from this analysis is that whether they are attempting to represent internal or external realities, textual gaps and visual devices seem to be very useful for measuring and representing silences and visual aporia. These gaps allow the reader to 'visualise' these omissions and absences of text and provide a platform for an author to choose not to include any text so as to more effectively represent a more relevant mode of consciousness. Rather than leave blank space without text, these authors often substitute the missing word with a visual device – a dot, an underline, another 'place-card' letter, a block of tone or bracketed gaps that all represent the length of time that occurs between these thoughts or utterances. This has one effect of allowing the reader to be drawn 'closer' to the original manuscript and to believe in it. For example, what is apparent in *House of Leaves* is that there was never an original 'Navidson Record' thesis and the way it is presented to the reader from Truant's assemblage of Zampanó's tattered notes is actually the only version of this text.

Visualising the text, or to be more specific, textualising the visual, in *House of Leaves* and the other novels featured in this chapter appears to be of importance to these authors. In *House of Leaves* these devices are used to represent the state of Zampanó's tattered manuscript, in *Trawl* and *Double or Nothing*, these devices are used as a way of measuring the gaps between utterances and thoughts in internal monologues. The difference between *House of Leaves*, *Trawl* and *Double or Nothing* is that there is nothing 'missing' in the latter two's internal monologue centred narratives. The blanks in *House of Leaves* offer a semiotic metalanguage of sorts. Each type of intentional textual gap possesses a slightly different meaning dependent on the context of its placement in the narrative. *House of Leaves* represents omissions of text through this metalanguage, for example, bracketed gaps for holes made by 'ash', boldened X's for holes and text that is seemingly erased by 'black crayon or tar', and underlined blanks that provide an extra layer of anonymity to appropriate footnote references.

All these types of intentional textual gaps disrupt the reading process in some way or another. Sometimes, as is the case with physical holes, these disruptions can prove to be surprising, removing the matter of

books – the page themselves. In other cases, and in comparison with some of the visual devices found in Chapters 3 and 4 of this book, many types of textual gap create a relatively minor disruption, often simply requiring the reader to navigate blank space between words and then questioning the meaning for that device. Often the primary texts featured in this chapter only feature one type of textual gap, ensuring that once the reader understands the purpose of that gap they can gain added meaning from the rest of the narrative. The disruption to the reading process is minimal, but the secondary signification or new type of representation that the reader gains from their appearance extends the possibilities for interpretation and requires a new way of looking at the page of a novel.

3
Textual Gestures: Iconic Text and Narrative

3.1 Introduction

Upon turning to a page featuring many unusual visual devices, or high multimodality, the Western reader's conventional methods of approaching narrative are challenged, defamiliarised and disrupted to varying degrees. Instead of reading sentences from left to right and from the top to the bottom of the page, some novels require the reader to turn the book upside down, on its side and to decode images that are constructed by the placement of the words on the page and vice versa. When viewing such a page for the first time the reader has to ask themselves a number of questions, primarily, 'How do I read this?' The act of reading becomes defamiliarised, the physicality of the text, the page and the book is foregrounded and the reader has to find new ways of interpreting the page to find meaning. When text is arranged on the page in a way that visually gestures towards something else, the potential interpretations of the linguistic signifier are also multiplied. The textual arrangement becomes another mode of signification for the reader to find meaning and new methods of representation need to be considered.

This can only happen because text is inherently visual in the first place. Roy Harris states that, 'writing is an extension of drawing, or more generally of graphic art' (1986, pp. 25–6). First and foremost, printed words and sentences are static, graphic images in graphic space that can be manipulated to convey information. Text can be arranged on the page to form representational cues and gestures that not only continue the narrative but also form an image from which the reader can gain additional meaning. This chapter analyses and classifies different typographic arrangements (or textual gestures) in context of the

narrative that they appear within, focusing on the way(s) that they affect reading and mimesis.

3.2 Aims and Structure

The novels that were featured in the previous chapter ('Reading Textual Gaps') often sought out more effective methods of representing consciousness and realities through extended and additional areas of blank space, blocks of tone, and holes cut into the pages. Rather than reduce these variations from traditional narrative conventions to postmodern 'gimmicks' and 'novelties', or even worse, publisher's 'USPs', it is necessary to continue to break down and unpack various types of visual device. There has been, as Drucker notes, 'a relative paucity of materials dealing with the typographic activity in any serious or systematic manner – especially by contrast to the veritable industry of publications on the visual art and literature' (1994, p. 4). Beyond discourse on graphic design and visual art (see Poyner, 2003), the significance of typography in fiction has been widely disregarded by critics, particularly in relation to the narrative use of textual gestures, images and arrangements. There are a few notable exceptions to this, and it is worth acknowledging the significance of Nina Norgaard's work in this area in particular.

Approaching visual texts and devices from a multimodal perspective, Norgaard (2009b) posits three different semiotic principles of typographic meaning (developed from Pierce's concepts of icon and index (in Chandler, 2002)): the iconic meaning (the shape and design of the text on the page, e.g. bold capital letters for shouted dialogue), the indexical meaning ('the look of the writing invokes the material origin of its own coming into being' (Norgaard, 2009b, p. 149)), and the discursive import (the history and connotations of a particular font, e.g. the use of Courier to suggest 'typewritten' in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000)). Norgaard's attempt at producing a 'grammar' of typography mirrors the intentions of this chapter and will be developed further here.

Textual gestures and typography clearly have significant effects on the narrative when the reader approaches them. They can add another level of meaning that can be produced from the reader's understanding of the context of the image in the narrative. Norgaard asserts:

> Because most literary texts are set in plain black typeface, typography is something we rarely think about when reading literature. This however, does not imply that the typography of such texts does not

mean anything. Instead, this particular choice of typography seems to carry the meaning of 'conventional' when it comes to the visual side of the letterforms. (2009b, p. 158)

Any arrangement of text that is placed unconventionally on the page carries the meaning of 'unconventional' before any further meaning can be decoded from the signifiers themselves. Very rarely, but significantly when it happens, the reader finds that a typographic arrangement can replace conventional textual narrative and actually forward the narrative through images that are created by the placement of the text on the page.

This chapter moves on from focusing on various types of intentional textual gaps to looking at the textual arrangement on the page as a whole. Most importantly we will look at *how idiosyncratic typography in the form of textual gestures affects the reading process*. To achieve this we will look at a number of different examples from prose fictions and ask two questions:

1. How does the page diverge from conventional design?
2. How do specific textual gestures affect the reading process and meaning?

The reader, as always, is paramount to our motivations here. It is the stalwart reader who has to navigate and interpret these unconventional textual gestures. To achieve the aims listed above, typographic arrangements have been broken down into three types and examples and analysis of them from a range of works of prose fiction will be given. These three distinctive variations of the arrangement of text on the page will be called *Iconic Textual Gestures, Narrative Textual Gestures* and *Iconic Narrative*.

This chapter is not concerned with the inclusion of non-textual images such as photographs, diagrams and illustrations on the graphic surface, but rather the typographic placement of text that can be said to pictorially represent or gesture towards an image or diagram or perhaps something else. Here we are interested in identifying the different types of typographic representation, how the reader navigates and reads them and, in the context of the narrative, what kind of disruption they cause.

3.3   Textual Representation and Textual Gesturing

The graphic surface of the page in the novel has often been utilised in varied ways throughout history, often to represent something in the

context of the narrative. For the purpose of this chapter, such a typographic arrangement of text will be generally called a *textual gesture* that forms a type of *textual image* or *arrangement*. The arrangement of the text on the page often gestures towards something else, be that an image or something other than lines of text arranged on a page in a conventional fashion. What is important to note at this stage is the distinction between the textual gestures that are being analysed here and conventional representational (mimetic) textual gestures that have frequently been used in conventional prose texts. For example, the epistolary novel gestures towards the form of written correspondence by the typographic arrangement of text on the page and concrete poetry utilises the surface of the page to enhance and supplement the meaning of the linguistic signifiers placed upon it. The next section of this chapter will demonstrate the difference between this and the textual gesturing happening in the texts featured here.

3.3.1 Concrete Poetry

More relevant examples of textual gestures can be found in the works of concrete poetry of the twentieth century. One of the most well-known concrete poems is Reinhard Dohl's *Apfel* (1965). It is worth contemplating the effects of this poem here in order to distinguish between concrete poetry and the idiosyncratic textual gestures that are discussed later in this chapter. The focus of this book is not on poetry. However, this poem is a representational textual image by definition and it possesses many similarities to the textual gestures in prose that will be analysed here. The repetition of the German signifier for apple is shaped into the form of the subject, with a worm ('wurm') appearing towards the bottom right of the image. The distinction between the linguistic signifier and the 'thing' it is signifying is highlighted. The reader of the poem does not have to engage with any narrative or even any variation in rhythm or allegory, metaphor or stanza breaks. Instead, the visual nature of text and poetry is emphasised and linguistic representation is questioned. What is most interesting about *Apfel* is the necessity of reading and 'seeing' the poem, rather than hearing it performed like some other types of poetry. Though a reader may read the poem aloud if they choose to, the result wouldn't be the same as hearing a conventional poem. The key here is the image that the arrangement of text creates and the meaning that can be generated from it. The reader creates the image of the apple and (possibly) notices the worm and then creates an image of a worm, despite the positioning of the signifier for it (it is also slightly reminiscent of the shape of a worm).

Though similar types of textual gestures can be found in the works of prose featured in this study (particularly in section 3.4 of this chapter), the main focus here is on 'concrete' narrative text. Concrete poetry is by definition, unconventional and often presents a significant challenge for the reader. The reader needs to first look at any possible images that the arrangement of text creates and then they can engage with the text that forms it. This will later be called a *narrative textual gesture* but the difference between *Apfel* and some of the works of prose featured in this chapter is the form. *Apfel* is self-contained, on a single sheet of paper and once the reader unlocks the meaning they have completed the 'text'. Textual images and gestures on the pages of prose fiction are often one of many that appear in the full work. They also require the reader to have read the narrative that precedes and succeeds them. Most importantly for this monograph, unlike concrete poetry (see Espinosa, 1990; Scobie, 1997; and Bodden, 2009), there is a dearth of critical material on textual gestures in prose that have attempted to understand how they affect the narrative and the reader.

Despite their disruption to the conventional reading process, textual gestures allow for effective representation of events (and objects) relating to the narrative. We can expand on textual images by widening our focus to two different types of iconographic devices called *iconic textual gestures* and *narrative textual gestures*. It is interesting to note later how these two types often cross into one another, forming an iconic image of text that is also comprised of the narrative, thus adding an extra element of meaning to the reading of the text that can be defined as *iconic narrative*. The rest of this chapter is divided into three different sections that discuss these types of devices in more detail, starting with iconic textual gestures.

3.4   Iconic Textual Gestures

Iconic textual gestures are unconventional typographic arrangements and visual devices that are arranged in a way that is visually reminiscent of something else (an object, a process etc.) but do *not* forward the narrative. They are supplementary to, rather than necessary for, the progression and comprehension of the narrative, or rather, they usually sit 'outside' of the main narrative. This type of textual gesture may supplement the narrative but is mostly an arrangement of text that forms a related icon that compliments rather than continues the narrative. The words that comprise the icon will often be connected to the main content of the narrative but in this case they are simply used as an alternative to lines that constitute an illustration. They affect the reader in

a similar way to conventional illustration. The choice not to use lines suggests that the words that form the image or icon may have added meaning and significance. This type of gesturing is also referred to and categorised as either an iconic textual image or arrangement.

This section discusses different uses of iconic textual gestures and arrangements on the pages of several novels and the implications that they have for the reader and the reading process. They demonstrate a large variety of different effects depending on their placement on the page and the context of the conventional narrative that accompanies them.

The reader cannot help but speculate on the significance of the word 'noodles' and the dollar sign ($) on the unpaginated page before 89.1 in Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing: A Real Fictitious Discourse* (1992). The 'noodle icons and arrangements' that punctuate many of the pages of the novel supplement the narrative and provide a representation of the narrator's mental processes but they don't act as a substitute for normal narration. The narrator has become obsessed with the list of essentials that he will need in order to write his novel uninterrupted for a full year. He decides that the most economic way to subsist on his meagre savings for this time will be to eat nothing but cheap, pre-packed noodles for 365 days. In the same way that narrative context was so important to the understanding of textual gaps in the previous chapter it is also important for the understanding of textual gesturing in this one. Noodles and dollars (the narrator is writing about a French immigrant named Boris residing in America just after World War II) are at the forefront of the narrator's mind and the 'recorder' character represents this dilemma as an iconic textual image that the reader finds on the page before 89.0. This novel's iconographic pages are always unpaginated; a device that separates them from the narrative. It is also important to note that on this page a line outline of a dollar symbol/ icon that surrounds the word 'noodle' appears. The word 'noodle' is interspersed with the word 'cents' in order to strengthen this financially based textual icon.

Though the reader does not necessarily associate noodles with currency, the narrator is so fixated on organising his year into the food and money that he will need in order to sustain himself while writing his narrative that the 'recorder' chooses to visually associate the two things and the reader is given an insight into the narrator's consciousness through the arrangement of the text in the shape of the dollars. These two things are foremost in the character's mind at this point and the iconic textual image represents this visually for the reader. The noodles become the dollar icon and the dollar icon becomes the noodles. The words 'noodle money' and 'noodle cents' are arranged on the page in

the shape of the dollar icon that would be visible without the thick black line that illustrates it. This type of visual representation doesn't add to the narrative content, it supplements it and demonstrates a different way of presenting text on the page that illustrates the narrator's mind.

In the previous example, iconic text is used in the representation of thought – representing the narrator's subconscious mind in the narrative, and by extension how people associate certain words with other things, laying bare the distinction between the linguistic signifier and what it visually signifies. Upon turning to the page the reader is instantly aware that this page differs from the conventional layout of how a page should 'look', though the reader of *Double or Nothing* is already very aware of this (every page of this novel has an unconventional typographic presentation) and expects this page to be no different. The reader notices that this page does not advance the narrative but instead, it supports, or illustrates it (a possible reason for its distinct pagination, separate from the 'actual' page). The American dollar icon is familiar to the reader and the signs for 'noodles', 'cents' and 'money' are all mirrored in their arrangement on the page and the thick black lines that surround them. The challenges to conventional typography in this text are literal visual metaphors that complicate the understanding of the linguistic sign, or at least lay the construction of the written sign bare and expose its mechanism. Iconic textual gestures like this defamiliarise and disrupt the act of reading but also add an extra layer of meaning to the sign through the context of the arrangement. The arrangement of text initially surprises the reader but the interpretation of this page is actually simple and only ever supplementary to the main narrative.

The reader also finds many unconventional pages featuring iconic textual images that supplement narrative in Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts* (2007) with the appearances on the page of 'conceptual marine life' and the ominous and threatening Ludovician, or 'idea shark', as it is referred to throughout the narrative. In the context of this narrative, these entities are not physical, but rather, mental, appearing and manifesting themselves in the mind. This is apparent with the two 'Fossil Fish Reconstruction[s]' on page 95 of the novel. Both textual arrangements/gestures on this page initially appear reminiscent of small sea creatures (later revealed to be prehistoric armoured fish). The only narrative to appear on this page appears underneath these two 'gestures':

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 under-
pass layout) using letter transfers. The structure seems to represent
a species of prehistoric armoured fish, although the image is incom-
plete with large areas of damage. The second image is my speculative
reconstruction. The text has been reproduced actual size. o other
underpass texts were recovered. (Hall, 2007, p. 95)

The narrator, Eric Sanderson, is on the trail of Dr Trey Fidorous, an
elusive, enigmatic expert in 'conceptual marine life'. Dr Fidorous has
left these 'text structure[s]' (an interesting, alternative term for a textual
arrangement or gesture, perhaps?) around various UK cities; this one
is a 'replica of a text structure found in the Arundel Way underpass in
Sheffield' (ibid, p. 95). The page features two textual images of these fish,
formed by the arrangement of the signifiers that make up the fish. The
fish's scales are represented by the word 'Scale', its faceplate by the word
'faceplate' and its fin by the word 'fin'. Firstly the reader could draw
comparisons between these textual images and Dohl's *Apfel*. Though
not an example of concrete poetry, the reader of this page firstly sees the
signifiers arranged unconventionally on the page and then realises that
the arrangement of them is representative of a fish. The arrangements of
the signifiers that represent different parts of the shark are placed in the
position that can be found on an actual shark. This laying bare of the
distinction between the two parts of the sign foregrounds the signifi-
cance of linguistic signifiers in this novel. Like the 'noodle dollar' icon
on the pages of *Double or Nothing*, this particular example is an Iconic
Textual Gesture: an arrangement of text in an iconic way that is not
actually comprised of narrative text. In many ways this iconic textual
gesture isn't too dissimilar to traditional illustration that can be found
throughout the history of the novel. The reader of this page is also pro-
vided with a representation of what the narrator 'sees' and it helps them
to understand the textual nature of these 'conceptual animals' (they can
only ever be textual in nature, for they exist on the pages of a novel)
that are of such importance to the narrative.

   A similar, yet slightly different iconic textual gesture can be found in
Chapter 15 of *The Raw Shark Texts*, entitled 'Luxophage', which deals
with another type of conceptual fish. In a change from the previous
example, the reader is first given the description of this iconic textual
arrangement:

   The creature had a round sucker-like mouth lined with dozens of
   sharp little doubts and inadequacies. I could feel it just downstream

> from me in the events and happenings of the world, winding at head height, holding itself in place with muscled steady swimming against the movement of time. (Hall, p. 146)

In contrast with the previous example, the text featured above appears on the page preceding the arrangement. It supplements the narrative in a slightly different way to the prehistoric armoured fish 'text structure'. The reader asks themselves, how exactly do you represent these 'sharp little doubts and inadequacies'? The image appears on the next page, formed by the arrangement of text.

Like the iconic textual gestures found elsewhere in *The Raw Shark Texts*, and the 'noodle dollar' icon in *Double or Nothing*, this iconic textual image supports and illustrates rather than advances the narrative. The 'luxophage' creature is not constructed out of narrative text, or the signifiers that represent it (for it is a fictional creature), its 'sucker-like mouth' is represented by the @ symbol from a computer keyboard, while its body is signified by words connected to rivers and the sea such as 'barnacles', 'weed' and 'silt'. The reader may notice that some of the body of the 'luxophage' is created from words taken from the main textual narrative on the previous page. This has an interesting affect on the reader, because the narrative of *The Raw Shark Texts* deals with concepts created by text and it is also a novel, a vehicle for text. The creature that the reader 'sees' is immersed into the same world as the narrator, a narrator who is also made from text. The 'luxophage's' small, eel-like body that appears on the page after the description seems to symbolise these small 'doubts and inadequacies' that are discussed earlier. The text is presented unconventionally but the reader has become accustomed to discovering these representations of the conceptual fish on the pages in this book. Just like the iconic textual gestures of the sharks, the page does feature some conventionally arranged text and it is this narrative that actually progresses the story, not the iconic textual image that represents the 'luxophage'.

Earlier in *The Raw Shark Texts* the reader is told that the narrator is sat at home watching his television when he sees something strange, which is then represented as a textual image on the page:

> A movement unlocked my attention. I re-focused my eyes, looking past the vodka glass and into the static buzz of the TV. I stayed very still for a few seconds before lowering the glass to the floor, careful not to take my eyes off the screen. 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. (ibid, p. 57)

The reader finds that the narrative is then interrupted by a rectangle (gesturing to the narrator's TV screen) with the word 'DisTance' arranged in a fragmented and representative way in the upper right hand corner. Upon closer inspection the reader realises that the word is arranged in a way that is visually reminiscent of a (the concept, not the actual) fish. It could also have the secondary meaning of the original translation of the word 'television' from the Greek – 'distance seeing'. Rather than describe Eric's television screen and the word that appears on it, it is presented iconographically on the page in a way that gestures to the screen and the vision of the character. This allows the reader to see a representation of what Eric sees. The rectangle that encompasses the 'fish' is *not* a textual image and is not a detailed representation of a television. Rather the simple rectangle gestures to the outline of a television screen without needing to realistically portray the exact dimensions and the appearance of it. The textual gesture in this example is found between two large paragraphs of text and the image seems secondary to the narrative. The reader reads the conventionally presented narrative as normal before the image momentarily disrupts the reading process. In comparison to the larger iconic textual gestures of the text structures and the 'luxophage', this disruption is only minor and the image itself is only small. The image acts as a small illustration that represents the sight of the narrator, further immersing the reader into the fictional reality depicted in the book and complicating the distinction between the linguistic signifier and the signified, as well as the distinction between words and images.

These iconic textual gestures supplement but never replace the main textual narrative. At times these images and arrangements are very disruptive to the conventional reading process and they highlight the distinction between words and images. These pages are unconventional in their arrangements of text. The reader is prompted to consider the visual possibilities of text and the placement of it on the page and the representational roles they play in context with the main textual narrative.

From the analysis of the iconic textual gestures featured here, it would appear that they are often the type of visual device most similar to the traditional use of illustration in more conventional novels. Iconic textual gestures illustrate the events or objects in the narrative without forwarding it, and they also fulfil a representational role, often portraying what the narrator can 'see' or gesturing towards their mental processes.

It is important to note that within this sub-category of textual gestures there can be further sub-categories still of this type of visual device. Each example is subtly different to the next due to the subtleties in the placement of the image in the context of the textual narrative. Some iconic textual gestures act as a break in the narrative; some provide a representation of the narrator's sight or internal thoughts. Often, they appear to be combinations of iconic textual gestures and narrative textual gestures, not fitting either type confidently. In terms of disruption to the conventional reading process and the traditional presentation of a page in a novel, iconic textual arrangements are the least challenging type of textual gesture to interpret for the reader. The image is often the goal and the reader often needs to simply understand what the placement of the text represents. The reader doesn't have to read any narrative text from the arrangement and the image is usually explained in the paragraph that precedes or succeeds it. Iconic textual gestures are distinct from conventional illustrations in prose fiction because of their textual form but they ultimately retain the same function as them, supporting the textual narrative instead of advancing it or even replacing it. The textual gestures that simultaneously advance the narrative found in the next section are different and disrupt the reader in a much more challenging way.

3.5   Narrative Textual Gestures

Narrative textual gestures can be defined as textual arrangements that are constructed out of the narrative text and are often presented on the page in a way that is visually complementary of the events in the story. In comparison to the previous iconic textual gestures, these visual devices act as, as well as assisting, narrative progression, told visually *and* textually, representing events in the narrative by the text that forms it. The arrangement of words on the page is not random but is instead composed using the words and sentences that make up the narrative. In this way they are unlike conventional illustrations found in other works of prose fiction.

We can find narrative textual gestures in Christine Brooke-Rose's *Thru* (1975) with the pages that gesture to the arc lights (p. 615), the table plan (p. 582), the retrovisor (p. 579) and others (note that these pages are from Brooke-Rose's *Omnibus* (2006), for that is the most readily available source of this text). We also see them on the pages of B. S. Johnson's *Travelling People* (1963) with the underground subway sequence (pp. 36–37, 41–43) and in the labyrinth bicycle sequence (pp. 469–90) in

Mark Z Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000). The reader can also find examples of narrative textual gestures and arrangements throughout Federman's *Double or Nothing*, and they are often set outside the usual chronological pagination, suggesting an aside or a footnote.

A typical example of a narrative textual gesture can be found on page 425 of Danielewski's *House of Leaves*. As well as mirroring the events in the narrative (the descent of Navidson through the labyrinth in his house), a key motif of this novel, the Minotaur myth, is visually referenced and gestured to through the arrangement of the narrative and text on the page that suggests a bull's head:

> '[This] issue is not so much what Danielewski has done to the text as the way he uses these effects to drive his narrative. For all the book's appearance of wilfulness and mystery, its lack of resolution, there is a carefully stage-managed relationship between *typographic form and literary content: one expresses the other*' (Poyner, 2003, p. 143; my italics).

The disruption to the traditional reading process here is relatively minor, the reader finds navigating the text on this page fairly easy because while it is arranged iconographically it is still comprised of sentences that are grammatically correct and the text reads from left to right and from the top of the page to bottom. It is certainly an unconventional page and it also features a lot of blank space but the page is dominated by the image that the text forms in four paragraphs. Unlike the iconic textual images that gesture to conceptual marine life in *The Raw Shark Texts*, here the narrative is forwarded and the reader is provided with a secondary visual aspect to the page from which they can also generate meaning.

The reader is told that Will Navidson knows that he is cycling 'downwards'. As well as being reminiscent of a bull's head (the minotaur myth is first discussed in a footnote on page 110 of *House of Leaves* and another image of a bull's head can be found on page 336 of the same book in a chapter entitled 'The Minotaur'), the reader also understands that as the narrative explains the downward motion of Navidson, the lines of text get shorter, yet the blocks of text feature more lines, visually suggesting a slipping downwards. This narrative textual image in *House of Leaves* gives the reader a primary (the textual narrative), a secondary (the bull's head image) and a tertiary (the downward motion) set of meanings that they can generate from this page in the narrative. The visual aspects of the text (the textual space and the visual nature of

text) are prioritised as the reader notes that the narrative textual image/ arrangement continues the narrative while supplementing the themes of the book. It does not provide the reader with a representation of the sight or the consciousness of Will Navidson but it might give them insight into the mind of the possible fabricator of the narrative, Johnny Truant.

Building on the previous example, a similar gesture is featured two pages later on page 427. The page is completely blank apart from a centred segment of narrative on the bottom line that states 'Sometimes the ceiling drops in on him'. Just like the example on page 425, the events that are happening in the narrative are mimetically represented graphically. The ceiling as it is portrayed on the fictional documentary film is represented by this small line of text. It is important that we take into consideration the page layout when analysing this page. This is not a typical narrative textual gesture, though the sentence in relation to the rest of the page acts as a full page image that gestures towards the events happening in the scene of the film. The reader must also realise that the narrative is attempting to represent, or remediate film and the pages of the book at this point aim to represent the character's position in the labyrinth that the film discusses. As the ceiling gets lower, so does the text, forcing the reader to be aware of the boundaries and dimensions of the page and representing the events that are taking place within the cinematic narrative, potentially drawing them closer to the story by allowing them to 'see' the events that the fictional viewer of the fictional film 'sees'. This continues on to the next page (p. 429). Now the opposite happens, the ceiling in the labyrinth rises and so does the placement of the text/narrative:

                                                          until

                                              higher

                                  and

                        higher

            rising

With a minor disruption, and understanding that this page continues from the previous one, the reader realises that they should start reading this page with the lowest word, 'rising' and read the following text from left to right but from the bottom to the top of the page. The narrative continues as normal despite the disruptions to the traditional placement of the text that forms it. At this point in the narrative the reader has been consistently challenged by various visual devices and has become accustomed to finding unconventionally placed text on the page. The words are substituted for the ceiling and dimensions of the house's labyrinth, giving the reader an extra mode of interpretation, allowing them to contemplate not only the constant shifting of the house's shape and size but also the dimensions of the page of this (larger than normal) novel. Not only do they read the text and generate meaning but they also read the image that the arrangement of the text creates. The unconventional typography represents both the images of the documentary film that is the subject of the narrative and acts as a visual substitute for exposition and description, as Poyner also notes, 'In Navidson's final exploration, words shatter into tiny speech particles, centrally placed within the void of the page' (2003, p. 144). The reader experiences the labyrinth as Navidson (or rather, the viewer of the fictional film) does, and the narrative textual arrangements and gestures in these examples take place on the entirety of the page in comparison with some of the supplementary iconic textual gestures and arrangements featured earlier. The reader notices that the typography only changes in *House of Leaves* when the narrator (or Truant) describes the scene, not when a character is speaking. The text moves as the reader flicks through this section, emulating the visual image on the television. In the case of *House of Leaves* this is complicated when analysed in context with the narrative. There are no series of documentary films or Will Navidson in the reader's or Truant's reality. Instead it appears to be a product of either Zampanó's or Johnny's mind, thus it is also a representation of Johnny or Zampanó's unconscious or conscious mind depending on the reader's interpretation. It is an unusual visual device that assists the narrative by providing a representation of a visual image that neither the reader nor Truant has seen and it provokes an awareness of the textual space of the page. What is most interesting here is that the narrative textual arrangements and gestures allow for several added modes of signification to the narrative, with it often being represented textually and visually.

Page 227 of *The Raw Shark Texts* features another, different use of a narrative textual image or arrangement. The narrator is presented with

a map by his companion, Scout. The map takes the form of a written word, 'ThERa':

> 'The only word we need to worry about is the one on the map. You still keeping track of where we are?'
>   I unfolded the sheet and stared again at the word: ThERa. I visualised the route we'd taken so far –

The following narrative textual image that occurs on the page after this exchange of dialogue is presented to the reader as the shape of the 'T' with the couple's route leading down the stem of the 'h'.

This narrative textual gesture ironically presents the reader with the image of a written sign that in the context of this narrative is the map that the narrator holds in his hands. It is therefore a representation of an object in the narrator's hands that he can see as well as being a representation of his route through the paper labyrinth, and it is after all, a linguistic signifier – 'Thera'. The route that the narrator superimposes over the word isn't created by him with a pen or other writing implement but rather it is fabricated in his mind – he 'visualises' the route. It is a representation of his conscious mind. The reader initially reads the word, for that is what they are used to doing, though the size of the text gives it prominence and added significance. 'Thera' isn't a complete word but the reader 'sees' what the narrator 'sees' and is drawn into the narrative in a unique way. The reader sees the mental tracing of the narrator's finger over the 'T' and 'h'. As a method of representation this is effective, it is iconic and also forms the narrative, the word 'Thera' gestures to both a map and a (incomplete) word, doubling the meaning that is generated by it. This mimesis of product is a unique way of textually gesturing towards an object in the narrative.

The narrator of Brooke-Rose's *Thru* attempts to represent a visual image by the arrangement of the textual narrative on the page. While not immediately apparent without any context here, the reader of the narrative may have established that it is set in a university and is narrated at some level by one or two university lecturers (see White, 2005, pp. 134–35). Context is all-important for dictating the understanding of the graphic surface of the page. Upon turning the page and expecting some degree of disruption to the reading process the reader is faced with an unusual layout of text. This page is relatively conventional in comparison with some of the pages of the same book and the reader has already decoded and read more complex pages before this one.

The reader of this block of text could interpret it as narrative textual gesture towards a top down floor plan of a lecture or seminar room. Each two line 'block' that forms the second 'paragraph' is reminiscent of a table in the room. The reader can fairly easily navigate the narrative but they are occasionally required to jump a gap between two 'tables' to finish a word. This can be demonstrated in the above example on the first 'table' on the second 'row' with the continuation of the sentence that reads:

Into which you

Enter unom   nisciently

The reader follows the sentence around the 'tables' and puts together 'unom' with the following 'nisciently' to form 'unomnisciently'. The reader may also note that this seems to be a play on the French *un homme*, leaving them to not only read vertically and across gaps but also across-languages. The splitting of 'unom   nisciently' also plays with the idea of not seeing everything, an idea that the reader may note is particularly relevant to their reading of the previous pages of this text. In *Thru,* the reader is often required to read 'down' the lines as well as across them, though they don't usually 'see' this until after reading the page conventionally. The form of the narrative – first-person, stream of consciousness or free indirect discourse, is an attempt at more accurately representing the experience of a central character, in this case a conceptual representation of either the visual or optical image of their seating plan or a representation of their conscious mind. The reader once again 'sees' what the narrator is experiencing, visually illustrating and gesturing towards what the narrator sees – in this case a classroom or a classroom plan. Importantly the narrative continues while the character is doing this, multiplying the potential meaning of the signifiers that are used and representing the conscious thought of a narrator. This is both supplementary to the main narrative *and* the actual narrative itself, making this example another type of narrative textual gesture or image. The arrangement of the text on the page does not interfere with the narrative though it does require the reader to forge new techniques and become more vigilant in identifying these devices.

There are also many diagrams to be found on the pages of *Thru*. They are a part of the main textual narrative and to remove them would remove the meaning of the text, hence, they can be classified as a type

of *narrative textual gesture.* The first of note occurs on page 6 (p. 585 in the *Omnibus* (2006)):

Which has been suggested,
Here,
You see,

cosÍ   I

I   I
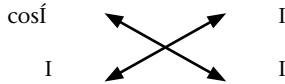
Should you start structuring your te['×' as crossed arrows]thattaway
Or the   latterway?

This diagram reoccurs several times throughout the narrative and acts as a device that instructs the reader how to read it. Rather than simply reading from left to right, *Thru* requires more from the reader. The reader needs to read vertically, horizontally and diagonally in order to decode the narrative on its pages. The simple arrow diagram above opens up possibilities for the author and complicates the reading process for the reader. The diagram simply takes the form of two crossed arrows but is preceded by, 'Which has been suggested, Here, You see'. Reading vertically down this narrative textual arrangement, the first letter of each line is encoded with a secondary vertical narrative that in this case spells out 'WHY'. The arrows point to four 'I's, a recurring motif throughout the book (I/Eye, who speaks and the act of 'seeing' the page). The arrows confuse and complicate the reading process but ultimately don't change the narrative, for the reader chooses one 'I' and continues to read the next sentence underneath. The sentence that follows the arrow diagram self-reflexively questions the previous decision that the reader made, disrupting the reading process and asking fundamental questions about it.

   The reader of *narrative textual gestures* finds that they are quite able to read the book and gain a secondary (or tertiary) meaning through the arrangement of the narrative. *Thru* features another example of this:

four   two
of them   correct
on either side   ▽   of the
nose   the other (p. 1 (p. 579))

The reader is initially puzzled by this opening section, appearing on the first page of the novel. As the first page that the reader has to read, the narrative textual image formed by the placement of the words (and icon) above is both unconventional and largely disruptive to the reading process. Do they read it as follows, 'four of them on either side nose, two correct of the other', or 'four of them on either side of the nose', or even 'four two of them correct on either side of the nose the other'? How does the reader read the inverted triangle and how does it fit the narrative that surrounds it? The four segments of text could represent the four eyes that the narrator can see reflected back in the rear-view mirror (or retrovisor) of their car. But the reader cannot situate the narrator at this stage, because they have not been given enough information to centre themselves in the text. Once the reader begins to see the image as a representation and gesture of the narrator's reflection the inverted triangle abstractly represents the nose that is being discussed in the narrative. Of all the narrative textual images featured as examples in this section, this one is the most disruptive to the reading process.

The examples from *House of Leaves*, *The Raw Shark Texts* and *Thru* provide the reader with a representation of the subconscious mind of their narrators (a tricky prospect in *House of Leaves*). The minotaur is on the conscious mind of Truant (he feels that some 'creature' is stalking him) and the unconscious mind of Navidson (with the association of Daedalus' labyrinth) in *House of Leaves* and Truant, apparently the fabricator of the text, chooses to arrange the text on the page in a way that evokes an image of a bull's head. Navidson realises that he is sloping downwards and the placement of the narrative reflects this. In *Thru* the representation of the table plan that the narrator is looking at while telling the story is created by the unconventional placement of text that gestures towards a seating plan. The example from the first page of *Thru*, featured above does the same thing as the two other examples but importantly, it appears on the first page of the book. *House of Leaves* begins conventionally. Only later do the textual images/gestures start to appear. The image from page one of *Thru* doesn't supplement or illustrate the narrative, rather, it *is* the narrative and the reader has no conventionally arranged page of text to gain a foothold in the story. A reader of any text initially asks themselves 'who speaks?' (see White, 2005, p. 134 and *Thru*, p. 1) and is puzzled by the difficult structure here, resisting a conventional reader and requiring the reader to work hard at finding meaning. The narrative textual image/gesture resists reading and forces the reader to hypothesise and interpret both the written narrative and the visual narrative that is conveyed by the placement of the text.

Narrative textual gestures are fairly common on the pages of uncon-
ventional works of prose and they are some of the most effective ways
of using the page to gesture towards objects and events that are hap-
pening at the level of the narrative. The reader finds that the meaning
that they can generate from the text on the page can be multiplied by
the necessity to also find meaning from the unconventional placement
of the text. Entire narratives can be found in these gestures or images in
the case of *Thru's* vertical discourse. Significantly, the challenge to the
reader of such textual gesturing is always manageable despite the initial
disruption to the reading process that they represent. Most novels that
feature such devices tend to be consistent throughout the rest of the
book and so the reader's main challenge comes towards the start of
the novel when they have to formulate new techniques that will assist
them throughout the rest of the narrative. The text usually 'wants' the
reader to understand the image or gesture and is usually accommodat-
ing, though there are always exceptions to this rule (see *Thru*, a text
that consistently resists casual reading). The following section describes
what happens when textual images or gestures are not formed from
narrative text, yet are not supplementary (like iconic textual gestures)
and still provide the reader with meaning that forwards the narrative.

3.6   Iconic Narrative

A significant example from *The Raw Shark Texts* ably illustrates the dif-
ferences between *iconic textual gestures, narrative textual gestures* and the
subject of this section, *iconic narrative* – a distinct type of textual gesture
that is definitely separate from the previous two classifications. The aim
of this section is to demonstrate a type of textual image that is different
to the supplementary type of textual image that has been defined as an
iconic textual gesture and the narrative type of image that was discussed
in the previous section and called a *narrative textual gesture*.

The Raw Shark Texts is unique amongst the other texts in this book
because one of the textual gestures that it uses lays somewhere in
between the two previous types. It is a significant enough device that
it certainly warrants discussion here as an exception to the textual ges-
tures discussed in the previous two sections.

The narrative of *The Raw Shark Texts* discusses the emergence of
'conceptual marine life' that are the products of text, not biology. The
'sightings' of these creatures do not happen externally but rather inter-
nally, inside a person's sub-conscious. As such, the reader finds that
the fish and other creatures are usually composed of text that does not

forward the narrative. The words are separate from the main, conventionally arranged narrative. They are usually an intertextual reference from a previous section of the novel.

The shark section towards the end of *The Raw Shark Texts* (pp. 327–79) is somewhat reminiscent of old novelty 'flick-books' (or kineographs) that present an animated image when the reader/user/viewer flicks through the pages of the book at high speed. These pages in *The Raw Shark Texts* do not require the reader to 'flick' through the pages at quite the same speed but it is a great example of how narrative can be told through textual gestures rather than traditional sentences and paragraphs. It is iconic narrative that not only arranges text in a way that is visually representative of something else but one that supplants the traditional method of text-based storytelling. Instead, the narrative is told in pictures created by the arrangement of textual narrative. In the case of traditional kineographs, the image would usually be located in the bottom right hand corner of the verso page. The reader finds the 'shark', and only the shark, on the centre-right of the verso page over the course of thirty-eight pages (pp. 335–73), though the 'image' or 'icon' is preceded by seven completely blank pages (pp. 327–34). On page 327 the boat that the narrator is on is hit by an unknown force:

> *Thud.* The entire deck lurched with momentum and I was thrown forwards, smashing my knees into the back of the printer. A shock of hard cracking pain and my weight breaking the machine free of its fastenings, sending me and it tumbling out and down over the side. Me in the air, upside down, falling head first. The ocean rushing up and hitting the back of my neck with a hard splash and then –
> The surface receding in hiss and bubbles below my feet.
> [BLANK SPACE FOR REST OF PAGE] (p. 326; my parentheses)

This event is important to note because it contextualises the following sequence. The narrator (and by extension, the reader) is now in the 'conceptual ocean' and is floating above and below the water with the waves. After eight blank pages (presumably of the empty ocean) the narrator then 'sees' the faint outline of a shark heading towards him (and the reader).

The shark (the 'ludovician') gets closer and closer (or rather, the illusion makes it seem like it is getting closer and closer to the reader) to the swimming narrator over the following thirty-eight pages until he is saved by the sentence, 'Fingers clamped my wrist and forearm and dragged me up back towards the surface with a' just as the shark

is about to strike. The following page repeats the sentence and shows the shark as close to the surface of the page as it can be with its mouth wide open, ready to bite. Page 376 is blank and 377 repeats the sentence twice just over half way down the page, though the second one is in more grey type, suggesting a fading of consciousness. Page 378 is then also blank and 379 repeats the same sentence but this time three times with the final (lower on the page) one in grey type again. The reader returns to the main narrative on page 380 with, 'tug-of-war heave, me hauled kicking and scraping my back and ribs and hips over the stern's backboard and collapsing to the decking like a half-drowned animal with a thump and splatter of water'. The pages that chart the shark's progress towards the narrator (and by extension, the reader) can be read in a similar way to a kineograph, the reader quickly turning the pages as the shark gets closer and closer to them, simulating and gesturing towards what the narrator is 'seeing' and acting as an effective way of providing exposition without printing it or using any text. Rather than telling the reader that 'the shark keeps getting closer' for example, the reader is shown that the shark is getting closer as they turn each page – the reason for the blank recto pages. The images themselves are not particularly disruptive for the reader, they are used to finding textual images and gestures throughout the previous pages of the narrative and they immediately realise that the arrangement of text on the page represents a shark heading towards the narrator. The device itself is very unconventional and has no other precedent in prose fiction. This is not simply an iconic textual gesture and it is also not a narrative textual gesture, it is a combination of the two – *iconic narrative*. Narrative is provided here from iconographic text and at the same time the icon is formed from narrative from earlier in the book in the shape of a shark (therefore representing the narrator's memories). The fin is formed from the letter 'I', the eyes from 'O'. The shark is a projection of the narrator's fears and it takes on the form through his fear. It is explained in the narrative as a mental manifestation of his anxiety of his girlfriend's death three years prior to these events and we are told that it is responsible for his amnesiac events that have resulted in him completely losing his memory eleven times prior to the narrative that the reader experiences.

This type of textual gesturing/imagery is very rare in prose fiction yet the effect it has on the reader cannot be underestimated. Firstly, the reading process becomes much faster than normal and the reader only has to view the page to gain a sense of the narrative. The conventional textual space of a page and the typical understanding of how narrative should be conveyed in prose is undermined and utilised in a completely

new way. Rather than linguistic representation of the events in a narrative, the reader is given a direct visual representation of it instead, allowing for a break in the reading process by the tense pastiche of Spielberg's *Jaws* ('You're going to need a bigger book!') that follows over the proceeding thirty-seven pages. Showing the reader the shark's position in relation to the first-person narrator replaces purely textual exposition. There is no need to write 'And the shark keeps getting closer' in this instance, for example. The device requires more pages but the process of turning them is increased, mirroring the speed of the shark. The image is the only place on the page that the reader generates meaning from but it is done in a completely different way to conventional reading that has more in common with viewing an animation. Yet, the image is still formed by the arrangement of text on the page but it replaces the conventional textual narrative and challenges the reader to question the visual engagement that they make when reading a physical book.

3.7   Conclusions

The textual gestures that are discussed in this chapter have one thing in common: they all arrange text in an unconventional way on the page in order to visually represent events or objects in the narrative. Sometimes these images replace the pure textual narrative completely and allow the reader to 'see' the events (see *narrative textual gestures* in section 3.5 and the example of *iconic narrative* in *The Raw Shark Texts* in section 3.6). Narrative textual gestures can create an interesting secondary (or even tertiary) layer of meaning on the page of the novel – the meaning generated by the context of the text and the image that that textual arrangement suggests. This expands the possible interpretations of the written sign and provides the reader with another method of navigating a novel, opening up new possibilities for the reader by allowing them to explore the visual image as well as the written one. The reader has always 'seen' the page, in these examples they also need to see the image created by the text.

   Examples of *iconic textual gestures* do not require the reader to process sentences or understand the semantics; they are the most conventional type of textual image and have much in common with illustrations found in many works of prose fiction whereas examples of *narrative textual images* do require the reader to engage with the words that construct them and the reader has to piece together the narrative by attempting to navigate and 'make sense' of the arrangement. There are also two other things worth noting in connection to iconic disruption

to the conventional page. The first is that the texts that continue the narrative while arranging the text iconographically are often presented in the first person, using internal monologues and a stream of consciousness to depict the character's thought processes (see *The Raw Shark Texts*). The disruption to the traditional page supports the narrative and gives the reader an effective way of understanding the character's mind and therefore, their motivations. The narratives that arrange text in a way that is visually suggestive of the events taking place in the main narrative but don't contribute to furthering the story are often narrated in the third person by an omniscient narrator. This could suggest that the images evoked by the arrangement of text are unconnected to the narrator's thought processes and is instead the artistic vision of the author/narrator – a supplement to the narrative. Both types of textual gesture require the reader to engage with the texts in an unconventional way. The reader of *Double or Nothing*, a text that features both iconic textual gestures *and* narrative textual gestures, must draw links between the main narrative and words that are iconographically arranged. The reader of narrative textual images/gestures must find a way of piecing the narrative together by navigating the unconventional typography. The reader of these narrative textual gestures is often challenged in unconventional ways, requiring an understanding of the narrative and the visual image that the arrangement of text gestures towards.

While the distinction between iconic textual gestures and narrative textual gestures often appears subtle, the usefulness of introducing it here cannot be underestimated. Like the previous chapter, the context in which the visual devices appear is everything. The distinction between iconic textual images and narrative textual images can be found in the use of narrative structures such as sentences that are arranged unconventionally and iconically. Iconic textual imagery is often found on the page as random assortments of text or single words that are arranged iconographically, while narrative textual images are always formed with the text that comprises the narrative. In a break from the previous two types of textual gesturing, iconic narrative is arranged iconically but is not formed from the narrative text. Instead the single words that are arranged to form the image that the reader sees are a replacement for the narrative instead. They tell the story as effectively as conventional narrative but are displayed visually rather than textually. Problematically, in the spectrum of prose fiction, this is still a relatively rare hybrid form that can only be fully understood critically by grasping how iconic text and narrative gesturing affect the reader.

The search for a more effective typology of visual devices that was started in the novels discussed in the previous chapter has now been expanded into typographical arrangements that gesture towards images or other forms. The challenge to the reading process is often great but the reader can always overcome it and engage with the words on the page in new and enlightening ways. The change from conventionally structured novels is not as large as many may originally think, because the reader still has to engage with text that is fixed on the page. Though new ways of reading must be sought, the challenge is always surmountable.

4
Graphic Storytelling and Visual Narrative: Images in Prose Fiction

4.1 Introduction

Photography, illustration and diagrams are staple devices in works of non-fiction, children's literature and academic text books, yet they only rarely appear in works of adult twentieth and twenty-first century prose fiction. When visual devices such as photographs and diagrams *do* occur in a novel, they utilise the space of the page in a markedly different way to text. Most importantly to this study, these visual devices are a part of the graphic surface of the page and the reader sees them before they engage with the textual content. Pictures on the pages of contemporary prose fiction comment on the ever-present distinction between words and images when dealing with mimesis in literature. When images appear on the page, the distinction between the two different types of representation (visual and textual) is both simultaneously highlighted and blurred. Images alter or support textual interpretation in a way that requires different strategies of reading and subsequently, a different way of critically analysing them, 'The imagetext reinscribes, within the worlds of visual and verbal representation, the shifting relation of names and things, the sayable and seeable, discourse *about* and experience *of*' (Mitchell, 1994, p. 241). Images can only be described through words. The use of images alongside text and, especially, images that replace text or act interdependently with text in the novel requires further study and discussion on the implications that they have on the reading process.

The previous chapter analysed the effect (and sometimes affect) that different types of textual gestures (images and arrangements) have on the reading process, breaking down different types of textual gestures into three categories: iconic textual gestures, narrative textual gestures and iconic narrative. A similar process is attempted in this chapter but with

photography, illustration and diagrams rather than the arrangement of text into images. The visual devices studied here have some similarities with textual gesturing, requiring the reader to acknowledge that they see the overall page before they read the text that forms the narrative. Images are the first thing that the reader sees on the page and therefore effect the reading process in numerous ways.

A categorisation of different types of visual devices and their effects on the reader is essential to the pursuit of literary analysis of 'visual texts' (an unsatisfactory term – all texts are inherently visual) because there is currently no distinct model or language for them. It is worth considering Terence Hawkes' comments in his preface to Roger Sabin's *Adult Comics*:

> How can we recognise or deal with the new? Any equipment we bring to the task will have been designed to engage with the old: it will look for and identify extensions and developments of what we already know. To some degree the unprecedented will always be unthinkable. (1993, p. ix)

Hawkes highlights one of the main reasons why the analysis of such texts that feature visual images on their pages is rare – we simply don't have the terminology with which to deal with them and we must represent the image through text, always a problematic endeavour. Instead, in this chapter we borrow terms from related disciplines such as visual art and concrete poetry. Early film criticism used literary critical terms before developing to the extent that the discipline gained its own critical language. Likewise, many works of prose fiction that include illustrations, unconventional textual arrangements and photographs amongst the textual narrative are only partially dealt with because of the lack of specific critical terminology with which to deal with them. It is also rare to find critical material that prioritises the reader's relationship with images on the page in prose fiction. There is a gap in knowledge here and the implications of such devices need to be considered.

Lynn Diamond-Nigh suggests that 'there is a whole inventory of the visual. Two traditional visual categories are typography and image… and there is a fifth category…the collision and melding of the word and image' (p. 180). It is this relationship between words and visual images (particularly illustration and photography) that is the primary concern in this chapter. Diamond-Nigh refers to a conversation she had with the American Surfictionist, Ronald Sukenick, about possible reasons for the increase in visual images in contemporary novels. Sukenick says it is a 'culmination of the diffusion and decay of the linguistic sign' (p. 178). It is

the inability of the linguistic sign to completely represent (or to do so to the satisfaction of self-reflexive 'postmodern' texts) that results in a predilection for the visual images that feature in the primary texts here. It may also have something to do with the relatively cheap availability of technological resources today that may encourage authors to 'play' with the page content in ways that were previously difficult, expensive or impossible. Nevertheless, the distinction between word and image is frequently discussed on the pages of the primary texts that are explored here.

Mitchell suggests:

> 'Word and Image' is the name of a commonplace distinction between types of representation, a shorthand way of dividing, mapping, and organizing the field of representation…Books have incorporated images into their pages since time immemorial. (1994, pp. 3–4)

The two concepts that Mitchell discusses above, word and image, have always been separated by critics in order to 'organise the field of representation' (ibid). But are images like text and do they signify like words? Or do they resist incorporation into a linguistic structure? This difference between words and images is often a major obstacle to the interrogation of images on the pages of prose fiction. It is worth noting, however, that books have always 'incorporated images into their pages' (ibid) and the insertion of an image onto a page in a work of prose fiction is not as disruptive to the reading process as some of the textual arrangements in the previous chapter of this study because, unlike them, the reader is used to finding images alongside text in magazines, newspapers and other non-fiction formats.

Referring to paintings, Julia Thomas says:

> There are aspects of a visual image that cannot easily be fitted into a linguistic structure: its surface, marks, lines, its very status as a visual object…printed text…has come to seem transparent, its physical characteristics so naturalised that we usually look through it to the concepts 'beneath', but with the multiple fonts, colours, and formats that can manipulate…text. (2007, pp. 199–200)

We need a method of interpreting visual images in works of prose fiction that acknowledges the differences that they have when compared to readings of the text found alongside them. Thomas says that 'Rather than close off the relation between words and pictures, this awareness keeps it open; it uses language not to replace but to reveal the image

and its meanings' (ibid, p. 204). In the novels that are analysed in this chapter, this separation proves problematic because many of them feature a combination of words and images that support and assist the narrative. It is important to once again note that books have always featured images on their pages but nearly always for supplementary or illustrative purposes. The choice of some of the novels to feature images that both support and replace the main textual narrative is a radical one that requires the reader to remove the distinction between the two concepts (word and image) and think of them as being one and the same. This different use of images on the pages of prose fiction requires further study in order to understand fully the implications that they have for the reader.

4.2   Aims and Structure

This chapter (and by extension, this book) is really about *looking*: the reader looking at images and the implications of seeing and interpretation that this action entails. The novels used here to demonstrate the effects that word and picture combinations have on the reading process often feature more visual images than conventional novels and the act of looking at a page of a novel has been affected by the inclusion of images *as well as* text on the page. Echoing Warwick (2004), the novels that will be 'looked at' in this chapter '[look] towards the visual as a way of helping us to reinterpret the textual' (p. 379). Bolter and Grusin (1999) have used the term 'remediation' to explain how 'new media draw on and revise media of the past'. In its reworking of one mode of representation (the text) in the form of another (the image), illustration is itself a remediation (in Thomas, 2007, p. 195) and a new way of looking at works of prose. The primary texts featured here revise the practices of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels that featured illustrations to create a hybrid and multimodal media form that allows the reader to consider the relationship between visuality and textuality.

Thus, this chapter has two main aims:

1 To analyse how a reader approaches images on the graphic surface of the page.
2 To see how images subsequently affect the reading process and the generation of meaning.

In pursuing these two aims, the goal of this chapter is to generate a way to categorise different types of images on the pages of prose fiction, and

the different effects these images have on the reading process. It makes sense to look to a different, yet similar, form to find a theoretical basis with which to deal effectively with the inclusion of visual images in prose fiction – the graphic novel. The relationship between words and images in prose fiction is similar to the same relationship in sequential art. Both forms feature combinations of words and images in an inter-dependent way and the images in the texts featured here appear to be attempting similar goals to the images on the pages of graphic novels. Graphic novels also adhere to the conventional codex form, like prose fiction. Their images are static and attempt to provide the reader with both a visual and a textual narrative. Meaning is found somewhere in between the combination of words and images in graphic novels. Theorists including Will Eisner, Scott McCloud and Roger Sabin, will be utilised in order to do as Hawkes suggests and look for and identify extensions and developments of what we already know. Images are often the first aspect of the page that the reader encounters or 'sees' and their effect(s) on the comprehension of narrative is our focus here.

Will Eisner refers to comics as 'Sequential Art'. Illustrations in works of prose fiction have often been singular and non-sequential. They often take the form of a wood cut or black and white drawing, not always relevant or specific to the novel that it is illustrating. In contrast, some works of fiction feature multiple visual images in sequence, not neces-sarily with another visual image, as would be the case in Eisner's novels, but rather with the text that accompanies it, forming a juxtaposition of words and images without a weighting of more importance for either.

This chapter will firstly explore existing theory on graphic novels and images alongside words (4.3), and the structure of pages of graphic nov-els (4.4), before discussing the worth of Scott McCloud's (1993) catego-risation of panels on the pages of graphic novels (4.5). Hoping to do as Hawkes suggests above and synthesise McCloud's terminology for use in literary criticism, it will then pursue close readings of pages from a num-ber of prose fictions that feature two different types of word and picture combinations, *supplementary images* and *narrative images* (4.6 and 4.7).

4.3   Existing Theory

In *Understanding Comics: The Invisible Art* (1993), Scott McCloud, referring to the relationship between words and pictures, notes that:

> traditional thinking has long held that truly great works of art and literature are only possible when the two are kept at arm's length.

Words and pictures together are considered, at best, a diversion for the masses, at worst a product of crass commercialism. (p. 140)

McCloud's text is a reaction and expansion of Eisner's earlier works and he builds upon Eisner's 'Sequential Art' by defining comics as 'juxtaposed sequential visual art' (ibid, p. 8). Images on the page may persuade the reader to consider the events in the narrative in a different way and therefore have been disregarded by many critics because they may suffocate the imagination of the reader. When images supplement the main textual narrative this may be the case but when they replace the narrative or challenge conventional reading practices they can expand the possibilities of signification or even assist the reader in the generation of meaning, avoiding the potential ambiguity of linguistic representation. Echoing Mitchell's comments regarding the two different representational modes (words and images) earlier in this chapter, McCloud's focus on the combination of words and fixed images make his observations particularly appropriate for use in this chapter. Images in prose fiction are not a new phenomenon and the novels in this study both use or establish a relationship between words and pictures. It is important to contextualise the importance of graphic novels in a contemporary literary environment before testing their theory on a number of pages of contemporary novels that also incorporate pictures into their narratives.

Rather than separating the analysis of words and images as two separate entities, many of the novels in this book require an understanding of how they work in tandem with one another, supporting, multiplying, and potentially improving interpretation.

Eisner discusses potential reasoning for the success of graphic novels as a valid medium, reasons that can also be extended to the works of prose fiction analysed here. He says:

The latter half of the twentieth century experienced an alteration in the definition of literacy. The proliferation of the use of images as a communicant was propelled by the growth of a technology that required less in text-reading skills. From road signs to mechanical use instructions, imagery aided words, and at times even supplanted them. Indeed, visual literacy has entered the panoply of skills required for communication. (2008, p. xv)

It is the historical context that graphic novels (and some of the novels analysed here) are produced that holds the reasoning for their visual

style. The hypothetical reader of the novels featured in this book can easily navigate their way through a page of images and text due to this high level of 'visual literacy' that has been developed during their navigation of the contemporary world. Similar to the way they encounter and deal with textual images, gestures and arrangements, the reader is more than able to gain meaning from pages that feature images. Eisner calls pictorial story telling 'graphic narrative' (ibid, p. xvii) and describes it as 'a generic description of any story that employs images to transmit an idea. Film and comics both engage in graphic narrative' (p. xvii). A significant amount of contemporary prose fiction now also engages in graphic storytelling and visual narrative.

We must acknowledge that as well as being a method of supporting the generation of meaning from the page of a novel, there are also many difficulties and problems when using imagery as a substitute for language:

> Imagery used as a language has some drawbacks. It is the element of comics that has always provoked resistance to its acceptance as serious reading. Critics also sometimes accuse it of inhibiting imagination. Static images have limitations. They do not articulate abstractions or complex thought easily. But images define in absolute terms. They are specific. Images in print or film transmit with the speed of sight. (Eisner, 2008b, p. 10)

The novels featured in this book so far attempt to navigate around these limitations, often by a combination of words and images on their pages and a challenge to the conventional presentation of illustrations in the novel. Abstractions are dealt with in the textual matter on the page and it is rare that pictures in prose fiction simply illustrate the events of the narrative. In the previous chapter we learnt that the linguistic signifiers in a narrative can double their significations through their placement on the page. The abstractions or complexities of thought are communicated more effectively via language but words can sometimes support pictures in a symbiotic relationship. Pictures allow the writer to communicate in another way that may better allow their vision to be more coherently understood by the reader, turning from verbal storytelling and narrative and moving towards graphic storytelling and visual narrative.

This relationship between words and pictures has always been apparent, even in works without pictures. McCloud says that 'writing and drawing are seen as separate disciplines, writers and artists as separate breeds' (1993, p. 47). With the exception of Alasdair Gray, Kurt Vonnegut, Steve

Tomasula and Tom Phillips, the other writers of the books analysed later in this chapter allow an artist or photographer to supply their images in the texts. Thus, we have a similar divide as we often find in comics. The author of the novel usually supplies the illustrator with their own image in order to assert some direction over it. McCloud proceeds to suggest that 'a single unified language deserves a single unified vocabulary. Without it, comics [and novels] will continue to limp along as the 'bastard child' of words and pictures' (p. 47). Contemporary novels with pictures that are fundamental to the comprehension of their narratives also need to achieve a single unified language with which to discuss them. Novels such as Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* (1992) and Tom Phillips's *A Humument* (1970–present) have already gone some way to achieving this. A new critical terminology is needed to discuss a new form because images and words are two totally different pieces of information, as McCloud notes:

> Pictures are received information. We need no formal education to get the message. The message is instantaneous. Writing is perceived information. It takes time and specialised knowledge to decode the abstract symbols of language. (1993, p. 49)

A picture instantly communicates something to the reader whereas words need to be decoded and are still potentially ambiguous depending on their syntactical use. Words are inherently graphic in design, as Christine Brooke-Rose asserts in *A Rhetoric of the Unreal*:

> The signifier is the sign in its physical (phonetic or graphic) shape, and the signified is, not the object it represents (which is the referent), but the concept evoked in our mind by the word (or sentence, or text). A text that plays with typography, for instance, (italics, capitals, titles, shaped poems …), is particularly susceptible to analysis of the signifier, as are comic strips, with their drawings, huge exclamation marks, bubbles, capitalised sound-words and other conventions…. (1981, pp. 25–26)

Brooke-Rose's semiotic analysis is particularly relevant to this discussion and her analysis of the signifier in relation to works of prose will be expanded upon later. It is those 'drawings, bubbles, [and] capitalised sound-words' that now seem relevant when considering some works of prose fiction. We must never lose sight of the fact that linguistic signifiers are graphic in nature, a visual mark on the surface

of the page. Images that also appear on the page are extensions of these marks:

> The reading process in comics is an extension of text. In text alone the process of reading involves word-to-image conversion. Comics accelerate that by providing the image. When properly executed, it goes beyond conversion and speed and becomes a seamless whole. In every sense, this misnamed form of reading is entitled to be regarded as literature because the images are employed as a language. (Eisner, 2008b, p. xvii)

This argument for the potential of comics can also be reapplied to works of prose fiction that include pictures. The reading process required of these novels is very similar to the process involved in the reading of a page of a graphic novel. The word-image conversion is still necessary but the supplementary images can accelerate this and provide the reader with a closer idea of the author's original goal. The images on the pages of novels also begin a dialogue with the reader, requiring them to make assertions as to their value in comparison with the text on the page. When images merely supplement the narrative the value seems to be weighed in favour of the words, but occasionally when the images replace the narrative their value supplants that of the words on the page. Eisner's 'graphic storytelling' and 'visual narrative' are useful terms, not just for comic books and graphic novels.

To conduct this analysis of words and pictures on the graphic surface of prose fiction we need to understand the structure of a page in a graphic novel in order to draw parallels between the page of that form and the page in prose fiction. The next section will discuss the various devices that feature on the pages of graphic novels and how similar they are to visual devices on the pages of contemporary prose fiction.

4.4   The Page in Graphic Novels

It is worth understanding the various graphic conventions that appear in graphic novels and how similar they are to the paratextual elements of the page in prose fiction. Eisner gives the following devices and their definitions:

PANEL   A box which contains a given scene (Box, frame).
BORDER   The outline of the panel.
GUTTERS The space between panels.

PAGE   A leaf of the publication or total area of work.
TIER   Row of panels (left to right) on page.
BALLOONS   The container of the text-dialogue spoken by character.
TAIL   Pointer leading from balloon to speaker. (p. 157)

These are the fundamental devices that make up the page of a comic book. Of most interest to this study are the ideas of panels and balloons, for it is worth comparing individual panels in graphic novels with pages in prose fiction and the balloons are the devices that contain text (mostly dialogue) on the page in a graphic novel.

Alan Moore and Dave Gibbons' seminal *Watchmen* (1988) adheres to a consistently rigid nine-panel three-tier page structure that features conventional borders, gutters and a variety of different shaped balloons with tails coming from them towards the speaker. The reader reads from left to right, moving down and left when they reach the last panel on each tier. This method is not too dissimilar to the way a reader of prose fiction reads a line of text, from left to right and then across back to the left until they finish a page. It is thus a fairly simple reading technique to 'pick up' and allows Moore and Gibbons' narrative to be easily communicated. It is also worth noting that this page adheres to superhero comic book conventions but in this pastiche they can be less rigidly applied. Despite its genre-breaking narrative content, the appearance of the pages in *Watchmen* is particularly conventional and not particularly disruptive. The form is complicated slightly when certain writers such as Craig Thompson, author of *Blankets* (2003), challenge these conventions in various ways. The pages of Thompson's novel often feature no borders, no gutters and an undefined panel and tier layout. Thompson chooses to arrange his pictures in scale and uses the pictorial depth of the page for navigation instead. A Western reader reads from top to bottom, left to right. On page 125 of *Blankets*, Craig and Raina, the two main protagonists of the novel, are having a discussion. The reader starts with Craig's bubble at the top left of the page (we know its Craig's because of the tail that leads over Raina's bubble towards him), then reads Raina's adjacent bubble. Craig's back acts as a border of sorts that leads the reader to the following 'panel' that depicts Craig sitting and Raina lying down. The illustration itself represents formal devices. The reader reads Craig's bubble that states 'You mean you don't sing either?' which then unconventionally leads the reader back over to the left hand side of the page, stopping first to read Raina's bubble that says 'I can't'. The bubble has a tail of sorts that leads on to a second bubble on a 'second' tier, that utilises the picture

of Raina's laid down body as its sole 'panel'. The final tier at the bottom of the page starts with Craig's bubble containing ellipses and then a bubble-less internal monologue that says, 'I needed to touch her, but was hesitant'. The page initially seems complex and undefined, though a quick analysis shows how Thompson essentially splits the first tier into two panels and the second and the third tier into one. This form feels more 'organic' than *Watchmen* and seems to work well in portraying a scene of relaxed dialogue between friends, the images acting interdependently with the text.

In comparing these two works of graphic narrative, we also notice that the use of colour is important. Moore and Gibbon's work was initially serialised into twelve editions, only later becoming collected in what is known as a trade paperback collection. *Blankets* is a 582-page single volume that was always intended as such. *Watchmen* is a series of assembled comic books whereas *Blankets* is a graphic novel – one was serialised and published bi-monthly, the latter was published as a single volume. On one level the colour is therefore a purely financial decision. Moore and Gibbons published their work for Detective Comics (DC – one of the two largest comic publishing houses) and were given permission to use full colour. Thompson's book was published by an independent company, Top Shelf. *Watchmen* parodies earlier superhero comics and utilises the colours used in the 'Golden-Age' of comics in order to pastiche them. *Blankets* is a much more personal, autobiographical account of Thompson's first love and his maturation into an adult. Thompson also sets it in his home town of Traverse City, Michigan in Winter, thus explaining the desolate black trees and the snowy floor, perfectly fitting into the black and white colour scheme.

The format of a page of a comic book or graphic novel can be widely different depending on the work, its writer and its artist and publishing house. They could have clear, defined borders, gutters, panels and bubbles or conversely the writer/artist can dispense with them in order to create different narratives in much the same way as some of the works of prose fiction in this study challenge conventional page design. The format of a page of a novel rarely involves the contributions of a separate artist. We will find that several of the novels that are analysed later in this chapter have their own take on the Eisnerian typology of graphic novel devices, but it is the relationship that they have between the words and the pictures on their pages that are of the most interest to us, as readers. To distinguish between the different types of visual devices in prose fiction we will draw upon McCloud's categorisations of panels in *Understanding Comics*.

4.5   Using McCloud for Images in Contemporary Prose Fiction

A theoretical basis or typology of different types of panel design in graphic novels should allow us to draw comparison with pages in prose fictions that do similar things with word and picture combinations on the page. This section will analyse McCloud's typology of comic-book word and picture combinations and attempt to synthesise various aspects of it for the analysis of words and picture combinations on the pages of the novel form. This will greatly help in the generation of a new typology of images later in this chapter.

In *Understanding Comics*, McCloud splits the combinations of words and pictures in comics into seven different types:

1 Word specific (the illustration does not add much to the text in a panel)
2 Picture specific (the words do not add much to the picture in a panel)
3 Duo specific (a combination of the previous two)
4 Additive (the words or the picture amplify or elaborate on the word or picture)
5 Parallel (the words and the picture follow two different, separate narratives with no intersection)
6 Montage (the words are an actual integral part of the picture)
7 Inter-dependent (the words and the pictures in a panel convey an idea that needs them both in order to function).

There is some ambiguity in McCloud's definitions here (such as the significance and worth of duo specific) and some categories that seem too similar to another, particularly montage and word-specific, but overall this list is a useful starting point. The difficulty with McCloud's categories in relation to works of prose is that McCloud is concerned with 'panels' in a graphic novel and not pages in prose fiction and clearly, the two are definitely not the same thing. A panel in a comic book is a small part of the whole page, surrounded by a box and bordered by gutters that transfer the narrative to the next panel. A panel could be regarded as being equivalent to a sentence or paragraph in a conventional novel. As discussed during the comparison of the pages of *Watchmen* and *Blankets* above, there may be several panels per page unless the page is a 'splash page' (one single frame for impact, see *Blankets*). A page of a novel is read in a different way (though the example from *Blankets* works in a very similar way to some pages of prose). Paragraphs and sentences

are the prose equivalent of comic book panels to some extent. Words are generally prioritised on the page in prose and there are no boundaries except for the page edges. The works of prose in this chapter blur this prioritisation of words over images and allow the two concepts to work in tandem.

The three categories from *Understanding Comics* that are most useful to analysis of pictures alongside prose in the novel are:

1　**Additive**, which we can see when the pictures on the page supplement the textual narrative.
2　**Montage**, when the words or the images become one and the same, such as the textual gestures seen on the pages of *The Raw Shark Texts* (2007) and *Double or Nothing* (1992).
3　**Inter-Dependent**, when the textual narrative and the pictures or symbols intersect with one another to form two parts of a whole – one cannot exist without the other. This is the most common type of panel in comics and graphic novels and we could argue that the same could be said that this is the ideal goal for the works of prose that feature pictures alongside the words on the surface of the page.

If we transpose McCloud's categories to prose fiction and substitute comic book panels to novel 'pages', while still acknowledging that there are differences between them, we have found a possibly useful tool for analysing visual images and text in these novels. McCloud ends Chapter 6 in his book, entitled 'Show and Tell', with a comment that seems to evoke what some of these prose fictions achieve. McCloud remembers a time of pictorial language when 'To tell was to show and to show was to tell' (1993, p. 161). The use of images on the pages of the novels analysed in this book adheres to this evocative phrase, and poses the question why not use pictures in prose fiction if it helps to more effectively represent the story? Images in prose fiction are most useful for the reading experience when they work interdependently with the words on the page. What we must do here is analyse the implications that such use of pictures has on the conventional reading process.

Starting with McCloud's additive category, the question the reader must ask in order to test whether the image on the page of a novel adheres to this category is: do the words on the page form part of the image that is being depicted? If they don't then the page is operating in a similar way to McCloud's additive category. The reader notices that McCloud's definition of additive panels is similar in effect to the use of traditional illustrations in conventional novels. If this category

is used for approaching images on the pages of prose, pictures on their pages that *don't* replace the main textual narrative seem to fit McCloud's description and seem to be doing the same thing for the reader. Additive images supplement the main textual narrative by visualising a scene in the accompanying narrative or by picturing something that the narrator can 'see'. This type of word-picture combination defines in absolute terms, specifically illustrating the events taking place in the narrative. Rather than doubling the potential significations of the text that they support, additive images assist the reader in understanding the author's original vision for the narrative. They force the reader to picture the scene in a specific way. It is also worth noting that traditionally these types of images have often been created by an external artist and not the author. This supplementary aspect of such images is discussed later as *supplementary images*, a more specific term that helps to suggest the supplementary aspect of the image, assisting and adding to meaning but never supplanting the importance of the textual narrative. Another method of describing traditional illustration, these supplementary images do exactly that, they supplement the generation of meaning from the page. They are often found wholly on the verso side of the pages of the novel and don't require any major alterations to the traditional reading process. There are exceptions of course, and these are analysed in further detail in section 4.6.

McCloud's montage category initially seems quite useful for considering the affect of certain word-image combinations on the page of prose fiction. When transposed to analysis of pictures in prose fiction, montage images must feature text that is a part of the overall image. This type of word-image combination is very rare in prose fiction but can be partially found in the examples that will be examined later. It has also been partially dealt with in Chapter 3 of this book and possesses many similarities with the narrative textual images/arrangements found there in section 3.6. Hall's 'conceptual marine life' in *The Raw Shark Texts* are partially relevant to McCloud's montage type because the images of them are represented by the arrangement of the words on the page. This works in context with the main narrative because the creatures only exist in the mind of the narrator, thus giving reason for their unique construction. Montage images in McCloud's definition of comic panels are images where the words in a frame make up part of the image and are integral to the understanding of it.

McCloud's 'montage' concept can only partially be applied to images in works of prose that are constructed by words in a unique typographic arrangement. Categorisation is rather limited in this case and actually

seems to be more suitable to the textual gestures seen in the previous chapter. McCloud's montage concept doesn't transfer very well to the study of pictures (if we are to separate pictures from words) in prose fictions but elements of his analysis is developed and incorporated into the study of what McCloud calls interdependent panels and what will later be called *narrative images*. McCloud's concepts are complicated when text plays a part in the visual image, as they require a separation of word and image. In graphic novels text is often placed in bubbles and text boxes, in works of prose that do this, the text is often a part of the image, like the *narrative images* in Philips' *A Humument*.

The most useful tool in our observations of word-image combinations can be found when transposing McCloud's interdependent category of graphic novel panels to pages of the novel. Page 155 of *Understanding Comics* calls interdependent panels, 'perhaps the most common type of word/picture combination…where words and pictures go hand in hand to convey an idea that neither could convey alone' (p. 155). While specifically referring to comic book panels, it is also one of the most common and most effective types of word/picture combinations to be found in prose fiction that feature images. Rather than supplementing the prose, like McCloud's additive category, interdependent panels suggest a symbiotic relationship between the words and pictures that the reader uses to gain further signification from the narrative. This type of visual device is a much more accurate term to describe the most disruptive, yet effective, type of image-device on the pages of prose fiction. Images that actually form or replace the main textual narrative in works of prose act as a challenge for the reader usually accustomed to narrative presented as text in sentences and paragraphs. These work even more effectively when the images that feature alongside the text represent something that is fundamentally required for the reader to gain full meaning from the text.

This analysis is focused on pages of prose fiction that feature images that either replace the main narrative or have an interdependent relationship with the text on the page – when the reader cannot generate meaning without the use of both words and pictures. Therefore, what we will now call a *narrative image* is any image, be it an illustration, photograph or facsimile that takes the place of the textual narrative but continues to forward the narrative through visual means instead or, any image that is required for the reader to fully understand the main textual narrative. Unlike *supplementary images*, *narrative images* do not supplement the narrative; instead, they *are* the narrative or are *needed* for the textual narrative to make sense. In this way, they have

similarities to the interdependent images from McCloud's book. After all, what is more interdependent than text that is also an image that is the narrative? McCloud defines 'interdependent' panels in graphic novels as panels that combine words and pictures with equal importance in order to convey the narrative. This is common and, indeed, necessary for effective narrative in the graphic novel form. *Supplementary images* are by far the most common type of image found on the pages of prose fiction; it is far more rare for the reader to find pictures that can be classified as *narrative images* in works of prose fiction.

We will now move beyond McCloud's work with the hope to test the usefulness of the terms *supplementary images* (generated from McCloud's 'Additive' category) and *narrative images* (generated from McCloud's 'Montage' and 'Interdependent' categories) for use in reader-based analysis of prose fictions that use combinations of words and pictures to convey narrative and meaning. This assimilation and synthesis of McCloud's categories helps with the analysis of what the images on the pages of several works of prose do to the reading process but we must first test how useful they are. We will remain focused on the reader's approach to pages that feature images and discuss how examples disrupt and hinder or promote and assist the generation of meaning.

4.6   Supplementary Images in Prose Fiction

A *supplementary image* is any visual aspect of the page, be it an illustration, photograph, diagram or facsimile that assists the reader in visualising the main, text-based narrative. These images are usually separate from the main blocks of textual narrative and are traditionally found on the verso page in the book in conventional prose fiction. In addition to this, supplementary images can often be found in the margins or at the foot of the page or even in the main text area but they are never a substitute for the main textual narrative in the novel. Instead, they are a visual accompaniment to the main narrative that provides the reader with an aside or a visual means of understanding the narrative. Most often they are illustrations of the events that are happening in the main narrative or illustrations that depict the main themes or that create a visual metaphor. There are two main differences between graphic novels and prose fiction – prose doesn't traditionally work with panels and pictures and the text on the pages of a novel is not placed upon the image like it is in comic book panels. These pictures are not the main focus of the narrative in any of the works of prose in this section, and are instead a small proportion of overall page content, combined with

the fact that they 'add' to the textual narrative while requiring its context. This type of visual device can be defined as a *Supplementary Image* from here onwards, as a type of image that supplements the narrative but does not replace it. Text still dominates on the page and any gap created by the removal of a supplementary image would not be crucial or detrimental to the main narrative. The pictures add an additional layer of meaning to the page/narrative and help to more accurately convey meaning than the ambiguity of words. They act as a secondary visual signifier that supports the linguistic signifiers on the page.

Supplementary images also include images that elaborate or expand on the narrative. This definition is useful when dealing with more traditional narrative illustrations, the kind that would have been given a page in novels of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and represent the least disruptive type of visual device in this chapter. While the novels that feature this type of image are not necessarily good examples of texts that utilise the textual space of the page in new and disruptive ways, they still have unusual effects on the reader. The implications of these effects are analysed here.

Many effective examples of *supplementary images* can be found throughout Reif Larsen's *The Selected Works of T. S. Spivet: A Novel* (2010). In the context of this novel, the reader is told that it is T. S. (Tecumseh Sparrow), the twelve-year-old protagonist and narrator, who is 'responsible' for these illustrations (the illustrations in this novel are actually provided by Ben Gibson, a friend of the real author, Reif Larsen). From page one of the novel, T. S. provides the reader with supplementary images such as the map of his home 'Coppertop Ranch' in Butte, Montana (p. 1). This map appears in the main textual space above the chapter notation but is accompanied by another map, this time of T. S.'s bedroom in the right-hand margin of the same page. The illustrations in this novel are often accompanied by text either above or below them in the margins that help to give them context. Page one features a textual explanation of the map of T. S.'s bedroom, and another illustration of the Sparrow Skeleton that was given to him after he was born. In the context of the narrative it is stated, 'At the moment of my birth, the sparrow had fatally crashed into the kitchen window' (ibid). These images supplement but do not replace the main narrative that is concerned with the events that follow a phone call that T. S. receives from the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C. that offers him the prestigious Baird Fellowship. While most of the illustrations in this novel can be found in the margins, accompanied by a broken arrow leading from the relevant text to the illustration, some of them actually take over the page and dominate

the space that is usually taken up by the main textual narrative. Page 63 provides the reader with a close plan-view of T. S.'s ranch that shows the movement of bats around that he makes for Dr Yorn, a friend of his mother and a close paternal figure to T. S. Upon turning to this page, the reader notes that the illustration of the narrator's farm takes up all the textual space of the page and is accompanied by textual annotations that show the position of the family's Llama, a flood light, a 'gate that squeaks' and importantly, a 'cassette tape with dictation of my last will and testament buried beneath [an] oak tree'. The map gives a sense of verisimilitude to the reader, concretizing the illusion that the book that the reader holds is a notebook with doodles and diagrams on its pages. The reader is led to suspend their disbelief that the narrator has written and drawn in a selection of notebooks that are then presented to the reader as facsimiles. T. S. contextualises the inclusion of the map at the bottom of the same page when he says, 'I made this map for Dr Yorn, who was an amateur chiroptologist. But I also made it for him in case I died. I wanted him to know where my Last Will and Testament was. (I made this map before he started lying to me.)'. The map does not replace the narrative for the reader (without the text before, after and annotating the image, it would not make sense) but it certainly enriches it and gives the reader a view into the visual way that the main protagonist thinks. It seems absurd that a twelve-year-old has made a Last Will but here Larsen demonstrates the abnormality of the narrator and provides the reader with a visual example of how he communicates. The inclusion of a map that documents the movement of bats without any context could seem random and disconnected from the main narrative but it shows the associative way that the narrator contemplates life if the reader looks at the final two paragraphs of the previous page:

> We pounded along, my father's hand on top of the wheel, his weak pinky cocked slightly upward. I watched the bats crackle and plunge against the sky. Such light things. Theirs was a world of reflection and deflection, of constant conversation with surface and solid. It was a life I could not endure: they never knew *here*; they only knew the echo of *there*. (ibid, p. 62)

The bats and their echolocation that are on the narrator's mind translate into the map of the movement of bats that he had previously given his friend, the scientist Dr Yorn, who over the course of the narrative has appeared as a sort of 'ideal father figure' for T. S., who has a difficult relationship with his tough and quiet Rancher father. Much of the

subsequent narrative is spent documenting T. S.'s complex genealogy and his relationship with his father. The illustration in this example supplements the main textual narrative. Importantly, this is a supplementary image because the reader does not require it to gain meaning from the text.

The reader notes that *supplementary images* in *The Selected Works of T.S. Spivet* also eat into the main narrative space from the margins but are always treated like a footnote, accompanying text or annotations and always signposted by a broken arrow line that helps the reader to navigate the page. The illustrations that intrude on the main narrative space become similar to McCloud's 'montage' concept as well as being 'additive', or what we have now termed *supplementary* in reference to works of prose. The illustrations and diagrams in Larsen's novel mostly remain in the margins but they sometimes intrude into the traditional narrative space, forcing the main textual narrative to 'wrap' around it. They also pose a challenge to the reader, being the first thing that they focus on when they look at the page but not knowing how they relate to the narrative. The illustrations are often diagrammatic, like the oil pump and map of the ranch in the previous example. The image still supplements the narrative rather than forming it. The illustrations enhance the narrative and provide an insight into the narrator's unique way of communicating but the textual narrative always takes precedence on the pages of the book, as if they *were* scientific illustrations.

It is also worth noting that many diagrams featured in works of prose fiction can be categorised as *supplementary images*. Many of the pictures in *T. S. Spivet* are diagrammatic in form and pages 298 and 299 of Steven Halls *The Raw Shark Texts* appear at first glance to be lifted from an instruction manual because of the diagram that appears on the top of page 298 and the subsequent annotations that are presented in a different font from the rest of the narrative. The diagram, unlike a lot of the images in Hall's book is not constructed out of text but rather lines and geometric shapes. It is, in fact, an image and not unlike the diagram of T. S. Spivet's farm earlier in this section. The diagram in question is a top-down (plan) view of the *Orpheus*, a conceptual boat made out of 'fresh wood and old floorboards, shelves, skirting boards…cardboard boxes, tea chests…[a] green plastic garden strimmer…' (2007, pp. 298–99) and more. It takes the narrator, Eric, quite some time to allow himself to believe that such an arrangement of 'ordinary things' (p. 300) can really be in any sense a boat. The diagram that shows the arrangement of these everyday objects certainly represents a boat. Still, after a dream sequence of his time with his late-girlfriend Clio back on Naxos

he finally accepts that the ideas of things can become something else. In this example the diagram is not constructed from text, but the context that it appears in allows Hall to represent an instruction manual that gives integrity to the boat. The reader doesn't need the diagram to make sense of the text, but they are assisted by the diagram; giving a degree of 'substance' to a complex and figurative concept, it supplements the main narrative. This diagram provides the reader with an illusion of realism, showing the reader an excerpt from a book that the narrator holds and helping them to understand a fairly unrealistic concept – a conceptual boat. This is an example of something that a textual diagram brings closer to reality (i.e. it is conceptual) and questions the substance of the 'real' thing.

A second noteworthy diagram in *The Raw Shark Texts* comes towards the end of the story, on page 410. This chapter is entitled 'The Light Bulb Fragment (Part Three/Encoded Section)' and follows a trend of other 'Light Bulb Fragment' chapters that have frequented the narrative. These chapters have a common topic – the events that happened to Eric on the Greek island of Naxos. It is in this final encoded section that Eric remembers that his girlfriend, Clio Aames, drowned while scuba diving off the coast of the island. It is the death of Clio that has resulted in Eric's psychosis, amnesia and the subsequent events that have occurred throughout the narrative in the novel. This chapter starts with a supplementary image – a diagram (though the reader could also draw comparisons between this and the iconic textual arrangements or narrative textual arrangements in sections 3.5 and 3.6 of this book). The word 'everything' is depicted by an arrangement of arrows on the page but isn't completely necessary for the reader's comprehension of the narrative. This diagram is then supported by the first sentence of the chapter, 'Everything is over'. The diagram is a visual code that is found when Eric decodes a video tape with a flashing light bulb that is found to be in morse code. Eric then applies the 'QWERTY code' to the video – each letter represented by the morse is attributed to its position on a QWERTY computer keyboard, resulting in the actual letter being one of eight letters that are adjacent to it on the keyboard. So, the letter 'G' could be 'R, F, V, B, N, H, Y or T'. This appears to be a fairly labour intensive code, requiring multiple results and interpretations until the reader is told that it isn't the letter that is important but rather the direction the letter is in from the original 'morse' letter. These directions can be converted into arrows that ultimately form the word 'everything' at the start of the chapter. This image stands out from the rest of the narrative because as well as being composed of diagrammatic arrows it is

also in a larger type than the main textual narrative. The original 'everything' diagram is only slightly disruptive to the reading process and it only becomes supplementary to the narrative once the reader begins to read the first paragraph of the chapter, for it isn't needed to understand the narrative. The QWERTY keyboard diagram/image is, again, only partially disruptive but very useful to the reader. The puzzles that the narrator faces in Hall's narrative are conveyed to the reader, promoting interaction with the text beyond engaging with the narrative. These diagrams never replace the narrative but they do fulfil a useful role, creating a memorable reading experience with only minor disruptions to the narrative. In this way these examples from *The Raw Shark Texts* represent a subtly different type of supplementary image, one that is not merely a representation of events in the narrative that assists the generation of meaning but that requires further interaction with the text, visualising the actions of the narrator.

Steve Tomasula's *The Book of Portraiture* (2006) frequently features pictures alongside text. Much of the Spanish section that spans a significant portion of the novel is attributed to the fine art master Diego Velasquez's notebooks, and many of his most famous paintings are sketchily reproduced by the author in line form, without colour. Page 24 features a sketch of the King's dwarf, Sebastian de Morra, whilst page 25 features a sketch of the Cardinal who accosted the dwarf in the narrative (note that the pages also have an artificial 'aged' look). The illustrations supplement the textual narrative by providing the reader with 'quick' preliminary sketches of Velázquez's famous paintings. Page 26 features a sketch of his *Old Woman Cooking*, which Velasquez, as the narrator suggests he should have titled *Two Eggs* instead, and page 27 has an image of *Three Men at a Table.* None of the four images on these pages act as narrative on their own, they only supplement the main narrative by giving a visual representation of the painting that is being discussed in the text. That is not to say that each painting doesn't have its own narrative of sorts, just not one that develops the main narrative of the novel. They give an illustrated representation of real paintings that reinforce the 'sketchbook/diary' format of this section of Tomasula's novel. Supplementary images often seem to provide both contextual representations *and* support the illusion that the book that the reader holds is really a notebook, diary or some other form distinct from a work of prose fiction.

The end of Velázquez's section in *The Book of Portraiture* finishes on page 81 with a full page illustration of his most famous work, *Las Meninas* (1656), a masterpiece of self-reflexive painting and the crux

of *The Book of Portraiture*. This example, purposefully sketched out in a light, brown pencil, just like the previous examples, gives the reader the illusion that this was one of Velasquez's preliminary sketches of the finished work, done hastily in his notebook with supporting textual annotations.

The style of the images in *The Book of Portraiture* (all drawn by the author himself) is consciously simple, sketching out a general outline of the finished paintings, giving the reader a 'sense' of the finished work, acknowledging that the finished pieces are now famous and easily found for a reader with access to an internet search engine or several books of art. This section of *The Book of Portraiture* represents Velasquez's notebook and the images reflect and represent this form. *Las Meninas* is important for many reasons, though the original sketch in the book leaves out many of the finished painting's complexities. Technically, *Las Meninas* is a detailed representation of the king and queen's view (reflected back in the mirror on the far wall), employing strong use of shadow and light from the open door. It is also noteworthy for the appearance of the artist himself and his canvas that enters the picture from the left. This subverts the traditional focus of painting. The viewer is not an extension of the painter in this instance; instead, they take the same stance of the King and Queen whose reflections appear in the mirror on the rear wall of the room. The mirror acts as another 'frame' to the image. The door to outside is also open, forming another frame (the door frame) that the reader can see out of the scenario. Tomasula's book is also concerned with 'frames' and multiple layers of narration. We could also note that the multiple frames of *Las Meninas* share similarities with the panels that form a page of a graphic novel, there are multiple areas of the canvas to look at. *The Book of Portraiture* spans four different sections from four different eras in human history. The reader receives a 'portrait' of each period, much like Velazquez includes himself, the King and Queen and their aides in his portrait of the young princess in his own painting.

Additive panels in comics can translate with some relevance over to works of prose that include supplementary images on the page to accompany the textual narrative. The images 'add' to the narrative without ever becoming a substitute for the textual narrative. They require narrative context for correct interpretation, and are always surplus to requirements, assisting the generation of meaning rather than being responsible for it. They are only slightly disruptive to the reading process, often coming as a relief for the reader rather than a frustration that must be studied at length to find meaning from it. We must also

acknowledge that pictures are a fundamental asset of a comic book and are not a fundamental part of traditional prose fiction. Novels that add illustrations 'help' to convey the meaning of their narrative and assist the reading of the page. A writer of prose consciously chooses to challenge conventions of the form by including pictures as well as words on their page, though these examples are not as disruptive as the narrative images that feature in examples in the next section of this chapter. When a picture appears on a page, it is given heightened significance because of the traditions of the prose form and the way it breaks them. Still, pictures always used to be a common part of a work of prose fiction.

Supplementary images as conventional illustrations, photographs or diagrams never wholly replace the main textual narrative of a novel. They exist much like conventional illustrations in older works, particularly from the nineteenth century and earlier. The reader's reaction to such images is fairly conventional, and they often do not disrupt the reading process to any great degree. Instead, these types of images supplement the narrative and provide the reader with an extra visualisation of events or characters in the novel and are in many ways a less disruptive type of *iconic textual arrangement* (see section 3.4), albeit constructed from lines and a camera rather than the arrangement of text. Supplementary images are often used to create verisimilitude in the narrative, appearing as doodles and diagrams that evoke a sense of other forms such as notebooks and diaries that the book attempts to mimic.

4.7   Narrative Images in Prose Fiction

Narrative Images are potentially much more disruptive to the reader, since they require them to question the value and relationship between words and pictures and to use a different type of visual literacy uncommon in the reading of conventional novels.

Narrative images are word and picture combinations that do not just supplement the textual narrative, they are significantly *necessary* for the textual narrative to function. This type of image on the page of prose fiction is rare but there are notable novels that attempt to achieve this. The best way of describing these images is to suggest that they exhibit interdependency with the words on the page, the words enhance the meaning gained from the pictures and the pictures enhance the textual content on that page. This type of visual device is more disruptive to the conventional reading process when compared with the implications of supplementary images but they are also the type of image that are most

effective for demonstrating the potential of incorporating pictures on to the pages of prose fiction alongside textual narrative. These images often have as much value as the words on the page in the generation of meaning. As a visual aspect of the page, narrative images are also often the first aspect that the reader encounters. The reader sees the image before they begin to read the textual narrative. The unconventional feature of an image on the page of prose fiction initially disrupts conventional reading practices but consequently assists the generation of meaning and draws upon the reader's visual literacy in tandem with their textual literacy. Like the *supplementary images* found in the previous section of this chapter, narrative images highlight the inherent distinctions between words and images, though narrative images require the reader to engage in this questioning more overtly, asking themselves why an image has been chosen to represent the narrative *over* the traditional textual narrative.

The felt-tip pen pictures in Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* (1973) are deliberately simplistic in order to convey their message easily whilst at the same time pointing out the ambiguity and misrepresentation of language. Vonnegut's famous illustration of an 'asshole' on page 5 of *Breakfast of Champions* only becomes one with the support of the preceding text and is thus a type of *narrative image*. Without the context given to the reader in the preceding paragraph this image could be regarded as an asterisk or star. In fact, his earlier comments about the 'Star-Spangled Banner' in the text that precedes the image may lead the reader to interpret it as such – a star on the American flag. Likewise, his drawing of the flame of Liberty on page 11 could also be interpreted as an ice cream cone due to the crude depiction in felt-tip pen. The narrator mentions in the accompanying text that 'It was a sort of ice-cream cone on fire' (p. 11), and sure enough, it is. With the text that precedes both examples, they act as a quick (the simple lines encourage short contemplation time), simple visual display of the narrative content that highlights the ambiguities inherent in written language. In this case it could be argued that the complexities of language that every writer wrestles with can be augmented and supported by the inclusion of illustrations that goes back to the creative writing dictum: 'show, don't tell'. These images rely on interdependency with the text because their full meaning is generated by the textual narrative that accompanies them.

The simplistic prose that Vonnegut uses in his textual narrative is mirrored by the simplistic felt-tip pen illustrations that frequent the pages of the novel. Their simplicity means that the illustrations only punctuate the text, rather than disrupt it. The secondary significations of the

two examples shown above also mirror the ambiguity of written language, demonstrating the difficulty in communicating ideas via words while attempting to help the generation of meaning by the supporting illustrations. This is problematic when the simplicity of the illustrations allow for multiple representations, a star or an anus and a torch or an ice-cream cone in the above examples. The reader sees these images first, before they start to read the text on each page, and they start hypothesising what they represent before they read the narrative that accompanies them. Nearly all of the illustrations on the pages of Vonnegut's novel are intentionally ambiguous, leading the reader to initially assume they represent one thing before the narrative tells them it represents something completely different.

The reader may notice that the images in *Breakfast of Champions* are situated somewhere in between the categories of *supplementary images* and *narrative images* (and possibly iconic textual images and narrative textual images). This is because the images not only elaborate on the prose on the page; they also represent the drawings of an omniscient author, highlighting the multiple meanings of words and the difficulty of representation in writing and illustrating. The images require the text for the reader to find meaning from them but the overall meaning of the novel requires the interdependency of both words and pictures. Pages 22 and 23 demonstrate this complicated interdependency. The word-image 'Wide Open Beavers Inside!' (p. 22), represents a words-only sign that is then explored and expanded upon on page 23 with an image of a beaver (the animal), closely followed by a line drawing of female genitalia. The naïve prose that supports these crudely drawn images plays along with the idea that picture books are the domain of children's fiction while at the same time providing or discussing adult content. The supplementary effect of these illustrations is a secondary level of meaning that the reader can use. These are not detailed illustrations that accurately represent what is happening in the text, rather, they are simple line drawings that comment on the problem of representation that is a focus of this novel. Unlike the supplementary images discussed in the previous section, the illustrations on the pages of *Breakfast of Champions* require the narrative text to make sense, and the narrative text requires the illustrations to convey the meaning of the novel.

A reader of a traditional novel may presume that the novel form doesn't need pictures to convey an idea; after all, words have always been the domain of the novel form. Any illustrations on the pages in traditional novels have only ever fulfilled a supplementary role. Reading is a

vehicle for the imagination and the most artistically successful authors are often the ones who can convey the most lucid imagery and characters through the use of the language. The novels approached in this book still seem to prioritise text; after all, they are not so dominated by images as to be classed as graphic novels. On occasion, their use of pictures alongside words allows for a symbiotic relationship to develop that enhances the narrative for the reader.

Phillips's paintings in *A Humument* (1970/86/98/04) literally combine text with images in a way that out of all the examples in this chapter, are the most similar to the graphic novel form. *A Humument* is a palimpsest, created from painting over each page of W. H. Mallock's *A Human Document* (1892), and Mallock's original text is usually still slightly visible underneath Phillips's paint. *A Humument* was first published in 1970 with the intention to repeatedly republish new editions of the novel that featured repainted pages until Phillips reaches his eventual goal which is to completely repaint over all the original painted pages of the novel. The first trade edition of the text was available in 1980 and since then three new editions have been released in 1986, 1998 and 2004, an iPad version of the book is also now available and has received critical acclaim for its use of the technology. In this section we will be looking at the 2004 edition of the book. Phillips disrupts the conventions of a typical Victorian novel by painting over each page. To use Bolter's (1999) term, he 'remediates' each page, ensuring that the reader approaches the book in a completely different way to the way they would have approached Mallock's original text. The reader of this novel cannot help but look for any significance in the narrative that lies just under the paint (after all, the reader usually looks for text in a work of prose fiction) but they are also distracted by the narrative that Phillips creates with the gaps and rivers of text that are left unpainted. The main text on page 38 states (first unpainted narrative excerpt): 'marry me lovely young eyes in my life said toge'; (second excerpt): 'In another moment rapidly surrounded by men with stars'; (third excerpt): 'But only toge may circle her sofa' (p. 38). Much of Mallock's original page 38 is still visible underneath the paint, most noticeable when painted over by a light colour such as grey, white or light blue. What is most striking at first is the 'comic book frame' (or splash page) appearance of this page, with its frame, picture and thought and dialogue 'bubbles'. Secondly is the image that Phillips depicts – two people (Toge and his lover) talking at a table in a room with wallpaper, a painting and a window that looks out on to a blue sky with a tree or bush. Many of Phillips's paintings in the book are non-figurative, depicting geometric shapes or patterns,

though this one represents a setting and supports the narrative, however, it *is* also the narrative. The pages in *A Humument* all feature word and picture combinations, like graphic novels, but the pictures usually take precedence in this novel. Still, the reader requires a combination of the words that are left unpainted and the images in order to gain meaning from each page. Several different colours are also used, whilst the human forms remain abstracted, mere lines and colour that appropriate the vagueness of the persons in a similar way to the earlier work of Henri Matisse whilst also staying short of literally depicting the characters. This is a narrative image at its most literal, the image illustrates (or does not illustrate) the text that Phillips' leaves unpainted. The image is interrupted by the often difficult to decipher text.

On page 103 of Phillips's novel, Bill Toge's lover is having a conversation with another figure and Phillips presents an image reflecting this. The narrative is not told with painted images alone and, instead, Phillips reveals Mallock's original text in order to tell his story. As noted in the previous example from *A Humument*, it is startling how similar this page is to a panel in a comic book. Phillips frames the image and includes tail-less balloons that contain the narrative. The difficulty for the reader is in working out who is speaking. Both examples feature representations of figures, unlike many of the abstract geometric designs found on other pages of the novel. Unlike a graphic novel, the 'rivers' of text that Phillips leaves unpainted do not feature tails that dictate which of the two characters in the image is speaking.

The examples from *A Humument* and *Breakfast of Champions* above demonstrate interdependency between the words and the images to an extent that both are needed for the generation of meaning. Both have equal status as narrative, unlike the supplementary images in section 4.6 where the words took precedence on the page. These examples are the closest that the novel form gets to the conventions of comic books, especially in the case of Phillips' text that could be argued to be read as a series of 'splash' pages. It is unfortunate that not many examples of this sort of device can be found in works of prose that use pictures.

Graham Rawle's *Woman's World* and Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts* do not strictly fit the definition of narrative images described in the introduction to this section. Instead, they both have elements of supplementary images and, at times, iconic textual imagery. *Woman's World* also features a unique presentation that causes this problem of categorisation. The novel presents the reader with an interesting dilemma in relation to the distinct category of narrative images. The entire narrative of *Woman's World* is composed of cut-out words and letters from copies of women's

magazines, meaning that the narrative itself is composed of textual arrangements and small illustrations, also found in the same magazines. This example sits in between narrative textual gestures, supplementary images and narrative images. The main textual narrative that appears on the page is both narrative textual imagery and a narrative image, due to the unique method of forming the narrative in this novel. This 'collage-effect' is distinct from the previous examples of narrative images in this section but warrants inclusion here to show the limitations of such categorisation of visual devices. Page 3, the opening page of the narrative in *Woman's World,* includes a small illustration of a house within the main narrative space that confirms the difficulty in categorising the images in this text. The narrative accompanying this page is complemented by the illustration's inclusion, 'It's what any woman wants when she loves her **HOME**'. The word 'home' is capitalised and the cut out is presented as 'reversed' type in order to signify its importance and connection with the image. This book is also an interesting instance of literal intertextuality. Rather than reference other works, *Woman's World* simultaneously uses them to create itself. The reader feels a heightened, though illusory, sense of materiality when they look at each page. The original manuscript, created by cutting out and pasting (rather than a word processor's virtual cutting and pasting) words and sentences from articles in women's periodicals onto the pages of the book would really give a sense of how important the physical object is to the act of reading. Instead, the reader is left with a printed version of the author's original work but still retains a partial effect of the original artefact. Importantly the images in this text *are* the individual cut-out words, as well as examples like the house in the above example and the telephone in the next example from this novel. Without the 'pasted' words, the pages of the novel would be blank and the reader would be unable to generate meaning. The supplementary and narrative images and the words are interdependent in *Woman's World* and we could say that every page of the entire book features *narrative images*.

This collage-effect in *Woman's World* is interesting and important for the study of novels that use visual images on their pages. The text that forms the narrative is, by definition, a type of image. Each word is a type of picture and sometimes the text is accompanied by a small pictorial supplementary representation of the word. The vast majority of the pictures in the novel are actually the narrative itself, thus conforming, in part, to this category of *narrative images*. This textual collage effect problematises the categorisation of this section, actually fitting McCloud's 'montage' panel category better (which was partly assimilated into this

new category of narrative images earlier). Each word is an image and the author occasionally inserts small supplementary pictures, like a hand holding a telephone and the house in the previous example, cut out from various women's magazines.

Woman's World has no universal font throughout the narrative; instead it constantly changes and allows for wider interpretation depending on the font and size of each word. On page 91, the reader can instantly see that 'Called' is significantly larger than the rest of the words on the page and it is supported by the visual image of a hand and a telephone. Their eyes are drawn to the middle of the page and the image before they begin to read the top line of narrative. The size of the word-image disrupts the flow of the reading process but allows for a secondary generation of meaning from the narrative. The protagonist is transgender. The resulting presentation of the book is reminiscent of stereotypical 'ransom-notes' often seen in crime dramas on television or in film. Though the reader only confirms the true gender of the main character towards the end of the novel, the presentation of the text on the page allows the reader to speculate about the possible reasons for such a choice and ultimately, having finished the narrative, the reader can formulate and generate meaning from the device. Though unable to confidently fit into either of the two types of image discussed in this chapter (though arguably more of a narrative than a supplementary image), the unique nature of this novel highlights the distinction between words and images and allows the reader to understand the visual nature of the linguistic sign. Each word is an image in itself – a *wordimage*.

In Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts*, a different visual device is used to represent the death of the 'Ludovician' shark that is a distinct narrative image, replacing the narrative and telling it visually instead. The narrator, Eric Sanderson, is now alone in the ocean (see 'Iconic Narrative' in section 3.6 for more details on the context of this) with only a laptop and the approaching shark that has seemingly killed his friends, Dr Fidorous and Scout. In a final act of desperation, Eric throws the laptop into the shark's open jaws. The shark explodes in a shower of text that is represented on page 419. The reader can see that the subsequent narrative image takes up the entirety of the page and features a watery smudging effect of the paper in the sea, much like the 'wavy' paragraph on page 323. This is not an image that stands outside of the narrative but it is rather, a direct visual representation of what Eric can see in front of him, thus, forming the narrative, albeit a more visual one than simply text. This image replaces the main textual narrative, demonstrating the potential of the visual image on the pages of a novel.

When applied correctly, these images (that are literally both the narrative *and* images at some level) can add another layer of signification to the page and assist the reader in generating meaning. In comparison to the *supplementary* examples in the previous section, it could be argued that this use of words and pictures is a more mimetically effective one when it is done correctly. They work as a visual representation of the linguistic signifier and provide a wider means of representation. They can mimetically represent objects or scenarios in a different way from similar uses in graphic novels. However, novels that arrange words and pictures in this way are still rare.

Many comparisons have been noted between examples of *supplementary* and *narrative images* and the types of text images in the previous chapter (3). They work and act as interesting counterpoints to *iconic textual images* (see 3.5) and *iconic narrative* (3.7). Yet they *are* different, mainly because the examples in this chapter are not formed from an arrangement of words, they are mostly formed from images (though *Woman's World* is an obvious exception and complication to this). The word and picture combinations that feature on the pages found in the previous primary texts call into question the relationship between words and images and, importantly, their differences. The narrative images featured in this section complicate the distinction between these two modes of representation, suggesting that pictures can be as effective at communicating narrative as long as they act interdependently with the words on the page.

4.8   Conclusions

It is impossible to fully distinguish a whole novel's images as supplementary or narrative because the examples that have been seen here can change too much from page to page. Like blank space and unconventional textual arrangements, the reader must analyse each image in context with the textual narrative that surrounds it or accompanies it. Sometimes the image will fit one of my two categories and there are also occasions when a device seems to fit both. Often the page seems to feature images that have elements of supplementary images and narrative images, resting somewhere in between these two categories (see *Woman's World*). At times the pages of these primary texts feature both supplementary and narrative images, requiring the reader to understand the differences between the usage of each image. This is complicated and requires further study.

The distinctive categorisation of comic book panels and images found in McCloud proved to be a useful starting point for the analysis of

images found on the pages of prose fiction but required changing in order to work for them. What is most apparent from attempting to transpose these categories onto examples from prose is that such a distinctive, segregated categorisation is not always useful. Some novels will use images that are 'additive', 'montage' and 'interdependent' at different times, and as discussed above, visual devices that feature elements of both supplementary and narrative images. Vonnegut provides one of the best examples of this contextual analysis of his pictures. His word pictures (the WIDE OPEN BEAVERS-INSIDE! on page 22 for example) seem to fall into the supplementary image category but other images in *Breakfast of Champions* appear to fit narrative images better because they are an acknowledged part of the narrator's story.

Many works of prose now demonstrate an awareness of the potential of the page for the placement of not just text, but now images, creating a visual narrative that often assists in the generation of meaning. This 'graphic storytelling' is not necessarily a new phenomenon. It is, however, a rarity to find works of prose that engage with images and unconventional textual arrangements. We must continue to find effective ways to analyse these works, separate from existing literary analysis, though assimilating relevant concepts from related disciplines. A prolonged study of a primary text will demonstrate the viability for the new critical terms generated in these three chapters. The next two case studies that follow this chapter use the terminology generated here to demonstrate this potential for effective literary analysis and critical interpretations of graphically disruptive pages. Both texts that feature in these case studies, Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing: A Real Fictitious Discourse* and William H. Gass's *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* feature examples of blank space, textual gestures, supplementary and narrative images that make them ideal for extensive analysis that utilise the new terms generated in these previous three chapters.

5

Case Study 1: Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing: A Real Fictitious Discourse* (1992)

5.1   Introduction

This case study demonstrates the effectiveness that an understanding of the implications of visual devices on the pages of prose fiction has in assisting interpretations of graphically disruptive prose fictions. It conducts a sustained close reading, analysis and interpretation of the postmodern writer, Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing: A Real Fictitious Discourse* (1992).

This novel is of particular use for such an exercise because of the plethora of unconventional visual devices and techniques that feature on nearly every one of its 270 pages. There are examples of textual gaps as blank space, iconic textual arrangements, narrative textual arrangements and supplementary images throughout the pages of the novel. The main aim of this case study is to approach *Double or Nothing* from a reader's perspective and demonstrate a new interpretation of the novel that highlights the challenges and disruptions to the conventional reading process that this novel often presents. The aim of this is to demonstrate the benefits of using newly generated critical vocabulary in relation to the interpretation of a previously critically neglected text, showing that it can be surmountable with an effective terminology and an understanding of its unconventional visual devices. Here we move beyond describing the reader's experience with graphically disruptive pages and the types of visual devices that feature on them, towards the benefits gained by applying new critical terms and an appreciation of the graphic surface of the page into a critical interpretation of the novel.

5.2   Background of the Novel

Double or Nothing: A Real Fictitious Discourse has been described, by Federman himself, as an 'autobiographical surfiction' (1975), and it documents a nineteen-year-old French Jewish immigrant's arrival in New York in 1947. The autobiographical background to the novel is significant because Federman is a Jewish immigrant who survived the Nazi Holocaust (the only one of his family to do so) and came to the United States in 1947, subsequently discovering a previously unknown uncle in New York. Rather than foregrounding his autobiographical experience, in *Double or Nothing*, Federman questions 'the possibilities of an adequate aesthetic representation of that very experience' (Oppermann and Oppermann, 1997, p. 43). This novel highlights a new understanding of the role that language plays in the process of creation and the 'relationship between the author and his fictional creations' (ibid, p. 43). The beginning of the fictional immigrant's story doubles upon the experiences of Federman's own life. The variety of visual devices on the surface of the pages of this novel is one way of exploring the inadequacy of aesthetic representation, particularly verbal representation, when dealing with a topic such as Holocaust survival.

The crux of the narrative in *Double or Nothing* focuses on the young immigrant who we later learn is called Boris (and will from now on always be referred to as Boris here). Having lost his entire family in the Holocaust, Boris intends to become a good citizen of the United States by learning English and working in a factory. Boris is the subject of the main narrative but is also possibly invented by the writer for the purposes of writing about his own experiences during the war and his emigration to America.

In the (fictionalised) introduction to the novel, entitled 'THIS IS NOT THE BEGINNING', Federman reflects upon his own painful process of producing the novel (the 'doubling' of the title – a fictional re-telling of Federman's own experiences as a Holocaust survivor). In their article, 'Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing*: A Prolegomena to a Postmodern Production Aesthetics' (1997, pp. 42–69), Serpil and Michael Oppermann also explain that:

> Instead of telling a story, the novel turns into a kind of dialogue between the writer and his text…the narrator debates the name of his protagonist (Jacques, Robert, Solomon, or Boris); vacillates over the name of the heroine (Mary, Marry or Peggy); cannot decide how to end his story; does not know where to start it (in France or in the States?); reflects upon the narrative tense (past, present, conditional

future, or a combination of all of them?); and discusses the story's aesthetic mode of representation (first or third person? Mimetic or non mimetic?). (pp. 44–45)

This 'dialogue between the writer and his text' is fundamental to interpreting the unusual disruptions and visual devices on the surface of this novel's pages. It takes the form of an unusual 'intramural' framing device, allowing the writer to discuss the act of writing and the difficulty in providing adequate aesthetic expression of his survival of the Holocaust. The reader is told that Boris the immigrant has recounted his memories to the narrator of the book that the reader holds (the 'implied' Federman, also referred to as 'the inventor' or 'noodler' throughout the novel). The narrative that follows this introductory section is then attributed to four different frames of narration. The subsequent narrative charts this 'inventor's' attempt to write a novel about Boris's experiences over the course of one year. Recalling the original narrative and deciding upon what food, writing materials and toiletries will be necessary to sustain him becomes problematic and causes frequent digressions in the narrative. Boris's story doubles upon the inventor's (and the actual Federman's) own past, 'writer' and 'subject' alike survived the Holocaust and came to North America by boat. By writing about his protagonist, the narrator (and both the implied and actual Federman) tries to come to terms with his own experience. Eventually, as the main narrative progresses, the reader notices that the distinction between the experiences of the inventor and Boris becomes more and more blurred, until they realise that Boris is a fictional construct created in order for the inventor (and by extension, Federman) to come to terms with his traumatic past.

   Each page of *Double or Nothing* is presented unconventionally, sometimes the textual layout of the page is reminiscent of a shape or other visual device, most often a picture or diagram, and the pages often feature a great deal of extended and additional blank space. In Jerzy Kutnik's *The Novel as Performance* (1986), Federman is quoted as saying:

   The movement of narrative and of language...should be a visible manifestation of the interaction of the four basic forces which are brought into play in the creation of a literary work: memory, imagination, language, and artistic awareness. (p. 176)

The four separate narrative frames (the 'recorder', 'inventor', 'Boris' and the 'implied author') are 'superimposed one upon another [and] are made to converge gradually and merge eventually into a single,

multilayered but inseparable structure' (Kutnik, 1986, p. 176) also match each of the 'four basic forces' mentioned above. The first figure in the text is attributed in the introduction (Federman, 1992, pp. 0-000000000.0) to *Double or Nothing* as a 'stubborn and determined middle-aged man…the *recorder*, the designer, the scribbler as it were of the second person's story' (ibid, p. 00). This first figure, the 'recorder' (as he will be referred to for the rest of this case study) asserts his presence in 'the space in which the discourse is concretized: the surface of the page' (Kutnik, 1986, p. 184). He says that, 'As a result of his conscientiousness, every page of his record becomes a typographical labyrinth, a masterpiece of visual design' (ibid, p. 184). This comment can be connected to the 'artistic awareness' and 'language' that form two of the main forces that Federman purports form the basis of the novel. The unconventional visual design of this novel allows this recorder figure to

> render concretely the unspeakable truth of the past which both memory (the protagonist) and imagination (the inventor) fail to articulate simply by means of typographical symbols: the parenthetical '(XXXX)' which, more powerfully than any words, conveys the reality of the young survivor's erased past. (ibid, p. 185).

This inexplicable event (the extermination of the 'inventor's' and Federman's family in the Holocaust) is only ever mentioned by this parenthetical missing content in a similar way to the X's that litter the latter pages of *House of Leaves* discussed in section 2.4 of Chapter 2 of this book. The often disruptive placement of text on the page, in comparison to a traditional page of text, mirrors Boris's and the inventor's fractured memories and their inability to deal with such a loss (yet Federman still attempts to construct it). Or rather, 'the recorder allows them [the reader] to experience the agony of a mind trying to communicate an experience beyond comprehension and description' (Kutnik, 1986, p. 185). The actual author (Federman) uses the textual arrangements (by the recorder) to find a way of representing what the writer (the inventor) needs to say about the subject's (Boris) traumatic past. The pages of *Double or Nothing* attempt to demonstrate the inability to convey the horror of the holocaust through typographical and linguistic means and this inadequacy of aesthetic representation is represented on the page by the iconographic X*X*X*X. We could draw comparisons between this typographic representation of the death of the inventor's family (four X's, four deaths) and the black tone that famously represents the death of Parson Yorick in *Tristram Shandy*. Both attempt

to represent the incomprehensibility of death and the inadequacy of linguistic representation in portraying it.

The inventor purports to be an 'irresponsible paranoiac fellow, who, incidentally, was also an inveterate gambler' (Federman, 1992, p. 00). Thus, the reader is told early on in the novel that the person responsible for the words that follow is mentally unstable and ethically dubious, making the reader constantly question the validity of the narrative that follows. This inventor is the writer who attempts to translate the story of Boris but gets distracted by the obsession of what it takes to lock oneself in a room for a year to write a story with only a 'sum of approximately 1200 dollars and some change' (ibid, p. 000). The inventor is therefore unreliable, not least because the reader is told that this character is an 'irresponsible paranoiac fellow' and an 'inveterate gambler' but also because this narrator is dealing with the memories of Boris (and really, his own) that are also frequently chaotic, fragmented and unreliable. This 'inventor' is the main narrator of the novel (though presented on the page by the 'recorder') that follows the page entitled 'BEGINNING'. As the narrative progresses this narrator and Boris's story become more and more entangled, the reader discovers that both characters share the same background and the narrative is a method of allowing the inventor to come to terms with his own past.

On the final page of the introduction to *Double or Nothing* (an unusual method of designating pagination is returned to throughout the novel, especially when the recorder uses a page for a supplementary image or iconic textual arrangement, in which case the page is unpaginated and the page that follows is given the same page number as the page before the image, suffixed by a .0 or a .1, e.g. page 11.1 that is found after the "Noodles and Potatoes" supplementary image), a footnote suggests that there is yet a fourth person involved in the text, 'someone to control organise supervise if you wish the activities and relations of the other three persons…someone who is like a father or like a supervisor but not necessarily like an inventor' (ibid, p. 000000000.0). In the same footnote it is suggested that this person 'may not be real and may never be heard and his presence never felt nonetheless is implied and implicit in this discourse'. This fourth narrator/figure is, of course, the implied author. This person is definitely *not* like an inventor. The recorder and the implied author are the two frames of the narrative that 'reflect different aspects of Federman's creative activity' (Oppermann and Oppermann, 1997, p. 48). The 'implied author' must exist in order to create a sense of unity between the other three – someone who is ultimately responsible for all three frames. This implied author is the 'real' Federman who uses the unconventional

framing device to expose the mechanisms of writing the novel – the aesthetics (recorder), the writer (inventor) and the subject (Boris).

This self-consciously obtuse 'intramural' set up is vitally important to understand. The word itself, intramural, meaning 'within walls', is very apt for describing the 'collaborative' nature of the presentation of the pages of *Double or Nothing*. Oppermann and Oppermann say:

> The complex interplay of narrative voices mirrors the novel's mode of production so that the entire novel foregrounds the 'mimesis of process.' Its dialogic mode of presentation, always part of the production process as an incessant questioning and answering activity between the writer and his (prospective) novel, is fictionalised in the dialogic relationship between the second [the 'inventor'] and the third person [Boris]. (1997, p. 48)

The reader quickly realises that Federman (or rather, the 'implied author' figure) is ultimately responsible for the presentation of the book but in the context of the narrative, this idiosyncratic framing device is vital to understanding and generating meaning from the page. This dialogic mode of presentation between the inventor and Boris (and Federman and the prospective *Double or Nothing* prior to writing) represents a dialogue about the possibilities of its own creation; 'it presents "a real fictitious discourse," as its subtitle proclaims' (ibid, p. 48). Federman himself plays the saxophone (ibid, p. 51), and is a keen jazz musician. We could consider the four frames of the novel as a 'jazz combo' of sorts. In *Double or Nothing*, Federman has gone out of his way to attempt to locate experience, writing and textual arrangements as separate roles in the creation of what the reader sees but in so doing it gives the narrative many opportunities to digress from traditional linear storytelling. The key here is that the reader *knows* the narrative is digressing which means that they hold in their mind what the *real* story/event is (the survival of the Holocaust), even though it is not in front of them, except for in the introductory section, entitled the 'BEGINNING'. Federman exposes these different aspects of the creation of a new novel in the four frames that each have different motifs that allow the reader to locate them in the text.

Kutnik refers to Federman's texts as *Novels of Performance* (1986) because a significant aspect of *Double or Nothing* is the performance of language on the page. Oppermann and Oppermann state:

> 'Performance', at this point, can be defined as the single act of writing which contributes to the production of the entire novel. The

individual act of performance is part of a highly complex movement in language that presents a (potentially infinite) process of coming to terms with an event in the writer's past. (1997, p. 43)

Double or Nothing's performative mode is 'most obvious in the relationship between the writer and the empty page which turns into a kind of performing space or stage' (ibid, p. 50). This 'performatory' aspect of the pages of graphically unusual fiction is significant, particularly in an autobiographical surfiction like *Double or Nothing*. It is important to discuss this here because of the autobiographical and formal nature of this novel that attempts to tell one story while failing to come to terms with the real story that the author intends to tell. The difficulty of finding adequate representation of the author's, inventor's and Boris's Holocaust survival is key to understanding *Double or Nothing's* intramural form and the disruptions to the conventional graphic surface of the page. Federman's 'jazz-like' performance of the language on the page (recurring motifs such as 'noodles' that are improvised on the surface of the page), embodied by the recorder, is his way of attempting to come to terms with his past by converting the events of it into a fictional narrative that is graphically unconventional and closer to the incomprehensible events of his past, often giving the reader the illusion that the writer/recorder is improvising with the placement of the narrative on the page. Federman attempts three different performances of this event by writing himself into his text as the recorder, the inventor and Boris. The performance of language isn't usually connected to the disruption of the conventional presentation of text on the page but this novel attempts to 'double' upon this, so that representation is provided by the text that constructs the narrative and the significations provided by the unusual textual arrangements on the page. This is neglected by Kutnik and Serpil and Michael Oppermann admit that they 'will necessarily neglect certain features that are admittedly crucial to Federman's text' (1997, p. 43). They neglect the concept of the reader as an active participant in the creation of the novel, a crucial part of this study and a gap filled by this case study. They also confess to neglecting 'the notion of the text as a parody of a traditional realistic or mimetic narrative' (ibid, p. 43). This, too, is an aspect of the text that is crucial to understanding how, and why the text disrupts the conventional surface of the page. These disruptions affect and have implications for the interpretation of the page. The novel is 'performed' both for the reader *and* the writer. Federman's presentation of the book that attempts to demonstrate the process of writing a traumatic event

requires an ability to discuss the visual devices present on the page and why they assist the interpretation of the narrative by the reader.

5.3   Close Reading

Using the knowledge of *Double or Nothing's* autobiographic and intra-mural construction, this section demonstrates how the blank spaces, textual arrangements and images on the pages of the novel affect the reader and expose the mechanisms of writing a prospective novel. It will explore how the disruptions to conventional pages in this novel attempt to convey a representation of the writer's traumatic past that goes beyond just verbal and textual depictions. The unconventional arrangements of text on the page (and a great deal of blank space) are the first thing that the reader sees when opening the book. Here is an analysis of what implications the unusual visual devices on the pages of *Double or Nothing* have on the interpretation of the narrative(s). A copy of Federman's book would be useful for reference during the section.

The X's that sometimes appear on the pages and in the inventor's narrative in *Double or Nothing* are quickly associated with mentions of the Holocaust and the death of Boris's and the inventor's parents and siblings. Page 0 of the novel states

> that his parents both his father and mother and his two sisters one older and the other younger than he had been deported they were Jewish to a German concentration camp Auschwitz probably and never returned, no doubt having been exterminated deliberately X*X*X*X, and that, therefore, the young man who was now an orphan, a dis-placed person, who during the war, had managed to escape deporta-tion by working very hard on a farm in Southern France, would be happy and grateful to be given the opportunity to come to America

Kutnik refers to the symbol *X* as an expression of 'the agony of a mind trying to communicate an experience beyond comprehension and description' (1986, p. xxvii). Similar use of X's were found in *House of Leaves* earlier in Chapter 2 of this monograph to represent missing content, specifically content that was marked by black crayon or tar in the context of the narrative. Kutnik misses something here, the missing content in *Double or Nothing* represents the narrator's difficulty in cop-ing with the total loss of his family but the X's also represent the missing family members, one X for each person. Oppermann and Oppermann say that 'The symbol "X" implies a painful memory in the writer's mind

which, at the same time, requires and defies verbalisation' (1997, p. 45). These X's in *Double or Nothing* highlight a distinct gap between the sign and the signified, or a 'kind of Lacanian "primordial lack"' (ibid, p. 45). The four letter 'X's' point to the word 'erasure'; to the act of erasing a line on a typewriter ('X' in the meaning of 'to obliterate'); and to the potential impossibility of writing about that event' (ibid, p. 46). They also point to the 'eXtermination' of his family, the signifiers represent their deaths. This textual gap as missing content is representative of the difficulty in writing about the holocaust for the inventor and the implied author. It represents the existential erasure of the narrator's family. The reader notices that in the above example the X's do not actually negate or replace any narrative on the page. Removing the X's results in no loss to the comprehension of the narrative, it simply reads, 'no doubt having been exterminated deliberately, and that, therefore the young man who was no an orphan…' The X's in this case are a type of textual gap that disrupt the comprehension of the page. They represent something that is essential to the context of the narrative (discussion of the death of Federman's/Boris's parents and siblings) and yet it is still something that defies adequate verbal representation.

When turning to page one of the novel (the page that succeeds the page entitled 'BEGINNING' but several pages after the introduction that sets up the framing device that spans from page 0 to page 000000000.0, entitled 'THIS IS NOT THE BEGINNING') the reader notices the unusual arrangement of the text on the page and the blank space that is left by it (Figure 5.1).

The reader's eyes are drawn instantly to the 'marginal frame' of this page. The first thing that they notice is the textual arrangement that gestures towards this frame, which states, 'Just think for instance if the room cost 8 dollars 8 dollars a week then it will have to be noodles noodles then it is imagine that in matters such as these there is much food for thought undoubtedly another guy would say there is little food' (Federman, 1992, p. 1). This frame only reads like this if the reader starts with the upper-leftmost word, 'Just' and follows the text from left to right around the page in a clockwise motion. The reader has to try different combinations and start at different parts of the page to come to this conclusion. Having begun the narrative properly and now separate from the author character that narrated the introductory section, the narrative textual 'frame' arrangement is a gesture to the margins of the inventor's page and a reference to the framing device discussed in the previous section of the novel. The narrative textual arrangement contains the narrative and confines the unusual presentation of the
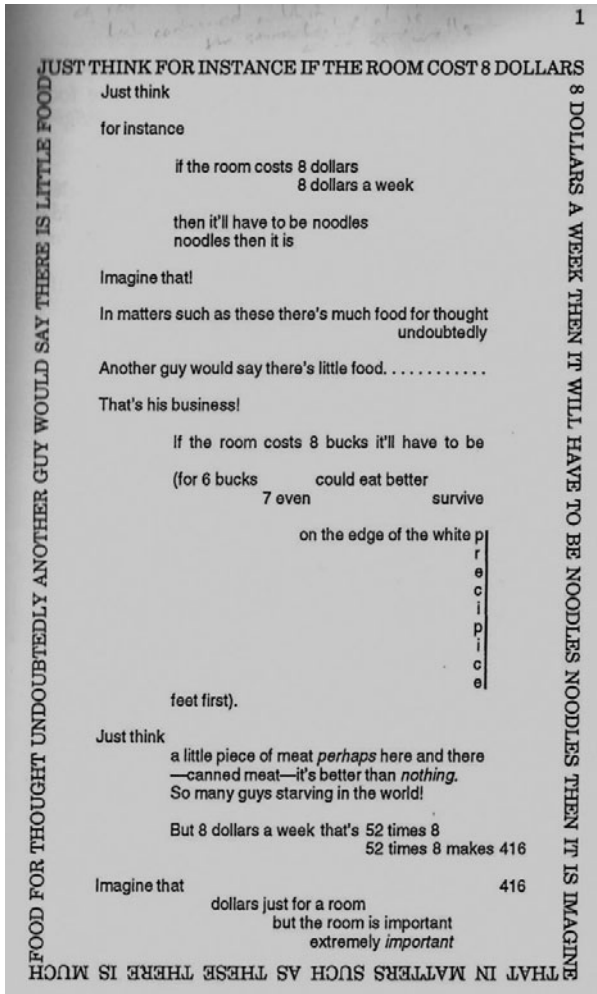
Figure 5.1 Raymond Federman, (1992), *Double or Nothing: A Real Fictitious Discourse*, p. 1

text within its borders. It is distinct in presentation from the introductory section and attempts to portray the inventor's difficulty in starting Boris's story.

There is a distinct lack of conventional punctuation marks throughout *Double or Nothing*, requiring the reader to find their own pauses in the narrative. The extended and additional blank spaces between

words and lines on page 1 act as punctuation in lieu of actual marks. The first ten lines of text that the reader encounters 'inside' the narrative textual arrangement 'marginal frame' replicate the words that form it, still without any punctuation marks barring the exclamation mark that follows 'Imagine that!' and the ellipses that follow the final word of the 'marginal frame' text, 'food. . . . .'Punctuation is found instead within the extended and additional blank spaces that feature on the page. The inventor (and, by extension, the author) begins writing his novel about Boris by focusing on the practicalities of writing instead – the cost of hiring a room and the cost of noodles that will allow him to survive while 'inventing' his story. Having established that the extended gaps between words and lines provide punctuation, the reader returns to the top of the page and reads it as follows, 'Just think' which is followed by a large gap for the rest of line and following line, possibly prompting the reader to do exactly that, think, while acting as a period in a conventional text; 'for instance' is followed by a similar gap of blank space in length as the previous one, acting in a similar way as a comma in a conventional text and representing the inventor's indecision and pauses for thought in the creation of his story. Another gap as blank space succeeds this statement, again replicating the pause for breath that is usually provided by a comma in conventional novels. This gap lasts for a line until '8 dollars a week', then a repetition of '8 dollars' that is extended to 'a week' that is followed by two lines of blank space and then, 'then it'll have to be noodles', then a single line pause, representing a comma, then, 'noodles then it is'. The two lines of blank space that follows this can be read as a period because the next statement 'Imagine that!' is located back towards the left margin, just like the other opening statement, 'Just think'. The reader is provided with punctuation in this instance and they are left with another two line gap before the next statement, again located towards the left margin. 'In matters such as these there's much food for thought' takes up an entire line filled with the text but the following word, 'undoubtedly' is not located on the left hand side of the following line, but on the right hand side of it, underneath 'for thought'. The repeated 'frame' passage finishes after a single line break that is then filled with 'Another guy would say there's little food. . . . .'. The reader then continues to read the rest of this page in a similar way, using the gaps as punctuation. This type of textual gap isn't necessary for the comprehension of the narrative and could have been replaced by relevant punctuation marks where necessary but the recorder of this narrative chooses to present the page in this unusual (and disruptive) way to demonstrate the difficulty that

the inventor is facing when beginning to write his novel. The following pages follow suit, with unusual textual gestures and various types of textual gaps. The extended blank spaces between the words and lines on the page represent his hesitation and indecision of how to begin such an undertaking. The reader gets a sense of the difficulty that the inventor (and the author) is facing, both in the narrative content and by the presentation of the text on the page by the recorder. The content of the narrative puts off the telling of Boris's (and his own) story by digressing and focusing on the materials required for the writing of it and the presentation of the text on the page demonstrates the hesitancy and incoherency of this process.The 'noodles' that are mentioned at the start of this narrative and that are a recurrent 'motif' of the novel indirectly reflect upon this unfocused attempt of writing the 'real' story of Boris's and the inventor's past. Trying to locate both experience and the act of writing the story on the page means that both the recorder and the inventor 'noodle' around with the presentation of the text on the page and the writing of the story respectively.

The same page of the novel also features a slightly different type of textual arrangement that visually supplements the narrative. Halfway down the page the reader reads, 'on the edge of the white', and then, 'precipice'. The word 'precipice' reads vertically from top to bottom and a vertical line is placed on its right-hand side. The reader gains a secondary meaning from this signifier because of the placement of the word and the line that supplements it. The 'precipice' is represented by the vertical placement of the signifier and the gap between the line and the 'frame' represents the void after it, supplementing the textual narrative and allowing for a visual representation of it. This disruption to the conventional page of text requires the reader to consider the placement of the text on the page and what this tells them about the 'intramural' narration that the novel features. The recorder figure attempts to present a visual narrative as well as the textual narrative provided by the inventor by noodling around with the 'original' text to create visual puns and narrative textual gestures. The reader realises that to gain meaning from the page they must consider the unique textual arrangements and different types of textual gap that occasionally provide a doubling to the signification of the linguistic signifiers on the page. This type of representation allows the reader to consider the pages of the book as a place for dynamic placement of text, both representing the precipice and the motion of falling down from it. This demonstrates the potential for unconventional arrangements of narrative on the page, allowing the writer to multiply the signifiers on the page.

Page two of *Double or Nothing* also features a significant amount of extended gaps between words and lines and unconventional textual arrangements that similarly represent the writing of both the narrative and events in both Boris's and the inventor's stories. The first thing that the reader notices before attempting to navigate the narrative on this page is the amount of additional blank space on the page in comparison with a conventional page of a novel and the disruption that the unusual placement of the text on the page causes the reading process. Upon closer inspection the reader may note that after the initial disruption and subsequent formulation of a new reading approach, the page is relatively conventional in the sense that the reader only needs to read across the page, from left to right, as is the case in conventional novels. At times the reader is required to 'jump' a gap between words but the narrative still makes sense with a fairly minimal alteration to their conventional reading practices. Starting at the top of the page, the reader notes a gap as blank space between 'Noodles' and 'by themselves' but carries on reading because the sentence makes sense. The textual gap in this example prompts the reader to consider two approaches. Firstly, to simply jump the gap to 'by themselves: a complete food' and secondly to return back to 'Noodles' to read the statement underneath – '-contains all sorts of good things'. This second approach requires the reader to re-read certain words, recontextualising the word in relation to the second statement and doubling the original word's meaning. The reader interprets the gaps as a method of allowing the recorder to double the meaning of specific signifiers by making them into visual puns. Again, the inventor is putting off the writing of his actual experience by focusing on the requirements of writing it. His procrastination is represented by the disconnected words. Further down the page there is a similar gap and a narrative textual gesture that fulfil representational roles and are more disruptive to conventional reading processes. The narrator states:

  A view on the street*huge* white *hole* and you fall **in** d

                                                    o

                                                   w

                                                    n

Like the 'precipice' arrangement on the previous page, the gap between 'street' and '*huge*' is not only disruptive, but also visually representative of a metaphoric white hole that is being discussed in the narrative. The gap represents something spatially, the '*huge* white *hole*' that the writer has figuratively fallen 'down'. A narrative textual gesture like this allows

the reader to consider the page as being a three-dimensional stage. Like the 'precipice', this arrangement also provides an illusion of movement or dynamism to conventionally static and fixed arrangements of the linguistic signifiers found in traditional novels. The view on the street that the inventor can 'see' is broken apart from the statement that follows in order to disassociate it from the succeeding statement and also to mimetically represent a white hole. In reality, the reader quickly skips the blank space (it is not as spatially 'huge' as the narrative would like the reader to believe) and reads the next part of the line, gaining secondary meaning from the blank space (the hole that is later referred to) and the positioning of the text that shows a precipice before the text literally falls down the page (and down the hole), adding an illusion of depth to the page. In this example the textual surface of the page becomes a huge white hole, representing the anxiety that the inventor feels when contemplating the 'whiteness' of the paper and punctuated by textual matter that the reader gains meaning from. The line of narrative doesn't make complete grammatical sense and the second part of the line features a pun – 'fall in down', 'fallin[sic] down'. The page is unconventional in comparison with a traditional page of a novel but the disruption to the reader is only minimal, requiring them to read across the page as normal but often needing them to re-read certain words to make sense of statements that are preceded by an extended blank space.

The presentation of page 17 continues this fragmentary association of the extended blank spaces as representations of the space between thoughts in the conscious mind of the inventor and the difficulty in verbally portraying the extermination of his family. The first paragraph at the top of the page features a large extended blank space on the fourth line down between the words 'come' and 'end'. This blank space is easily dealt with by the reader, as in the previous example they simply take notice of it and then read the following text but the representational purpose of the device requires further contemplation. This page is best analysed by looking at the lines on the textual space of the page, rather than traditional sentences and paragraphs. The blank space on the fourth line has two affects on the reader. The reader has just read that the 'end of the week has come'. The blank space that follows this statement is a literal end, more in common with a period or comma, allowing for a momentary break in the unpunctuated narrative. The statement that follows the blank space, 'end of a period', is also followed by a smaller gap. This statement reaffirms the previous thought, though the word 'period' is later contextualized in relation to the

female menstrual cycle. This device acts as punctuation and as a visual pun in this instance, doubling the potential interpretations from this part of the narrative. It also represents a gap in the thought processes of the inventor, chaotic and broken, finding it difficult to write Boris's, and his own, story. If this is a novel about the complications of writing memories (and particularly writing about the Holocaust), the narrative textual gestures and blank spaces on pages 2 and 17 reflect the difficulty in translating actual memories into textual sentences and paragraphs, especially when trying to verbalise the loss of his family. The unconventional gaps and the presentation of the page foreground the inadequacy of aesthetic representation that conventional novels may feature and attempt to provide a new way of representation that affect the reader in unique ways.

Pages 14–15 of the novel also features extended blank spaces between words that also provide the reader with a secondary textual arrangement that has a different effect on the interpretation of the page. These two pages mirror one another superficially even though the narrative is continuous. These two pages feature a much larger type size than the previous pages of the narrative and take the form of one continual paragraph that runs across each page in a conventional manner. The text and the absence of text are combined to create a larger iconic textual symbol. The narrative itself is not disrupted, apart from requiring the reader to read 'across' the rectangular extended blank space by breaking up certain words. The gaps assist the representation of the larger iconic image formed by the text and the extended blank spaces. That is not to say that the text is irrelevant; in this case it is as important as the larger visual symbol that the gaps and the arrangement of the text represent. The narrative continues as normal with only a slight adjustment needed by the reader to find meaning from the pages, but the meaning of the pages themselves assist the themes of the novel, allowing for secondary signification and an extension of interpretations. The pages and the reading of them are disrupted half way down each page, when the reader notices a large extended blank space that seems to reciprocally form an upright rectangle that upon looking at the pages as a whole seems to be reminiscent of an iconic textual arrangement that represents two zeros ('doubling nothing' – a visual pun on the title of the novel). Mathematically, to multiply nothing (0) by nothing (0) results in nothing (0). Federman, in writing a novel that attempts to deal with the events that happened to him and his family in Auschwitz ends up producing nothing. This is because he does it through fictional frames. Federman is attempting to tell

a story through the inventor figure, who is attempting to tell the story of Boris, and by extension, Federman himself. The inventor, just like Federman, struggles to represent this event through verbal means just like Boris, who has attempted to recite his memories to the inventor. Boris doubly does not exist, both in the reader's reality and the reality of the book. He is a construction by both the inventor *and* Federman. Both the inventor and Boris don't exist, essentially reflecting the title of the novel, nothing is doubling nothing.

Page 37 uses extended gaps in a similar way to the previous example and also forces the reader to turn the book ninety degrees because it is laid out in a landscape form (but features conventional positioning of the page number at ninety degrees to the text on the page). Like the previous example, the narrative on the page is gained by making only slight adjustments to conventional reading processes. The first, sixteenth, and last lines on the page read from left to right as normal. The extended and additional blank space on the other lines of the page break the narrative up into five newspaper-like columns, though unlike columns in a newspaper, the narrative only makes sense if the reader reads across the columns rather than down them. The page and the blank spaces dictate this method of reading this page by making the first line run across the entire page without disruption and it is backed up by the same method used on the sixteenth line and the final line on the page. Still, by using this device, the reader who is familiar with reading a newspaper may instinctively read down the page initially just to see if the narrative 'makes sense'. There is no traditional punctuation on this page, leaving the reader with a constantly flowing stream of consciousness from the point of view of two narrators. The extended gaps occasionally punctuate the narrative, though they mostly disrupt it, often breaking up words but mostly operating as an extended type of the traditional gap present between words in conventional novels. This page is later echoed by page 125 that is entitled '*The Subway Scene*'. This page is similarly presented to the previous example, in a landscape form, but rather than five columns, the reader only has to read across three.

The continual changing of the form of this novel requires the reader to similarly improvise their reading methods. A product of this continual need to 'stay on one's toes' is that the reader is made to focus more closely on the narrative in a way that reading associated with a traditional novel would not require. If the reading of prose fiction has become habitualised and automatised, *Double or Nothing* appears to be concerned with challenging this because the reader finds it difficult to become accustomed to a particular structure of the page; instead, the

reader has to constantly find ways of dealing with new page layouts that forces them to forge new methods of navigation and actively engage with the deciphering of certain sections. This connects to the separate roles that have been discussed in section 5.2 of this chapter; the recorder attempts to represent the inventor's experience, his writing and the placement of text on the page as separate roles that lay bare the mimesis of process that goes into the writing of the book. Further, each page is a challenge to overcome for the reader and the narrative becomes secondary to the navigation and process of reading the text and engaging with possible reasons why the narrator has chosen to defamiliarise the page in such a startling way. 'The Subway Scene' documents Boris's journey on the New York subway network. The choice to use the word 'scene' here is a cinematic or visual term that reflects the 'recorder's' desire for the reader to 'see' and gain some meaning from the page before they attempt to read it. Most of the words on the page are not disrupted by the extended gaps but a few are, such as 'especially' (1st column, 3rd line), 'triangle' (1st column, 22nd line), 'wondered' (2nd column, 2nd line), 'immediately' (2nd column, 12th line) and 'better' (2nd column, 21st line). The extended blank spaces between these words don't appear to act as punctuation like the gaps in some of the previous examples in this study. Boris is contemplating his sexual feelings towards the women on the train, the extended blank spaces on the page represents the motion of the train on the tracks, each gap representing a certain distance between the 'sleepers' on the rails. This is an effective device that enhances the signification gained from the narrative. The rhythm of the train going over the rails is represented dynamically by the performance of the textual arrangement on the page. This narrative textual arrangement represents this and stresses the three-dimensional quality of the page.

A similar visual representation of events and themes in the narrative can be found on the pages in the novel that focus on the word 'noodles'. A significant amount of the narrative in *Double or Nothing* documents the inventor's obsession with the provisions that he will need in order to write his novel about Boris while eating and drinking only the minimum amount in order to remain sustained throughout the process. The inventor quickly decides that he will only eat packets of noodles for the 365 days he intends to isolate himself from the outside world while writing Boris's (and his own) story: 'he is the noodle man in a double sense of the word: Noodles guarantee his survival, and he is "noodling around" with language' (Oppermann and Oppermann, 1997, p. 46). Noodles represent three aspects of this text, they represent the time

for the writing of the inventor's novel (365 packets, 365 days of writing), they represent the writing of the novel (noodling with language), and they become a dominant motif for the 'recorder' character to use in the presentation of the novel. This leads to the 'recorder' choosing to repeat and foreground the word 'noodles', forming a 'jazz-like' motif that spans the entire novel (and alluding to noodling in a jazz sense). The linguistic signifier, 'noodles', often features as part of a larger image, sometimes created by the textual arrangement of the words on the page, and often on differently paginated pages from the main narrative. The main narrative is paginated as normal, for example 1, 2, 3, 4 etc., while the 'textual arrangements' and other visual devices are mostly denoted by the addition of a 0 to their page number, for example, the 'stairs' on page 50.0 are succeeded by an unpaginated page with a iconic textual arrangement that repeats 'noodle ups and downs' before the main textual narrative continues on the following page, denoted as page 51. This constant experimentation with the layout of the inventor's page by the recorder mirrors the indecision and obsessions of the inventor, constantly listing, documenting and planning the practicalities of attempting to write a substantial piece of prose, and his failure to deal with the events of his recent past. The reader is also left confused and desperate for a resolution until they realise that the digressions from linear narrative and the failure to deal with the 'real' story (the Holocaust) is actually connected with the meaning of the novel. Each page often has to be taken as a separate hurdle that has to be decoded to find meaning in the absence of narrative content. Each page requires the reader to forge new techniques in order to deal with the multiple puns (both visual and textual) and representations of other things that are created by the unconventional arrangements of the words on the page, 'In fact, the novel's complex typographical play documents the story of a writer who is trying to come to terms with the English language as a means of artistic expression' (Oppermann and Oppermann, 1997, p. 53). The iconic and narrative textual images and arrangements that can be found by the reader of many of the pages in *Double or Nothing* are a result of the recorder's 'noodling' with artistic representation, avoiding the 'real' subject but also documenting the difficulty of expressing such thoughts verbally, in a second language.

The page between 11 and 11.1 contains three words in large bold font, 'Noodles or Potatoes'. This iconic textual arrangement is fairly easy to read and interpret, featuring only three words, in the English language, though it is definitely unconventional when compared with the arrangements of the pages of traditional novels. The main narrative

isn't forwarded by this page; instead, this unpaginated page is attrib-
uted to the recorder. Despite its separation from the main narrative of
the novel, this page still has an affect on the reader. Firstly, the text
used is representative of the inventor's current fixation on noodles and
potatoes. This is a significant, though ultimately mundane issue for the
inventor – should he buy and eat only noodles *or* potatoes for the dura-
tion of the writing of his novel? The recorder chooses to represent this
choice in large, bold type, stressing the importance of it for the inventor
at this stage in the narrative, despite it having no connection to Boris's
memories and the subject of the inventor's narrative. Instead, the act
of writing is foregrounded here and the inventor's inability to come to
terms with the extermination of his family is writ large upon the surface
of the page, choosing instead to focus on the everyday items needed for
his own survival. The page and the text that is placed on it becomes
an image of sorts. The reader notices that the signifier for 'noodles' is
represented in a casual (near-'Cooper Black') font, and the placement of
it on the page rises in a slight curve. This seems reminiscent of the prod-
uct itself – cheap, long and loose. In contrast to the presentation of the
word, 'Noodles' on the page, the signifier for 'potatoes' is reminiscent
of an oval shape, not unlike a representation of the shape of an actual
potato. The reader gains no narrative from this iconic textual gesture
but they gain a sense of the obsession and digressions that are distract-
ing the inventor from writing Boris's (and really, his own) story. This
page should traditionally be numbered as page 12, yet *Double or Nothing*
complicates this logical method and denies numbering the page. The
page preceding it is page 11 and the page following it is numbered 11.1.
Upon turning the page again the reader finds that the recorder returns
the novel to its traditional chronological order with page 12. This
occurs again between pages 50.0 and 51 with a page that states 'Noodle
Ups & Downs' with text that descends horizontally down the page from
left to right. This time the page preceding this page is clearly partially
diagrammatic, representing a series of stairs and the inventor's frequent
trips up and down them to reach his room. The diagrammatic image
supplements the narrative documenting the writing of the inventor's
story but like many of the other images and arrangements on the pages
of this text, they don't actually engage with Boris's story. The linguistic
signifiers for 'UP & DOWN' form the steps of the 'inventor's' stairs due
to their iconic textual arrangement on the page.

   The disruptions to the pagination of the book seem to mostly occur
on pages that can be categorized as featuring iconic textual arrange-
ments or supplementary images, suggesting that the recorder cannot

commit himself to the idea that these pages adequately continue the narrative and are instead, visual devices that provide the reader with an emulation or representation of the events (usually documenting the indecision and mundane nature of the inventor's writing process) that are occurring in the narrative. These pages often supplement the main narrative by providing the reader with a visualisation of events and related symbols to the events that are occurring within the inventor's reality. They expose and make clear the inherently visual attributes of the written sign and then enhance the combined concepts of the signifier and signified by including both within the written word and the visual image on the graphic surface of the page.

In contrast to the iconic textual arrangements on the pages of the previous examples, page 137.1 is reminiscent of a front-view of a boat (though one much older than the ocean-liner that Boris and Federman must have sailed to America on). The previous page also features an iconic textual image that gestures towards the waves of the sea that the boat sails upon, by the placement of the repeated phrase, 'noodle water' in a way that is also iconically reminiscent of the sea (and, the shape of noodles). The noodle water 'doubles' the meaning of the word noodles because of the arrangement of the text on the page. The word is both reminiscent of the shape of a noodle and is also clearly the waves of the water in the sea. Page 137.1 quite clearly conveys the shape of a boat that sails on this 'noodle water', though the image is created by the gestural placement of text, but importantly, not narrative. The crow's nest is represented by the phrase 'The call of the ocean', the sail by the placement of the letter 'S', the mast by asterisks, 'O's' and parentheses, the deck by two parallel horizontal lines with the signifiers of the world's oceans in between and the hull is represented by the placement of the signifier, 'Ocean'. When initially looking at the page, particularly after coming to it from the previous 'noodle water' iconic textual arrangement, the reader realises that this represents a boat, yet they gain no actual narrative from this page or the one prior to it. Instead, the image supplements the narrative two pages prior to it when the inventor is telling the story of Boris's journey from France to the US. The textual arrangement provides an iconic visual representation of the events in the main narrative before it continues on the following page.

Page 153 attempts something similar to the boat and the 'noodle water' on page 137.1. The reader is presented with a narrative textual arrangement of the inventor's 'Noodle Map of America', forged from the

placement of empty noodle boxes on the floor of his room. As always, the reader must approach each new page of *Double or Nothing* having understood the narrative on the previous one (while also understanding the autobiographic aspect of the novel). Page 152 ends with the following statement:

> I'll make a whole list of all the guys who eventually have to come to America. *Up & Down & Sideways*. Then what I can do eventually is make pictures **huge pictures** with all sorts of people and all sorts of places. I'll make a picture on the floor of the room with my noodle boxes. Pictures of places and of things too. Like an enormous *Map of America* with my noodles. Boxes all over the floor of my room. And then I'll walk on it. On the map. I'll plunge in it. Swim in it. Drown in it. State by State. Box by Box. It will be tremendous. And after a while I'll be able to eat the *map*.

The inventor's preoccupation with how to represent the overwhelming number of people that Boris's new life must include in his story is represented by the recorder creating a map of America that he can walk and swim in, and eventually, such is the inventor's obsession with noodles, he will eventually eat the map. The page is presented unconventionally, evoking a sense of grandeur for the inventor's new '*Noodle Map of America*'. The reading process is disrupted by the reciprocal relationship between the iconic and narrative textual arrangements and the blank space on the page, though the reader has now become accustomed to having to deal with such disruptions in this novel. Of initial interest is the iconic use of star symbols that relate to the stars on the American flag and then the narrative textual arrangement after, 'This whole story is getting more and more *symbolic* spatially and temporally'. Both 'spatially' and 'temporally' are arranged descending diagonally left to right and from right to left, respectively, forming a narrative textual arrangement that self-reflexively doubles the significations of each linguistic signifier, 'spatially' demonstrating the textual space of the page and 'temporally' representing the time denoted by the consumption of each box of noodles, one per day and the space it takes on the page, moving down the page from right to left. The two words cross at the 'l's', requiring the reader to momentarily read from left to right, horizontally as normal to complete the two words, the resulting blank space between the letters allowing for the reader to see this 'cross'. The narrative textual arrangement on the top half of the

page is supported by four words that frame it, '*Fabulous!*', '*Amazing!*', '*Prodigious!*' and '*Stupendous!*', with blank space in between the words forming the four corners of a rectangular flag of sorts. The bottom half of the page features another representation of a flag but this time the reader notices that it is created from non-narrative text, and is thus an iconic textual image. The 'stripes' that form a part of the traditional American flag are represented by lines of text, interpreted by the reader as the stripes on the flag and formed by all the linguistic signifiers of all the states of America without any gaps at all between the words. This second narrative textual arrangement is then separated from a final, third arrangement by two star symbols, ensuring that both stars and stripes appear on the page. The third 'flag' is a narrative textual image formed from lines of narrative that all begin with the number 50 (states of America). In comparison with the iconic textual image above it, this 'flag' continues the narrative with only a minimal disruption to the reading process. Oppermann and Oppermann also address this page:

> The involvement of the body of the writer in the text is most obvious when the writer arranges a number of noodle boxes on the floor into a 'NOODLE MAP OF AMERICA' which is not only a 'spatial displacement of noodle boxes,' as Wielgosz argues, but also an act of consuming language. When the noodler [the inventor] reflects upon consuming these boxes, he literally reflects on 'eating' his own text, thus turning his body into a 'performing' entity. (1997, p. 52)

The signifier for 'spatially' represents this 'spatial displacement of noodle boxes' and the entire page is interpreted as a way of demonstrating the presence of the writer in this autobiographical surfiction (both the inventor and the implied author). The performative aspect of the novel and the connection between the inventor and the text he uses to present Boris's story is brought into question. This consumption of language is referred to with the 'Noodle Map' to demonstrate the inventor's coming to terms with his new language and his new place in America. The reader finishes this page having continued the narrative and gained a supplementary, visual representation of the noodle flag of America that currently occupies the attentions of the inventor. The arrangement of the text on the page assists the interpretation of the narrative, foregrounding the possibilities of the placement of text on the page and representing the mind of the inventor, while referring to Boris's exploration of his new country.

The blurring between the inventor and Boris starts to become more apparent after his consumption of the 'noodle flag' above. Page 184 documents the inventor's decision to begin writing the 'real' story and requires the reader to interpret a few different iconic and narrative textual arrangements. The first line of the page states, '...........After all this..............here *we* are in the middle..........'. The ellipses act in a similar way to the period-type of blank space in Johnson's *Trawl*; they represent pauses in the thought-processes of the inventor. The iconic textual arrangement that follows this plays with the idea of 'middle'. Each word intersects the other at the middle, one of the 'd's' in each case. This assists the interpretation of the narrative. The iconic textual arrangement of the word 'middle' at the top of the page represents the inventor's awareness of his blurring with Boris's past. The following thirteen lines use blank spaces to represent punctuation or pauses in the inventor's thought processes. The 'contorsions contraptions circumvolutions' are mirrored by the placement of the text on the page and the following sentence, 'Here *we* are *converging*   into one another', mirrors the opening line of the page and the iconic textual arrangement formed by the repetition of the word 'middle'. Each visual device on this page attempts to provide the reader with an understanding of the overlap between the inventor's, Boris's and the implied author's past. Boris is becoming replaced by the inventor's own recollection of his past, now that he has started to overcome his inability to deal with the loss of his family. The positive and negative sign and the bisected triangle act as a supplementary image, providing an iconic supplement to the textual narrative to their right that states, '*Ce "je" qui est moi et qui n'est peut-etre pas moi*' ('This "I" that is me and that is perhaps not me'). The reader of these devices interprets them as ways of explaining this connection and disconnection with the inventor's subject. These devices also highlight the distinction between 'the linguistic pronoun "I" (which is supposed to signify the teller of the tale [the inventor]), and the existential "I" (which represents the author)' (Oppermann and Oppermann, 1997, p. 57). *Double or Nothing* liberates itself from the restrictions of conventional representation by featuring visual devices that highlight the distinctions between the narrator (the inventor), the subject (Boris), the author (Federman) and the reader of the novel.

The rest of page 184 is fairly simple for the reader to navigate, featuring blank space that again, acts as punctuation. The final two lines are aware of their position on the page, 'as *we* augment towards our end towards the end at least for a while longer'. The reader notes that this is

the 'end' of the page and the following page again self-reflexively refers to the position of the text and reacts to the previous statement,

and yet

so many days	left		
so many boxes	left		
so many pages	left		
so many words	left	and so many stories	too
		right on *we*	go!

(Federman, 1992, p. 185)

The reader reaches the end of the page having navigated through three different types of visual device – iconic textual arrangements, narrative textual arrangements and blank space. The reader's awareness of the object that they hold in their hands is momentarily heightened when they realise that there are 'many pages left' and so, also, 'many words left'. They turn the page and continue their journey along with the inventor, who after all has 'so many stories' left to tell. As the inventor writes 'right on we go!' (referring to himself and Boris, now acknowledged as being one and the same), the reader goes with him, turning the page to a new challenge to the conventional methods of reading.

A similar but subtly different use of a textual arrangement can be found on page 79 which is initially similar to the pages analysed earlier in this case study, featuring plenty of extended blank spaces between sentences and words that act as a form of punctuation for the reader. The reader is told that Boris is visiting the Bronx area of New York to see a man that knew his father before the war. The inventor writes about Boris's journey to the subway. Using the textual space of the page, Boris's journey underground to gain access to the subway is represented by the recorder, as the linguistic signifier for a subway descending diagonally from left to right. Boris's movement is mimetically reproduced, conveying a dynamism that a conventional page of text is unable to do. This narrative textual arrangement also leads to the bottom of the page, the last place on the page that the text can be placed, representing the 'subway's' location underneath the city. The inventor notes that this journey 'is a kind of turning point' and the representational narrative textual arrangement of this statement by the recorder, visually 'turns' on the page. The text ascends and then plateaus before descending again. The reader has to read it to continue the narrative and by doing

so they gain a supplementary visual 'sense' of the actions and thoughts of 'Boris's' actual journey.

The effects of the narrative textual arrangement at the bottom of page 79 are repeated on page 195 of the novel. This one, long narrative textual arrangement is one of the most disruptive visual devices in the entire novel (Figure 5.2).

The reader must first of all decide where to start reading on the page (a decision that has become automatised in conventional fiction) and will have to read words that descend, ascend and words that may have to be held up to a mirror in order to 'see' them properly. The recorder provides a line alongside each word in order to help the reader to follow the narrative. The line above 'it' at the top of the page begins with a small vertical line, signalling the beginning of the narrative on the page. The reader then reads 'it's normal', descending diagonally down the page from left to right, then 'all the' ascends, followed by 'other' that descends vertically. The word 'kids' descends from right to left and the reader begins to grow accustomed to this disruption. Using this process, the remaining narrative reads:

> Are so much younger all of them following the same courses of study nothing normal about *Boris* that's important kids between the age of 14 and 18 do not really feel loneliness they skip it not BORIS though He's an exception He cultivates his loneliness that's part of the plan you might say part of the scheme.

The recorder of the inventor's narrative provides no punctuation for the reader, though the positioning of the lines that 'support' each word and each new position on the page acts as punctuation of sorts in a similar way to the extended blank spaces between the words discussed earlier in this case study. After the word, 'scheme', the line points like an arrow back towards the word, 'exception', which the reader notices has a long arrow descending from left to right that points to the conventionally placed statement, 'It's like an attack'. This is a very difficult and disruptive page to read, requiring the reader to constantly change the way they approach words and narrative on the page. The reading process is slowed by this disruption but the reader still gains and continues the narrative as they read through the narrative textual arrangement. The placement of the text on the page does not form a secondary, supplementary image like the iconic textual arrangements in the previous examples, but instead, the chaotic, random placement of it mirrors the unconscious mind of Boris who is currently re-experiencing the

195
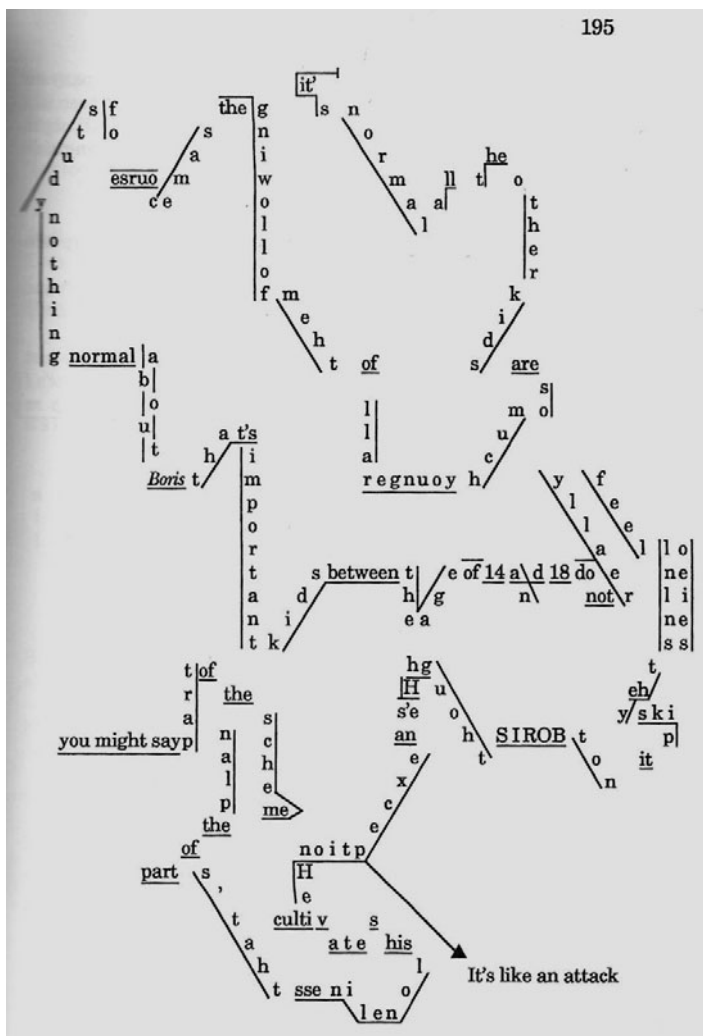
Figure 5.2 Raymond Federman, (1992), *Double or Nothing: A Real Fictitious Discourse*, p. 195

difficulty he had fitting in at school. The arrangement of the text on the page assists the interpretation of the events happening in the narrative, providing the reader with a fractured representation of Boris's mind.

This disruptive narrative textual arrangement on page 195 has similar effects to the images on some of the other pages of the novel. There

are four 'pictures' (non-textual arrangements) in *Double or Nothing* and each one is a *supplementary image*. Three of them appear on unpaginated pages with no other narrative to support them, except for the text on the preceding pages. Each image appears on the verso page and affect the reader in a similar manner to illustrations in conventional novels. The pages in question appear on the pages before 156, 197.1, 201, and 239. The image that takes up most of page 156 is partially formed from text, in this instance, six repeated 'Noodle Reality' phrases. The previous page features a narrative textual arrangement that philosophises about the inventor's endeavour and is supplemented by the same phrase, 'Noodle Reality', descending vertically on the right hand side of the page. The image that is provided (by the recorder) on the following page provides no narrative. Instead the reader is presented with an image that plays on the dichotomy of black and white. The three phrases at the top of the page are filled in white that slides towards grey as the third phrase appears and the three phrases at the bottom of the page span a near black to an eventual black final 'noodle reality'. The black, white and grey tone that surrounds the words begins as black at the top of the page and gradually becomes grey and then white as the image descends. The implication of this page on the reader allows for a visual representation of the inventor's questioning of his sanity and his inability to deal with his past on the previous page. His obsessions with food, predominantly noodles, have made him self-aware of the impact that it is having on his original goal, to write Boris's (and by extension, his own) story. His inability to deal with the complete loss of his immediate family in the Holocaust is echoed in his lack of progress made with his novel. The only thing that the inventor deals with is his plans to sustain himself on noodles and the events that happen to Boris once he gets to America. This 'slipping' of reality is mirrored by the form of the novel's narrators. Created by one author, the recorder uses this image to represent the multiple aspects of him (recorder, inventor, Boris and implied author). The recorder represents this visually for the reader, allowing them to gain this supplementary image of the inventor's increasingly fragmented mind.

The image on the page before 197.1 utilises similar tone to the 'noodle reality' image. In this instance the reader sees a musical symbol, a mostly grey G clef and either two black crotchets or a beamed crotchet depending on the reader's interpretation of the small gap between them, as if black paint had been spilled on the page. The image is entitled 'Noodle Music' at the top of the page in an italic typeface. The narrative on the page that precedes this one states, 'Like the time he decided he was

going to buy himself a TENOR SAXOPHONE' (Federman, 1992, p. 197). The image supplements this narrative event, though no saxophone is depicted, the symbols of music represent the sound that it could produce. This page also prompts the reader to understand Federman's (since the novel is an autobiographical surfiction) own connection to music and the significance it may have for the narrative. The reader could also interpret the choice to use musical notes as being slightly more reminiscent of the long, thin shape of the noodles that continue to distract the inventor's narrative. The resultant image is a dual-representation of aspects of the inventor's consciousness in the production of the work of prose *and* the events that are happening in the narrative to Boris. The two frames converge in the recorder's representation. The novel's central metaphor, 'to noodle around', in a jazz-sense refers to a casual, aimless playing and is 'reminiscent of the verb "to doodle", which is used especially in relation to writing' (Oppermann and Oppermann, 1997, p. 51). The writing in *Double or Nothing* resembles this noodling and doodling, the reader of this image is assisted by this admission of musical noodling. Federman himself states, 'The language of my novels just goes on and on, improvising as it goes along, hitting wrong notes all the time – but, after all, jazz always builds itself on a system of wrong chords that the player stumbles upon and then builds from…' (1979–80, p. 52). As an acknowledged aspect of the narrative's four main frames (the fourth, implied author), the author's connection to music, and jazz in particular (he once joined one of Charlie Parker's jam sessions (Oppermann and Oppermann, 1997, p. 52)) must be acknowledged by the reader of this novel at this point. The act of producing *Double or Nothing* resembles that of music, splicing 'together parts from various takes for the final recorded version' (ibid, p. 52), in a similar way to how Mark Z. Danielewski's *Only Revolutions* (2006) remediates music. The four figures discussed in the introduction to the novel act as four different jazz performers, each one producing unconventional motifs that recontextualise the textual space of the page as a place for experimentation and remediation of other artistic forms.

Similar in fashion to the 'Noodle Music' and 'Noodle Reality' images, the image on the page before 201 takes the form of a large, black question mark that is filled with the phrase 'noodle questions'. Each one of these four images in the novel is a visual representation of a phrase that begins with the recurring motif, 'noodles'. The previous two pages have detailed the common questions that have been asked by people that Boris has met, such as '*How do you like it here?...How long have you been in this country?*' (p. 200), and, '*I really like it…………………..*

honest……………………………*I do'* (p. 200.1). The image that follows these questions supplements the narrative but does not continue it. Again, the image features two colours, the black question mark and the white 'noodle questions' that it contains. The supplementary image assists the interpretation of the narrative by providing the reader with a visual metaphor that combines the noodles (associated with the inventor) and the questions (associated with Boris) from the previous page. No narrative is gained from the image but the symbol foregrounds the significance of the questions that dominate Boris's interactions with people from the narrative on the previous page. Each image represents the crossover of the inventor and Boris, two parts of the same mind.

The final image in the novel on the page before 239 confirms this overlap, and features a large heart symbol with 'Noodle Sex' written inside of it in italics. Similarly to the previous examples this supplementary image follows a page that documents Boris's (and really, the inventor's) first sexual experience. The lack of pagination cements the idea that the image is only supplementary. These 'images' act as clues, punctuating sections of narrative and working more like chapter titles in conventional novels that allow the reader to quickly find material in the novel. This is a visual representation of the obsession of the inventor (noodles) and the events that are happening to the immigrant, Boris (sex) by the recorder. The images visually represent these three frames that are creating the work that the reader holds – the artistic 'scribbling' of the recorder, the preoccupation with 'noodles' of the inventor and the events in Boris's story. The reader interprets these images as such, quickly disregarding them due to their simplicity and lack of detail, instead they concretise the distinctions between the intramural narrators, bringing aspects of them together in a visual representation.

These four images all fulfil a supplementary role in the narrative, but their purpose is more integral to the novel. They denote sections and events in the narrative like chapter titles in conventional novels but more importantly they concretise the importance of the visual in the narrative and represent the conflict and overlap between the inventor and Boris. Each image repeats the word, 'noodles' and attaches it to a word that describes the events in Boris's story, giving the reader an insight into the mind of both frames. All the images are digressions and distractions from the author's 'real' story about his experience in the Holocaust, instead they represent the jazz-like noodling part of the implied author's process of writing the novel.

Double or Nothing often does not resemble a finished product; 'it is only one version of a long improvisational movement in language which

could be endlessly extended and revised' (Oppermann and Oppermann, 1997, p. 52). Oppermann and Oppermann stress the connections between jazz and language, suggesting that the pages in this novel demonstrate an 'improvisational movement in language'. Federman himself defines writing as a 'constant reshuffling of things until you find the right combination' (1979–80, p. 52). The final version of the novel is a result of this reshuffling, improvising and rearranging of linguistic material that goes into the process of creating it. As noted in the analysis of the 'Noodle Music' page earlier, the noodles that dominate the narrative and the images in the novel relate to the 'noodling' or 'doodling' that is required by the writer when piecing together various parts of a novel. The whole novel is aware of the process of writing and the repeated digressions of the inventor represent the author's own awareness of his inability to deal with the true subject of *Double or Nothing* – the death of his family in the Holocaust.

Each page of *Double or Nothing* requires the reader to understand several things in order to gain meaning from the narrative – the 'intramural' framing setup that is conveyed to them in the first section 'THIS IS NOT THE BEGINNING', the peritextual autobiographical material for Federman (his experience in the war and his connection and similarity to the immigrant, Boris, the subject of the book) and terminology with which to interpret the various visual devices on the page. An awareness that the appearance of the page comes before reading can assist the interpretation of a novel. The various visual devices on the page can multiply potential interpretations and infuse the narrative with supplementary signification.

6

Case Study 2: William H. Gass's *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* (1968)

6.1   Introduction

The aim of this case study, like the previous one, is to further demonstrate that the pages of a previously regarded 'difficult' novel, in this case William H. Gass's *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* (1968), can be dealt with and critically interpreted by understanding the implications that visual devices have on the reading process. To achieve this, each page will be approached with two questions in mind:

1. What makes this page disruptive in comparison with a conventional page?
2. How do the visual devices on the page affect the generation of meaning?

Featuring photography, unconventional textual arrangements and textual gaps, many of the pages in *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* pose a challenge to the reader accustomed to 'traditional' novels. The aim here is to show that rather than concealing meaning and resisting the reader, this novel actually makes efforts to assist and enhance the generation of meaning from its pages by the use of these various types of visual device. Gass's novel exists as a multimodal piece of literature, featuring combinations of words and photography on many of its pages. One of the fundamental areas of discussion in this case study is the different representational roles that words and pictures (often photographic in this instance) fulfil on the page, informed by the discussion in Chapter 4. W. J. T. Mitchell's *Picture Theory* is particularly relevant for introducing this:

> *Three questions:*
>
> 1. *What is the relation of photography and language?*
> 2. *Why does it matter what this relation is?*

3. *How are these questions focused in the medium known as the "photographic essay"?*

Three answers:

1. *Photography is and is not a language; language also is and is not a "photography."*
2. *The relation of photography and language is a principal site of struggle for value and power in contemporary representations of reality; it is the place where images and words find and lose their conscience, their aesthetic and ethical identity.*
3. *The photographic essay is the dramatization of these questions in an emergent form of mixed, composite art.* (1994, p. 281, Mitchell's emphases)

Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife is an example of this 'mixed, composite art'. The pages in the novel that use photography alongside text often highlight this struggle for 'value and power' in the reading of the page. Photography and language are *different* and many challenges to the conventional reading of a page in this novel are created when the two interact with one another, allowing the reader to question the value of both. Mitchell's text is limited in scope to photography and illustration, and it disregards combinations of other visual devices on the page of prose fiction that fulfil similar visual roles in representation. This aspect of 'looking at' and 'seeing' the pages of *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* that happens before the reading of the narrative is fundamental to understanding the effect that the pages have on the interpretation of this novel. Gass's narrative is a hybrid: combining words and images to question the adequacy and nature of linguistic and visual representation. It questions the distinctions between a variety of narrative layers and frames, encouraging the reader and critic to consider the photography and text on the pages of the book as parts of one two-dimensional layer. The key to understanding this novel is the relationship between the body that is portrayed in the photographs and the text that accompanies them.

6.2   Narrative Background, Context and Interpretation

Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife was first published in Tri-Quarterly Supplement Number Two in 1968. The First Dalkey Archive edition of the novel took a further 21 years to reach publication in 1989. The edition that is to be used throughout this case study is the third printing of that First Dalkey Archive Edition, published in 1998 because it is easily obtainable and identical in pagination and content to the first edition.

It would be beneficial if the reader of this case study can refer to a copy of the novel as they follow this analysis.

This short, unpaginated, novel explores the relationship between text and images that Mitchell later discusses in *Picture Theory*, featuring many examples of photographic images alongside the textual narrative on its pages. The text is often equated with the body of the eponymous 'Lonesome Wife', Babs Masters, the main narrator, and all the photography in the novel is of the nude body of a female model that represents this character/narrator, yet actually exists at the same ontological level as the author, William H. Gass. This distinction is key for interpreting the unconventional pages that follow. The novel is often graphically sexual in content, representing the relationship between Babs and her lover(s) and the reading process is frequently disrupted by unconventional arrangements of text on its pages. Babs' choice to represent the narrative (and herself) unconventionally (visually) is a method of enticing her inattentive husband, and, by extension, the conventional reader, to pay more attention to her. On page 53, she admits 'I'm an image' and three pages later, on page 56, she acknowledges that she is only a fictional construct in a novel, existing only in language (and as two-dimensional images that only represent), stating, 'I am that lady language chose to make her playhouse of, and if you do not like me, if you find me dew-lapped, scabby, wrinkled, old (and I've admittedly as many pages as my age), well sir, I'm not, like you, a loud rude noise and fart upon the town.' Language is equated with the body of the narrator. The disruptive arrangements of text in comparison with how a traditional page 'should' appear, and the non-sequential multiple narratives challenge the reader to pay close attention to the text, and by extension, Babs herself, whose body becomes synonymous with the textual narrative and, by extension, the physical materiality of the book itself, 58 pages in length and, as we are told on page 56, 58 years old as well. Problematically, this age seems to stand in contrast to the young model that appears in the photographs that frequent the pages of this novel.

The narrative frequently changes in tone and perspective and there are often three different representations of the narrative on the page. For example, pages 7–10 feature three separate typefaces, bold, italics and roman, each representing a different aspect of the narrator. The bold narrative appears first on page 7, discussing the symbolism of different parts of the body:

Feet now-feet are notably ugly-and don't they stand for the whole of us? Bent and knobby calloused things, hid in our shoes

like solitary prisoners out of the light, dungeoned in their own stink and tread upon like a soft pavement of slaves-ai! (p. 8)

The bold text, standing apart from the italicised and roman sections of narrative on the page, disrupts conventional narrative practices (and presentation). Though presented in a somewhat conventional style, the reader often feels lost when searching for an answer to the question, 'Who speaks?', and must decide upon which of the three voices (sections) they should read. Once accustomed to the frequent changes in narrative voice, font and the placement of text on the page, the reader is freed from the confines of a single narrative (and narrator), often having to stop reading halfway down a page and continue reading the same narrative on the following page before returning to the second or even third narrative once the initial narrative ends, complicating the traditional methods of reading each page sequentially and chronologically. For example, the second narrative on page 7 appears in italics and seems to be written by an omniscient author, writing about Babs in the third person:

> *It surprised her, under the circumstances, to remember how that fellow's nose had felt, the railroad conductor's, when he tried to kiss her between the cars-they were going to Gary-jabbing her cheek like an icicle, both of them swaying and jouncing-he must have been short, she was only a kid-at the same time shouting in her ear for her address while his stiff cap nearly scalped her-his nose was cold as a dog's nose, sharp as a stick-and she'd thought* (p. 7)

This italicised narrative allows the reader to visually 'see' and understand that there has been a change in the narrative voice, assisting the reading process. This second narrative voice often intrudes into the middle of the third and final narrative voice on the page, the roman text, seemingly written by Babs in the first person (though note the intrusion of the third person voice towards the end of this paragraph):

> Love? No thanks, none of that gicky bumpydump for me, I'd rather turn into a roach right now, this instant, absolutely, and live on crumbs from candy wrappers kicked beneath the seats, I wouldn't care, and be completely curtained in by sweaty calves and dirty trousers, even if it was forever, absolutely, I wouldn't care; *still she must have had her destination pinned to her coat, the confident way he'd grabbed her, and she'd thought, flattered for a moment:* lust for me? Nah …

golly! *Until his cap had struck her like a cleaver; and it really had been a rehearsal, most of it* (p. 7)

These three narrative voices, all attempting to represent the narration of Babs, continue to entwine throughout the rest of the novel, eventually becoming one and the same, not dissimilar to the 'intramural' narrative setup in Federman's *Double or Nothing* (1992). The reader is encouraged to question the integrity of the narrator and acknowledges the creation of the text by an implied author who must exist on some level of the text. The photographs that give a body to the narrator are often exposed as the fictional representations that they are, with coffee mug stains superimposed on top of them, representing the presence of the writer in the novel. Later in the novel, the narrative takes the form of a script for a Russian play, featuring characters named Olga and Ivan (a reference to the opera, *The Maid of Pskov* (1872) by Korsakov), and then later in the style of a different play, featuring the characters Angela and Phillipe. It is only much later in the novel that the reader learns that Babs once played Olga, who is yet another fictional construction in Babs' fictional representation, 'She always knows her own is not her own; that she must borrow, beg of, and be Mrs. Willie Masters, a thing I faced too, when I went upon the stage as Baby Babs, or when, again, I answered to the name of Olga in a skit – how many names I've had' (p. 40). Her experience as an actress ties into the themes of the narrative, stressing the performatory aspect of the pages of this novel and the foregrounding of artifice.

On page 6, Babs reflects on her own fictional construction, saying, 'I feel sometimes as if I *were* imagination (that spider goddess and thread-spinning muse) – imagination imagining itself imagine. Then I *am* as it *is*, reflecting on my own revolving…and like a mirror endlessly unimages itself, yet is none the less an image' (p. 6). Her acknowledgement of her own existence strengthens the relationship she has with the textual matter that features on the pages – the text is literally her body, the words are her thoughts, she is a product of someone's imagination, seducing the reader with her textual games and provocative photographs.

Portmanteau, conjoined and phonetic words are used by Babs throughout the narrative to help represent herself. She frequently discusses the semiotic relationship between signifier and signified and their occasional inadequacy for accurate representation:

Screw-they say, **screw** – what an idea! did any of them ever? It's the lady who wooves and woggles. Nail-bang! – sure – **nail** is nearer theirs.

> *She felt the terror of terminology.*
> Why aren't there any decent words? (ibid)

This dissatisfaction with terminology and conventional words and by extension, conventional pages, is mirrored throughout the novel by the use of photographs and different fonts that evoke a feeling or tone. When linguistic text is too ambiguous, the photograph removes any ambiguity and directly represents (though at the level of the author, and problematically when the reader understands that Babs is 58 pages old and therefore different to the model that appears in the photographs). It is no accident that a quote from Locke's *Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) is used in a footnote on page 16:

> The use of words, then, being to stand as outward marks of our internal ideas, mark, and those ideas being taken from particular things, mark, if every particular idea that we take in, masticate, and swallow down, should have a distinct name, names must be endless, names must be endless, names must be endless, names must be endless; and we must be endless, endless to contain them.

Locke's comments evoke a consumption of ideas that must be swallowed, highlighting the materiality of words, or marks. This is mirrored in the image that spans the first two pages of the novel. This first photograph in the novel (not counting the images on the cover and the image that 'lays' across the publication and title pages) appears across pages one and two of the novel. The first thing that the reader 'reads', or rather, 'sees', on these two pages is a large black and white image of a nude woman. Its prominence on the page instantly draws the eye, taking up more textual space on the page than the words on page 2. The only thing that the reader can gain meaning from on the first page is the image. These first two pages must be read as one. The photograph makes the reader question the need for the provocative image (why a photograph? Why not an illustration?), and it sets the tone of the narrative. This image initially seems to be supplementary to the narrative until the reader notes that it interacts directly with the textual narrative on page two. The first letter of the novel, the 'S' in 'She'd', is part of the image, a letter on a block that the woman has 'picked' from the novel and looks to be aiming to eat or place in her mouth. The woman in the image is literally in the process of disrupting (and consuming the text on) the page. The image lies somewhere in between supplementary and narrative imagery since it gives the reader an image of the female

narrator and also interacts with the narrative itself. The sentences '*His hair was the only illumination in the room. Its smooth slope lit her breasts*' (p. 2) connect to the image across the page, yet there is no other mention of the narrator's appearance apart from her desire for large ear lobes, '*She had so wanted lobes when she was young*' (ibid). The continual referencing of parts of the body, particularly those used in sexual attraction can be interpreted as mirroring the same lure of text during the act of reading. Babs, as a fictional creation is a product of words and text. Her 'real' (i.e. *not* the woman in the photographs) body is made of the linguistic signifiers that she uses to represent herself. The image that consumes the start of the novel intrudes into the narrative level of the page, disrupting the textual matter itself. The relationship between words and the body that can only be understood through them can be interpreted as one of the main aspects of this narrative.

If we compare this with the end of the novel, we find support for this interpretation of the body as text or the book. The novel ends with a challenge to the reader. An implied author begins to intrude into Babs' narrative and draws attention to her fictional nature. On page 50 the reader is addressed directly by the implied author, highlighting the nature of (meta)fiction and pointing out the efforts that they must have made in order to read this far. The narrator states:

> You've been had, haven't you jocko? you sad sour stew-faced sonofabitch. Really, did you read this far? puzzle your head? turn the pages this way and that, around about? Was it racy enough to suit? There wasn't too much plot? I thought the countess something fab. For the nonce. Nothing lasts. But, honestly, you skipped a lot. (p. 50)

The implied author self-reflexively comments on the reader's experience with the novel. He acknowledges the difficulty that the reader must have had to overcome and makes suggestive comments about their reaction to the sexual content. The final sentence in the excerpt above even presumes that the reader 'skipped a lot' of the content, something that the actual reader may, or may not, have done. The final two pages of the novel suggest a new way of writing prose fiction, utilising new ways of representation:

> Then let us have a language worthy of our world, a democratic style where rich and well-born nouns can roister with some sluttish verb yet find themselves content and uncomplained of. We want a diction which contains the quaint, the rare, the technical, the obsolete,

the old, the lent, the nonce, the local slang and argot of the street, in neighbourly confinement. Our tone should suit our time: uncommon quiet dashed with common thunder. It should be as young and quick and sweet and dangerous as we are. Experimental and expansive – venturesome enough to make the chemist envy and the physicist catch up – it will give new glasses to new eyes, and put those plots and patterns down we find our modern lot in. (pp. 57–58)

This novel is really a discourse about types of artistic representation. The narrator suggests that 'it will give new glasses to new eyes', prioritising the prerequisite act of 'seeing' the pages and the marks that lay upon them. It welcomes experimentation and desires a more democratic approach to language. The unconventional placement of text on the surface of the pages in *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* demonstrates this new approach and shows that while the reader has always had to 'look' at the page to read a book, a slight change in the presentation of it, be it unconventional typography or the inclusion of a photographic image, is an effective way of making the novel 'new' for the time when it was published. These disruptions to the conventional presentation of the page expand the possibilities of representation, they do not restrict them. The inadequacy of representing the horrors of the Holocaust in Federman's *Double or Nothing* is repeated in a more general way in Gass's novel, who instead casts his net wider towards the connection between the novel and performance, text and the body and the inadequacy of language for conventional mimesis.

   The reader of the pages in this novel that include photographs also has to question the value of both text and image (Mitchell, 1994) on the page, something that readers of prose fiction very rarely have to do as the novel is predominantly a vehicle for text, not image. The recurrent inclusion of photographs of the same female body (at the level of the author) connects text and the body, especially when the text is arranged in a way that is representative of the curves of the photographs.

   On a formal level the images and text combine to highlight the connection between the body and text in the narrative. The second sentence on page 2 of *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* is connected to the final image in the novel. It says, 'I'll be a little mouse of a woman, blond and skinny, and there'll be rings on my belly where men have set down drinks.' This ontological connection between the book and the narrator's body is key to interpreting this novel. The narrator refers to her body as the pages of the novel where the reader may accidently place their mug of coffee or tea, leaving a ring of dried liquid that stains

her belly (of course, in reality placing a hot cup of coffee on somebody's bare skin would not be recommended). The last page of the novel visualises this statement. The image shows the coffee ring stain on the narrator's belly that is referenced on page one. The inclusion of the breasts at the top of the full page image signifies that this is a woman and not now an image of a man. The body becomes the page, an area on which the reader could, if they wished, lay down their mug or cup of coffee, suggesting that the photograph is as fictional as the textual narrative and showing the disconnection of the reader, the book they read and the characters/narrators that feature as textual constructs on its pages. The reader is provoked into drawing meaning from the body that they see. The supplementary image of the body attracts the reader in a way that the text on the pages of a conventional text does not.

The constant formal shifts in style and presentation of the text on the page in this novel mirror this allure of the body; the reader is persuaded to pay close attention to the page. Babs is, after all, a textual construct by the author, a device that is represented through text in conventional novels but through actual photography in this novel. This is also demonstrated on pages 41–42 that only feature a supplementary image of the back of Babs Masters. As noted earlier, the reader realises that this isn't actually the real Babs Masters but a model who exists at the same ontological level of the author. On these pages the textual narrative is completely replaced by the supplementary photographic image. No text appears on these two pages because the image of the woman appears on them instead. This 'full page spread' of the female body stresses the connection between the body and the book, for this image is almost the full body of the 'narrator', laid out across both pages. The reader gains no narrative from this supplementary image but they do attempt to gain meaning from it. They question the woman's position, arms raised above her head, facing backwards towards the photographer/reader. The absence of any textual narrative on these two pages suggests that this image contains more value than textual narrative at this point in the narrative.

Seven pages earlier another image appears that acts in a similar way to the first image on the first two pages of the novel. In this instance the narrative image of a leg and a foot interacts with the text in a similar way to the woman's hand on pages one and two. The foot has touched the first word, 'The', and the 'T' has been pushed slightly away, literally disrupting the narrative. The leg and the text after all are interpreted as the same being at the level of the narrative. The narrator repeats her comments about coffee cup rings, stating, 'The muddy circle you see

just before you and below you represents the ring left on a leaf of the manuscript by my coffee cup' (p. 34). The key word here is 'represents' because the coffee ring that the reader encounters isn't an actual coffee ring stain. It is far too small in diameter to represent an actual cup and the paper is not affected by it. The coffee rings that appear on her stomach on the last page featured above are equally placed on her 'textual body' in the example above. The narrator comments on this, revealing the true reasoning of the narrative, 'Represents, I say, because, as you must surely realize, this book is many removes from anything I've set pen, hand, or cup to' (ibid). The reader acknowledges this ontological break between the original manuscript and the book that they hold. There can only be representations of the writer, 'All contact – merest contact – any contact – is impossible, logically impossible' (ibid). The narrator then responds to a possible question from the reader, 'But why put a ring in the book? Kiss mine – why not? It can be a map of Dante's seventh circle if you like. Why not?' (ibid). The ring is there because of its ontological connection to the act of reading and writing, outside of the narrative, and to reveal the illusion that is usually unwritten – that the book that the reader holds has been mass reproduced and is only a copy, a representation, of the original manuscript. The narrator pokes fun at the reader's desire for teleological meaning, telling them to believe that the coffee ring is instead a representation of the seventh circle in the *Inferno*. It is a representation of a coffee ring and nothing more. Their inclusion on the pages of the novel does not bring the reader closer to the original manuscript and the author. Instead, they act to the contrary. They highlight the printed nature of the object that the reader holds. It also tells the reader that the photographs of the nude model are exactly the same, printed images and nothing more, though they allude to the connection between the body and the text.

The page of narrative that ends the story on page 57 features four representations of these coffee mug ring stains. The first stain, in the left margin, features a narrative textual arrangement that appears upside down and to the side. The reader struggles to gain any meaning from this narrative textual arrangement but can just about make out, 'in early morning, coffee down the [missing] using a ste [missing] ide [missing]' (p. 57). The coffee is referenced but no other narrative can be gained from inside this ring. The second ring circles four of the last six lines of the narrative. After finishing the page, the reader returns to the rings and attempts to find meaning from the text that they encircle. The second ring reads as follows, 'Alexander now [end] Queen, paws for her [end] Achilles runs against [end] pissing prose we've [end] full up, erect [end]'

[end signifies the ring of the coffee stain] (ibid). Between the first four lines that this coffee ring encircles, 'HERE BE DRAGONS' is presented in between the lines, a common phrase denoting unexplored areas. This literal reading between the lines is also an area where text and narrative is not placed, mirroring the phrase. This could be interpreted as something or someone different speaking in the novel, as it is placed between Babs' lines. The fourth coffee ring features a similar phrase, read apart from the main narrative. It says, 'YOU HAVE FALLEN INTO ART – RETURN TO LIFE' (ibid). This statement, along with the coffee rings provokes an ontological break in the reading process. The reader is made to question their reading practices and the mundane act of drinking a hot beverage is represented on the page by images that could be accompanied by actual coffee rings. The coffee rings exist at the same level as the photographic images, for both representations are not textual matter on the page. They allude towards the implied author who is ultimately responsible for the writing and construction of the narrator (from text) and who inserted the coffee stains and the images of a 'real' person, both separate to and representative of the narrator, Babs Masters. The phrase, 'YOU HAVE FALLEN INTO ART' reflexively questions the illusion that the reader has fallen for, assuming that the woman in the photographs is the same person as Babs.

The pages of the novel that feature a script for a play featuring two characters, Olga and Ivan begin to be littered with asterisks that refer to footnotes that start to take over the script on the textual space of the page. On page 19, the use of footnotes is parodied by the following statement: 'I'm scared of it, I'm terrified. Nasty thing like that. I'm scared to death. [*shivers*] Brrr****************. Suppose you'd found it buried in your breakfast bread' (p. 19). Asterisks that represent and refer to footnotes have started to take up large portions of the textual space on the page.

The following page, 20, features a large asterisk that interferes with the textual narrative. The asterisk that appears in the middle of the text makes up part of footnote *****. The first line of this footnote is broken in the middle by the presence of the top of the icon. The word 'goes' is split by the icon. The following line is again split by the asterisk which conceals and disrupts the narrative. This type of iconic textual gesture directly affects the textual narrative on the page. The reader can also draw comparisons between this device and the X's that represent missing content in Federman's *Double or Nothing* and Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000). This asterisk represents nothing that is missing from the narrative but it works like the blocks of monotone in Sterne's *Tristram*

Shandy (1759–67) and Johnson's *Travelling People* (1963). It disrupts the graphic surface of the page and removes text from it, giving the illusion that this asterisk has been placed 'on top of' the page like a palimpsest. A word is missing between 'haven't a' and 'on your bosom'. The reader is left to think about why this asterisk has created this break in the narrative. Maybe the asterisk is a replacement for the missing word on this second line and this leaves the reader to think of what the asterisk may represent. The novel's preoccupation with the body and especially genitalia and the breasts may urge the reader to consider the similarities between the large asterisk and a nipple on a breast, or perhaps the anus alluded to by the narrator of Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* (1973, p. 5). It would fit semantically in the sentence and is related to the bosom that is also mentioned. The connection between the body and the text supports this interpretation, rather than using the photographic image of a nipple, the implied author/narrator uses a textual representation instead. The gap in the narrative is really an (un)gap, for the text that the asterisk/nipple 'covers' never existed to begin with. Only this word is missing from the page, the following line is again broken by the bottom of the asterisk much like the top line. The following footnote complements the gap of the previous footnote in content:

> ****** Prolong this silence until the audience titters nervously. Note: if you found unprinted pages in a book you'd bought, you wouldn't feel embarrassed and need to giggle all the blanks up. You might exclaim: say, look at this, the cheapjakes have left out the dirties. And certainly you'd want your money back. Painters, too, can leave large areas of canvas empty. (p. 20)

This footnote refers back to four pages earlier to a set-up of a scene of the aforementioned play. The reader is told, 'After a prolonged silence ******, during which both of us sit as motionless frightened hares*******, the dialogue commences' (p. 16). The narrator/writer of the play comments upon the differences between performed silence in the play and a page of unprinted text on the surface of the script. The narrator also self-reflexively comments on the difference between blank space on a canvas and blank space on the page. Unlike other novels featured in this book, there is no large gap as blank space on the page in this instance.

On page 28, the narrator discusses some of the implications of asterisks that drop off the bottom of the page. The drooping asterisks are a visual pun that represents the decline of sexual arousal in the male reader. The connection between the novel and the body is foregrounded

again. After the 'drooping' asterisks on this page the next footnote states:

> In addition, the stars interfere with the reading, pester the eye (Why don't you go to a movie?) More than that, one loses count – which goes with what, what goes with which. All this is true, but don't come crabbing to me about it – do you live in the modern world, or not? Besides, in performance, all difficulties disappear. Anyway, these asterisks are the prettiest things in print. Furthermore, you have no trouble, do you? with charts and tables, graphs or logs (Go to a movie). Forward and back, in and out, up and down.

The narrator criticises the reader and acknowledges the difficulty that the reader faces when presented with another footnote represented by these asterisks. Babs tells the reader that they intend to make them lose count of which line of asterisks corresponds to which footnote but then chastises them for not keeping up with the developments of the modern world. She compares reading this narrative to dealing with 'charts and tables, graphs or logs' and then tells the reader to just watch a movie instead. The priority that is given to the visual image or text that is arranged unconventionally gesture towards different visual images is referenced in this footnote. The narrative textual gestures on this page assist representation. The reader, after all, only has to look at the page in order to gain meaning from this novel, just like they do when reading a more conventional novel. This intentional textual gap as missing content is also similar to an iconic textual gesture, frustrating the reader by replacing the sequential textual narrative and disrupting the textual space of the page. This textual icon disrupts the reading process while commenting on the deliberate confusion caused by presenting footnotes as various combinations of 'stars' or asterisks. The reader has difficulty when interpreting the narrative because of the obtuse referencing format. If the asterisks represent the female breast's areola, then the narrative text is continually connected to the body, even without the photographs of the nude model that frequent other pages of the novel.

 Page 27 demonstrates the effects of textual gaps as blank space and missing content at the bottom of the page. The typeface is broken by the two arrows that descend diagonally down the page. The only text in between these two arrows is 'Las Bas', translated as 'Down There' or 'The Damned', and is also the title of a novel by the French author, Joris-Karl Huysmans, published in 1891 that deals with Satanism in contemporary France of the time. Like the intentional gap produced by the disruptive

asterisk/areola in the previous example, the gap in this example conceals and removes text, disallowing the reader from completing the lines of narrative. Neither of these examples of blank space act as punctuation like similar devices do in *Double or Nothing*, they only seem to frustrate the reader and deny them completion of the text. The allure of the different font is denied to the reader who cannot find meaning from the missing text. This intentional textual gap as blank space intentionally denies complete interpretation to the reader here, forcing them to 'skip' portions of the text that they are then chastised for later in the novel on page 50 when the narrator notes, 'you skipped a lot'. This flirty chastising can be interpreted as the female narrator teasing the reader for missing sections of narrative (intentionally denied by the textual gaps), and, since the text and book is applied to the body of the narrator, missing sections of her body. Full meaning is denied to the reader by the textual gaps that litter the pages of *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife*.

The supplementary images that often dominate the page of this novel offer the reader a possible direct visual representation of their narrator which would suggest that Gass would perhaps deem it unnecessary to experiment with the placement of text to represent other images. Photography in this book appears to fulfil as important a role as the textual narrative. Importantly, however, the photographs are never narrative images as such; they are always, instead, an accompaniment or a supplement, maybe even just a device to alleviate the frustration of having to navigate the often difficult textual narrative. Each photograph only slightly contributes to the narrative by providing the reader with the implied image of the narrator (though the reader understands the disconnection between the photograph and the textual narrator). This would need to be described in a more conventional text but here on page 13, Gass chooses to arrange the text in a way that is reminiscent of the actual curves on the photograph underneath. This verso page remains unconnected to the narrative on the previous and following pages. The reader notices that this page contains a combination of linguistic signifiers and photography. The text that reads 'OO-OOO-OO my Mister Handsome how could you?' (p. 13) is presented in a large font size. The arrangement of the text on the page is not reminiscent of any image, though it does supplement the content of the narrative and the image of a naked female model that is placed underneath. This iconic textual gesture assists the generation of meaning from the narrative through its placement on the page. The curving arrangement of the text evokes a sense of the tone of the dialogue rather than representing an image or object, gesturing towards the tone of the voice that speaks

it. The supplementary image that lies underneath the text suggests that the tone of the dialogue is sensual and seductive, even flirtatious. The language used is given a physical charm by the presentation of it on the page, seducing the reader into paying attention to the narrative/Babs. Here the photograph and the few words that are placed above it complement each other, assisting the generating of meaning and providing secondary significations for the reader. The argument for the effectiveness of this must be whether or not the placement of the text in this way would be effective without the nude image underneath. The image here is supplementary and the words and their typographical arrangement could continue providing the narrative effectively without it. The image is not entirely superfluous; it maintains the theme of the narrative (the body and text) and adds another dimension to the interpretation of the page and the story. Its inclusion automatically generates a response that is uncommon in conventional fiction. The reader asks questions, why black and white? Why this pose? Why nude? Why this woman and not another one? The connection between the body of the narrator and the textual narrative is foregrounded on this page. The reader 'sees' the photographic representation of the nude body directly alongside text, just as it is on pages one and two of the novel. Both exist on the two-dimensional plane of the page but it is the photograph that conventionally provides a sense of reality for the reader. This is undermined when the reader acknowledges that both the text and the image are fictional representations. The model who poses for the photographs is performing as Babs, just as the implied author uses text to perform Babs.

Page 19 also features text arranged in an iconic way that gives secondary signification to the reader and supports interpretation. The narrative at the very top of the page is presented to the reader in a 'speech bubble', a device commonly used in graphic novels and comic books. The reader notes that the font used for the narrative text within the bubble is also representative of text in comic books. The narrative within the bubble reads as follows:

"I shall giveway...I shall say YES! I shall let myself marry him – I cannot help it!" She suddenly whispered, with her hot face to the pillow that night, on hearing one of the other girls sigh his name in her sleep. "I cannot bear to let anybody have him but me!! Yet it is a wrong to him, and may kill him when he knows! O my heart-0-0-0-0-

This has a completely different affect on the reader when not presented as it is on the page in Gass's novel. The original narrative textual image

uses a completely different font that looks casual and handwritten, expressing the overwhelming love that the narrator feels for her lover. The quote above, in standard Roman type still conveys the meaning of the narrative but not as effectively as the arrangement in the novel. Several words are boldened and capitalised on the page such as:

I SHALL GIVEWAY…YES!...HOT…SIGH…ANYBODY…ME!!...KILL
and,
O MY HEART 0-0-0-0.

This capitalisation has the effect of drawing the reader's eyes to these significant words, putting a stress on their syllables that cannot be conveyed in the quote above. Another interesting aspect of this narrative textual gesture is the difference between it and a speech bubble in a comic book. The reader notices that the first three lines of the bubble are enclosed in speech marks, while the next four lines are in the third person before the final five lines are again in speech marks. Traditionally, speech bubbles represent the speech and dialogue of a character in a comic book, third-person narration is represented by the illustrations in the rest of the panel and internal thoughts are represented by a different device, a thought bubble. In contrast with the conventional use of a thought bubble, this one acts as a 'narrative box', or lexia of text. In this example, the contents of the panel are entered completely into the speech bubble instead. The bubble doesn't appear from the mouth of any character illustrated on the page, instead prompting the reader to realise that it comes from the page itself, and by extension, the narrator. This unconventional method of representing dialogue draws attention to the possible interpretation of the page as Babs' body. Her speech isn't presented conventionally, but rather from a bubble that connects to her 'body' (it is placed at the top of the page in a place that could represent her mouth). This visual device expands the possibilities of representation on the page. The presentation of conventional text on the page doesn't have the same effect as the text in the narrative textual arrangement on this page.

   Like the bubble that connects to Babs' mouth, page 34 of the novel features a variety of different types of visual device that disrupt the conventional space of the page and attempt a connection between text and the body. On this occasion, and similarly to the asterisks that are used to represent nipples, the narrative at the top of the page is placed in a circular narrative textual arrangement that gestures towards the shape of an eye. The narrative reads, 'The eye by which I see god is the same as the eye

by which god sees me. My eye and god's eye are one and the same – one in seeing, one in knowing and one in loving' (p. 34). The actual text as it appears on the page in the novel is entirely capitalised. The reader gains a secondary signification from this arrangement. Initially just seeing the text arranged in an oval, when the reader reads the narrative they realise that it is arranged in a way that represents the eye that is mentioned in the narrative. In this example, the reader also has to ask why the author did not just choose to include a photographic image of the eye, in fitting with the other photographs is the novel. It would appear that this narrative textual image is necessary at this point; a photographic replacement would give no information about the God that is discussed and the connection between the text and the body is foregrounded. The concept of God is also a path that the reader could analyse, particularly in this novel, where the main character is aware that she is a construction of an author/God, above her in the narrative hierarchy.

A similar, minor device appears on page 36. This time the entire page is arranged as a narrative textual image. Upon turning to this page the reader instantly realises that the narrative is arranged to represent the outline of a fir (Christmas) tree. In this example, the reader has to read the entire page before they gain any reference to Christmas and even then, the narrative's connection is tenuous at best. The final five lines read, 'or coiled at the bottom of his tackle box, that would be comic, sure as shooting – comic as Christmas – a fundamentally funny fix' (p. 36). This statement is arranged as the 'trunk' of the tree. Again, like the eye in the previous example, the reader questions whether a photographic image of a tree could have replaced this page. In this instance the text does not gesture towards an aspect of the body either. This novel seems to value text more than image at this point, choosing to present the narrative iconographically in these two instances.

Page 31 returns to the use of asterisk/nipples as representations of body parts and features an interesting combination of disruptive textual arrangements and a device that lays somewhere in between a narrative textual image and a non-photographic supplementary image. The reader has previously read page 30, a page that presents the narrative in gradually larger font size and finishes with stars or asterisks that have become a recurrent motif of the novel. Page 30 finishes with three large asterisks/areolas that lead to the unusual arrangement on page 31. The reader initially looks at the iconic textual arrangement of asterisks of different sizes before noticing the two blocks of text in the left margin and the footnote at the bottom of the page. They then quickly avert their gaze from the asterisks, 'the prettiest things in print'

(also connecting them to the 'taboo' sighting of a female's nipples) and first reads the two blocks of text in the margin. The first block is the key to unlocking the meaning of this page. It states, 'A cow broke in tomorrow morning to my Uncle Toby's fortifications' (ibid). The reader may realise that this could be a reference to Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*. It is not a large leap to realise that the arrangement of asterisks bears some similarity with many of the pages in Sterne's novel that use the same graphic mark, such as page 391 in the Penguin World Classics edition. The asterisks in Sterne's book represent missing content or inaudible (or not listened to) dialogue. The page from Gass's novel doesn't represent either of those things, instead, the narrator's fascination with 'distracting' the reader with her 'nipples' reaches its peak on this page, for no more asterisks appear on the remainder of the novel's pages. The narrative is replaced by these asterisks, leaving only the intertextual reference to *Tristram Shandy* in the left margin and the footnote that discusses the narrative use of puns at the bottom of the page. Meaning is restricted on this page in *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife*, requiring the reader to search for meaning in Sterne's text before realising that it doesn't work the same way in this one, though it does nod in the direction of Sterne's formal experimentation, acknowledging the narrator's inspiration.

Willie Master's Lonesome Wife differs from *Double or Nothing* in the value that it gives to the photographic image in a work of prose fiction. Federman's text presents images iconographically, giving an extra layer of signification to certain pages and doubling the interpretative qualities of the text. Gass's novel challenges the reader to question the relationship of the images (both supplementary and narrative) and the text. The photographs on the pages of this novel also give an extra layer of signification to the pages on which they appear but no narrative is ever forwarded from interpreting them. This takes us back to the quote from Mitchell at the start of this case study. *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* acknowledges that photographs are *not* language but neither is language like photography. The photographs are *not* actually Babs' real body because she only exists through text and in the mind of the implied author. The photographs aren't necessary for the understanding of the narrative and also, without the textual narrative there would be no narrative to gain from only the photographs. This work of prose fiction is a hybrid multimodal form that uses words and pictures to convey meaning but the pictures are always secondary to the words, even though the pictures occasionally interact with them. The reader of this novel also acknowledges that the photographs that they find on the pages are only a representation of the narrator that they find in the textual narrative,

though this also raises many questions about textual representation as well. The narrator, Babs Masters, is always aware that she exists only as text to the reader. Her legs, her arms, her breasts and her face would conventionally require language to represent them, though the inclusion of the photographs of the nude body on the pages often negate the need for a textual explanation of her form. They also allow the reader to understand the (dis)connection between the writer and the narrator and the performative aspect of writing (see Kutnik, 1986).

It seems evident that the visual devices that have been explored in Chapters 2, 3 and 4 of this book can be useful when interpreting and analysing the implications of unconventional pages of text on the reading process, especially when several of the devices appear on one page. It has also become apparent that it is very rare to find more than a couple of these devices on any one page. *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* uses intentional textual gaps, textual arrangements *and* supplementary and narrative images, but they are rarely used all on the same page. The key here is narrative context and an understanding of the different types of intentional textual gap, textual gestures and images.

7
Conclusions

The main chapters of this book conveyed the significance of conducting analysis of unconventional visual devices on the pages of prose fiction. The construction and testing of new critical terms was an exercise in providing new and adaptive tools and terminology to deal with the visual material found on the pages of often previously neglected texts. There have been many discussions on the many and varied ways that disruptions to the traditional graphic surface of the page in works of prose can contribute, assist and widen the scope of the reader's and critic's interpretation of the wider narrative. It only remains now to review some of the implications of this book and the gaps that still need to be filled by future critical material.

A starting point for this book was the following statement from Glyn White's *Reading the Graphic Surface: The Presence of the Book in Prose Fiction*:

> As visual arrangements of printed text on the graphic surface, graphic devices can contribute to the process of reading, combining with the semantic content within the context which that text creates. The graphic surface thus allows authors a second mode of signification, one which may point out the constraints of normal printed language, but which may simultaneously supplement that language and contribute to the generation of meaning. (2005, p. 206)

The previous case studies and chapters have each tried to build upon this statement by providing interpretation and analysis of (graphic) visual devices on unconventional pages in prose fiction. A notable discovery of this study is how the graphic surface of the page allows for more than just secondary modes of signification and meaning. Visual

devices supplement and, at times, replace printed language that is often constrained when trying to generate meaning. They utilise the fact that the reader initially 'sees' and looks at the page before they 'read' it. The moment that a reader 'sees' or 'looks' at the page comes before any comprehension of the text and narrative. In traditionally presented novels this act of looking becomes automatised and only results in the reader acknowledging that there is nothing unusual in the way they should read the page. In novels that feature different types of visual devices, this same act of looking results in a disruption to conventional reading processes, prolonging the reader's perception of the page and resulting in a challenge to the act of reading. At the very least, a page featuring visual devices makes the reader acknowledge that there is something unusual about the page in contrast to traditional novels, defamiliarising the reading process and making the reader forge new techniques with which to overcome the challenge and generate meaning from the page and the narrative.

This book has examined a number of different visual devices and worked to construct a refined terminology for different types of textual gaps, textual gestures and visual images that appear on the pages of prose fictions. It is very apparent that it is difficult to 'group' different types of visual device into clearly defined categories. There are textual gaps that act as punctuation, gaps that represent pauses in thought and gaps that assist the iconographic arrangement of text in gesturing towards something in the narrative. There are textual arrangements that supplement the main narrative without forwarding it and there are arrangements that both forward the narrative and provide the reader with a secondary signification. Very rarely there are textual arrangements that do not forward the narrative but replace it instead. Visual images are also difficult to categorise, sometimes they supplement the narrative like conventional illustrations, at other times they replace the main textual narrative. This distinguishing between types of gap, gesture or image can be unhelpful, as the specific device often lies somewhere in between two or more types. Indeed, it is this complexity inherent within different visual devices that make them so compelling. These novels and pages often relish a protean shifting in meaning and understanding. The attempts within this book to generate new critical terms that help to describe different types of visual device have occasionally been problematic, because they are often very specific, as can be seen by attempting to transfer comic book theory over to visual images on the pages of novels in Chapter 4. The types of textual gesturing in Chapter 3 seemed to be compatible with the visual devices in Chapter 4 until the

implications of the relationship between word and image were explored and it was discovered how important this is for the overall typology of visual devices. Textual gestures (typographic arrangements of text) and visual images may initially appear to have similar effects on the reader but further study of them highlights many distinctions between the two areas. Images formed by textual arrangements and images formed of lines are definitely not the same thing and have different effects upon the generation of meaning. It must be stressed that the new critical terms that have been developed here are merely a starting point for further study into the effects of visual devices on the generation of meaning and the reading process and further refinement is to be welcomed.

The implications for the reader of such unusual pages and visual devices are varied and wide ranging. The choice to focus on the effects that disruptive pages have on the reading process at the start of this book has proved to be fundamental in accessing the meaning behind each type of device, though the generation of an ideal reader initially proved problematic when trying to avoid subjectivity. In the end it was decided to embrace this subjectivity, as this author is, after all, *the* reader of the texts featured in this study. The reader of such unconventional devices may be initially intimidated by such a challenge to conventional reading practices. This intimidation can later be replaced by the relief that the unconventional devices are actually manageable and rewarding, often providing the reader with a much easier way of generating meaning from the narrative that resonates with their everyday navigation of visual culture. It should be stressed that the reader of pages that feature graphically innovative visual devices initially does exactly the same thing as a reader of pages that do not: they look at the page and translate the signs upon it into meaning. It often seems that authors challenge conventional page layouts in order to provoke a reaction from their readers, either disrupting or assisting the generation of meaning. It could be argued that the most successful visual devices do both – initially disrupt but ultimately assist and supplement the generation of meaning by providing arguably more accurate mimetic tools.

This book has often stressed how effectively visual devices can assist in the representational qualities of each text. These novels are not unreadable or merely aesthetic experiments as some critics have dismissed them as being. The graphic surface of the page has always been available for such purposes and disruptions to conventional presentation does not always distract from literary realism; it often enhances it, providing the reader with a more effective method of reading how a character thinks, consciously or unconsciously. Novels that feature

visual devices are not necessarily anti-realist in this regard. The pages of graphically innovative texts refuse to be resolved into either a visual or a verbal mode and the usual distinction between these two modes is frequently problematised and challenged. The critic is left with the idea that books have always been a vehicle for this kind of questioning, for a page in a book is primarily visual, first and foremost. John Berger's concept that 'seeing comes before words' (1972, p. 1), is as relevant to the study of literature as it is to the visual arts.

Many of the novels featured and analysed in this book attempt to highlight the distinction between the linguistic signifier and the thing that it represents. For example, an iconic textual gesture on page 137.1 of Federman's *Double or Nothing* (1992) simultaneously gestures towards a ship in the ocean and still highlights that the arrangement of text on that page is *not* an actual ship, but instead, a crude representation of one. This echoes the experiments made by Magritte earlier in the twentieth century with his paintings, *The Key of Dreams* (1930) and *The Treachery of Images* (1929).

Both these paintings attempt to challenge viewers' preconceptions of representation in a very similar way to the images, both visual and textual, that feature on the pages of many of the contemporary texts featured throughout this book. Many of the novels featured here actively engage with the Structuralist and Poststructuralist discourses that dominated the twentieth century and still resonate within art today. It is the fundamental inadequacy of linguistic representation that often results in these experiments and disruptions to the graphic surface of the page. The image often represents more directly and more effectively than the word. When the words on the page also present an image, both forms of representation are improved.

The introduction to this book stated that it intended to critically analyse literature with a method that incorporates the *reader*, the *text*, the *semantic context* and the *material presence* and *physical form* of the *print-based book* and how they all play a key role in the interactivity of reading. All of these aspects were required when considering the implications of reading unconventional pages and visual devices. This has ultimately been a study about how disruptions to the traditional page of a novel can affect the reader, and by extension, the generation of meaning from the page. This central approach helped get to grips with what have previously been dismissed as mere 'gimmicks' by some. The term '*text*' has been used more than any other word in the scope of this study. In this work text has been taken to mean both the novel itself and the marks placed upon the surface of the page that traditionally

convey narrative to the reader. At other times this term has been used to describe certain types of visual device – for example, iconic *text*ual arrangement, narrative *text*ual arrangement and *textual* image. The origins of this word 'text', meaning 'to weave' and 'texture', suggested a connection to materiality that many other critics have avoided (with the exception of White, 2011, p. 105 and Peter Stockwell's *Texture: A Cognitive Aesthetics of Reading*, 2009). Visual devices in text stress the importance of the materiality of the page, and of the book that the reader holds in their hands. Absences of text in the form of textual gaps and aporia also foreground the blank surface of the page and the materiality of it.

Photography often appears to be palimpsestic, placed on top of the page but they too have a sense of materiality. The photographs that accompany the text in William H. Gass's *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* (1968) stress the connection between the female body and text. The allure of the text is matched by the attraction of the nude photographs that surround it. In Gass's novel, the book itself is a metaphor for the body of the narrator, the relationship that the reader has with a book is mirrored in the relationship between the narrator and her lover. The material aspect of reading the page needs further exploration, particularly with the proliferation and ascendance of the e-book in recent times.

White states that, 'Beyond implications with regard to the fundamental contact of literature, the meeting of text and reader, there is much close reading still to be done of texts which present a distinctive graphic surface' (2005, p. 207). Starting with this idea of the text on the page and the reader's interpretation of it as being the 'fundamental contact of literature', this book has expanded the close readings of such texts. This in itself is justification for this study; the more close reading that is done of 'texts that present a distinctive graphic surface', the more familiar the reader becomes with the types of visual devices that appear in them. Conducting close readings has allowed us to formulate and explore new critical terminology by analysing different uses of text on the graphic surface of the page, comparing the effects that different arrangements have on the reader and creating terms such as *iconic textual arrangements* and *narrative images* to assist further study and close readings of such texts. There are many critical gaps that remain to be filled, however.

Critical work in multimodality is also extensive and very useful when approaching texts that engage in a dialogue with words and images and particularly how they are adapted across different modes of delivery.

The emergence of e-books and e-readers as a popular vehicle for the storage of digital literature is an area ripe for exploration and will potentially allow critics who previously studied electronic hypertexts to expand upon their work. The physical interaction that the reader has with the pages of electronic books with disruptions to the conventional page is another area of study to pursue, as is the marginal field of hypertext fiction that sometimes require the reader to 'finish' and construct absent parts of their narrative. Further study into the materiality of text would benefit from a comparison of the traditional codex form and novels that are represented digitally and accessed via e-reader hardware. The simple act of turning a page of a physical novel is represented by the press of a button on an e-reader. The choice of many e-readers to utilise 'digital-ink' or 'e-ink' technologies suggest that the reader of a novel has an affinity with the physical matter of the page and the book. This is worth exploring, particularly the affect they have on the reader when texts that present a distinctive graphic surface are translated into e-book format. Certain novels featured in this study, such as Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1969) and Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* (2010), would struggle to be adapted for use in this new format, because losing the presence of the book would diminish the purpose that removing the covers and cutting holes into pages has. Abrams' and Dorst's *S,* with its abundance of artefacts such as newspaper clippings, postcards and pamphlets that are inserted into the novel between the pages would also considerably change its effect(s) when translated into e-book form. It is worth noting that Marc Saporta's *Composition No. 1* has recently been released by Visual Editions (2011) for use on the Amazon Kindle e-reader, changing the effect that the removal of the covers of the book and the shuffling of the original's loose-leaves of paper have on the reading process. Mark Z. Danielewski's *The Fifty Year Sword* (2005, 2014) has been adapted as an enhanced e-book which features animation of the text on the page. One sequence presents the reader with a time limit before the text slides off the page, removing any chance of conveying the meaning of the words unless the reader reloads the page. Such a change ultimately effects the generation of meaning from the page. Tom Phillips's *A Humument* has also been adapted as an app that can be downloaded from the iTunes store on Apple devices and features every previous iteration of the physical book that can be compared according to the user's need, and will change with regular updates from the author. There are many more gaps in this discourse that require further study, a refinement or extension of the critical terminology created here would assist in future close readings of unconventional texts and visual devices.

These works of prose fiction that have previously been marginalised by critics 'take advantage of the potency of the book and the flexibility of fiction to communicate with readers in a variety of stimulating ways' (White, 2005, p. 208). The potential of the page has been shown to be limitless. The relationship between the linguistic signifier and images has only recently begun to be properly explored by critics, despite the work of the Poststructuralists in the 1970s and 80s. The reading process itself needs to be recontextualised in light of developments in literary criticism. Too often, the reader is dismissed as failing to grasp or desire to read such unconventional works of prose as if their reading of the narrative will be jeopardised by having to ask the question 'how do I read this unusual page?' The reader of the novels that have featured throughout this book will always find an answer to this question more easily than they may have been led to believe and the contribution to the interpretation of text that many of these visual devices bring to the reader can allow for a more fulfilling experience that helps understanding the meaning of the narrative by providing the reader with a multitude of possible significations.

What this type of graphic storytelling and visual narrative ultimately demonstrates is the continued possibilities of the blank page of a novel as a potential space for conveying meaning, representing reality, and destabilizing conventional reading practices.

Bibliography

This bibliography is split into three sections: Primary Material, Secondary Material and Related Material. The first section details all the novels used as examples in this book, while the second documents all the theoretical material that was used and consulted during its creation. The final section, 'Related Material', includes a list of selected texts that feature visual devices that may prompt further literary study of these novels and may have been referred to but have not necessarily been dealt with in this novel. The aim of that section is to provoke further scholarly material and analysis of those texts with visual devices in mind.

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Index

Note: This index has been prepared by the author. Titles of texts are indexed under their authors *apart from* William H. Gass's *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* and Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing: A Real Fictitious Discourse*, which have their own headings because of the depth of detail that they have been dealt with in the two case study chapters. Like the rest of this book, I hope that the reader finds this index useful in helping to develop and explore their own understanding of visual devices in literature.