Digital Narrative in Shelley Jackson's Patchwork: Hypertext as a Mode of Reading and Writing

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Abstract

In Patchwork Girl, Shelley Jackson reimagines Mary Shelley's pioneer work, Frankenstein through using digital media to reshape the narrative structure and the thematic complexity of the novel. Through using hypertext format, Jackson explores a fragmented and nonlinear storytelling approach that challenges the confines ofthe traditional narrative forms. Hypertext links invites readers to navigate the story choosing which path to take which blurs the boundaries between author, text and reader. This article will explore the role of technology in the narrative structure of Jackson's Patchwork Girl and will analyze the interplay between content and form which highlights the reader as a co-creator of meaning. .

"I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly and exult in the agony of the torturing flames. The light of that conflagration will fade away; my ashes will be swept into the sea by the winds. My spirit will sleep in peace, or if it thinks, it will not surely think thus. Farewell." (Mary Shelly 1818, 3)

1. INTRODUCTION

In words bidding farewell spoke the monster at the end of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, when both Victor and his creation surrendered to their demise. Death, nonetheless, overpowered Victor's attempts to reconcile with his monster, leaving the creature whaling Victor's dead body. Straddled in grief, the monster jumped from the window and floated away on an iceberg, never to be seen again. For many readers of the novel, the monster perished or disappeared as it sailed away on the iceberg. Yet Frankenstein returned many times in the following decades. As countless Gothic novels and movies are engraved in the common cultural subconscious, monsters often return in different forms if not in their original form. Indeed, "the monster always escapes" and "its monstrous progeny will return, ready to stalk again in another bigger-than-ever sequel" as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen[1] proclaims in *Monster Theory,* which in turn

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[1] In Monster Theory, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen explores the cultural significance of the monster as a literary construct that often haunts the collective memory.

reciprocates Mary Shelley's famous wish for her monster to create its own progeny. In the 1831 introduction to *Frankenstein,* Mary Shelly writes:

> And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper. I have affection for it, for it was the offspring of happy days, when death and grief were but words, which found no true echo in my heart.(Shelley 1831, 3)

Over the two centuries following the publication of *Frankenstein*, Shelley's wish was realized as her "hideous progeny" has "go[ne] forth and prosper[ed]" (Shelley,1881). The monster, taking after his creator's name, has appeared and reappeared in various adaptations that marked both literature and popular culture with different versions based on the monster appearing in text to theater, film, and hypertext. Transgressing the boundaries of adaptations, the monster has become a cultural myth in its own right and his progeny returned and re-appeared in different forms. While some adaptations[2] reproduced the plot or the monster's features, most of the adaptations recreated some of the structural complexities of the novel about the narrative and the dichotomy between the body and the soul. Some of the recreated elements consisted of the use of multiple narrative frames and the parallels between the monstrous body and the monstrous narrative which resurfaced into adaptations of Frankenstein in different media like theater, film,or hypertext.

Throughout the different reincarnations of the original monster, the progeny of Shelley's creature continues to bear the marks and features of their ancestor. Two hundred years later, the monster is reincarnated in a female electronic body in the cyberspace of Shelley Jackson's Hypertext novel, *Patchwork Girl*(1995) which is both a sequel and a re-reading of Shelley's *Frankenstein* as it follows the creation of a female monster assembled by Mary Shelley. Visual artist and writer Shelley Jackson imagines that Mary Shelley completed the creation of the female monster, an idea that she contemplated but rejected in the original novel. The monster comes to life through visual illustrations and blocks of texts connected through hypertext links , recounting the missing fragments of the story. The narrative of the electronic monster, whose name is also Patchwork Girl is , thus, explored through collecting the pieces of the body which in turn reveals the story of their owners as the reader clicks from one hypertext link to another with each leading the reader to discover the story of the donor of the body organ. Hypertext links play a pivotal role in structuring the narrative to simulate an interactive game where the participants actively engage in writing the story. This article examines the role of technology,

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2   Some adaptations like movies, Frankenstein and others retained the same plot. Other books are only loosely based on Shelley's original text.

namely , hypertext, in shaping the narrative structure and thematic complexity of *Patchwork Girl* by Shelley Jackson, a landmark hypertext fiction .

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The complete title of Jackson's novel is *Patchwork Gil; or A Modern Monster, by Mary/Shelley ,and Herself* . This title , evidently resonates with the fragmented nature of both the text and the protagonist, which is a characteristic of hypertext. Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* is an exemplary work of Hypertext Fiction, a genre which incorporates hypertext links to help the reader gain greater control over navigating the narrative. The hypertext novel revisits the myth of Frankenstein by imagining a story in which Mary Shelley creates a female monster, named Patchwork girl. As a continuation of Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Jackson's hypertext novel, an outstanding Gothic tale , follows the journey of the female monster starting from the moment Mary Shelly depicted Victor Frankenstein contemplating the creation of a female monster. In the original story, Victor relinquishes the idea but in Jackson's *Patchwork Girl,* Mary Shelly returns to the graveyard and brings her monster into life . The monster then embarks on a long journey to the United States which is both physical and internal, as it struggles with its fragmented identity finding a tool of self-affirmation in writing.

Upon its release in 1995, Shelley Jackson's novel was praised for being innovative as it introduced the new genre of hypertext fiction, and also explored innovative thematic content. Shelley has explored the visual aspect of hypertextual writing as she presented a conceptual card for readers to engage with. In *Writing machines* (2002), Katherine Hayles considered the novel to be an iconic representation of the second generation of electronic literature.

To comprehend   the dynamics of hypertext fiction, it is essential to have a brief overview of hypertext and its role in literary narratives To begin with , the term hypertext was first coined by Ted Nelson[3] in 1965 to describe non-sequential writing .The prefix hyper implied an excess or surpassing of the traditional boundaries . In this context, David H. Jonassen defines as follows :

In place of the verbal connectives that are used in normal text, such as topic or transition sentences, hypertext connects nodes... through links. The primary purpose of a link is to connect onecard, node or frame and another card, frame or node that enables us to jump from one to another. (1989, 8)[4]

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3   "MiscNews Feb65." Archive.org, 2024,
web.archive.org/web/20130510074431/faculty.vassar.edu/mijoyce/MiscNews_Feb65.html. Accessed 24 Dec. 2024.
4   Floridi, L. (2011). The philosophy of information. Oxford University Press.

Links provide the electronic text with the ability to enable navigation . Precisely, the electronic text operates by association and a non-sequential representation of information.Luciano Floridi [5] suggests a more functional definition that, which contemplates Jonassen's model, identifying three essential elements that constitute an hypertext:

1. A discrete set of semantic units (nodes): These units, described by Roland Barthes as lexia, can take various forms: Alphanumeric documents (pure hypertext), Multimedia documents (hypermedia), Functional units, in which case the result is a multifunctional hypertext or hypermedia.

2. A set of associations (links or hyperlinks): These connections are embedded within the nodes using specially formatted areas, known as source and destination anchors. These stable and active cross-references enable the reader to navigate instantly to other parts of the hypertext.

3. An interactive and dynamic interface.

It was in the late 1980s through the mid-1990s that hypertext fiction emerged as a genre that gained significant popularity and critical interest. Since personal computers became widely adopted and the advent of the Internet, interest in interactive genres grew remarkably. The advances of the internet introduced the concept of hypertext which allowed writers to link sequences of texts and thus connect fragments of text. Rettberg (2014) explains ,"Hypertext fiction represented a bridge between the literary experimentation of the late twentieth century and the cultural shifts accompanying the move to networked computing."

Eas For generations of scholars, the text has often been considered stable regardless of the physical medium, " linear, bounded, and fixed." Consequently, writers and scholars typically operated within these predefined rules, imagining the text to be stable when based on the physical medium. Delany and Landow, define hypertext, as " text" that opposes the static form of the book. Hypertext is can be composed and read non-linearity; Its structure is variable and changing and consists of of block of texts[6] woven together using digital links. This aspect allows readers to jump from one block to another creating a new reading experience. Such an approach visualizes the mental processes fundamental to the reading experience . Hypertext breaks away from our traditional way of reading texts, challenging the physical effort readers grew accustomed to such as flipping pages.

tgate systems[7], a pioneer in the field of hypertext established in 1982 in the United State, released a special software called storyspace , which enables writers to write hypertext fiction and readers to read these narratives using the same platform. Michael Joyce is credited

5   In the Philosophy of Information, particularly in Chapter 10, titled "The Symbol Grounding Problem, he examines how hypertext systems contribute to the understanding of semantic information and meaning.
6   Barthes refers to blocks of text as " Lexia)
7   Eastgate Systems, Inc. is a pioneering company in the field of hypertext and electronic literature. Established in 1982 and based in the United States, Eastgate is best known for publishing innovative works of hypertext fiction and non-linear narratives. Its mission revolves around exploring new ways of storytelling, primarily through the use of technology.

for being the first to write a hypertext fiction piece when he released , afternoon, a story in 1987. Other works followed including Shelley's Jackson Patchwork Girl.

3. STRUCTURE AS FRAGMENTATION

In *Patchwork Girl* (1996), Jackson utilizes computer technology to allow the reader to navigate from link to link, instead of following a linear page-to-page narrative, creating a form of storytelling known as hypertext . Often intrigued by the unpredictable paths, the reader navigates the plenitude of nodes, which can contain text, quotes, and images. Elements of the original narrative such as the monstrous narrative are visualized by different hypertext links, which gives the reader the possibility to follow different narrative strands. Unlike traditional literature which typically restrains readers to a start-to-end reading, hypertext fiction invites the reader to make a variety of choices, Hypertext fiction relies heavily on nodes of text which make up a fictional story. Each node presents several options, allowing readers to decide which link to pursue . Interestingly, hypertext can be experienced on paper as well as on screen with each medium   displaying its own characteristics. Thereader continues to navigate the plenitude of nodes, which can contain text, quotes, and images.

In this hypertext, the body parts are represented within the electronic nodes that constitute the text. The reader is entrusted with the authority to piece together and patch the different bodies, constructing their own image of the body as a quilt. Each of the monster's body parts owns its own narrative voice and history. These body parts are stitched together to form a constantly unstable and shifting monstrous body that often threatens to fall apart. At some stage, the body is held together with duct tape. The loosely connected hypertextual maze of links and narrative threads , thus, embodies a monstrous body in itself, visually represented by clickable maps of the patchwork girl's body and parts..

The novel's title betrays the monster's fragmented identity and body as it acknowledges multiple authors, "Patchwork Girl or a Modern Monster" by Mary/Shelley and Herself. Jackson's hypertext is attributed to many authors highlighting the themes of fragmentation and hybridity in both literary and body authorship . This raises questions about text ownership and the ownership of the monster . With the power of authorship comes the reader's responsibility to follow and the path to build in order to reassemble both the body and the narrative of the monster. Once charged with authorial power, the reader must   decide the links to follow and the path to build to reassemble the body and the story of the monster.

The narrative in Patchwork Girl is presented as a series of fragments , and nodes which mirror the fragmented nature of the protagonist . The body and the identity of Patchwork Girl

is fragmented and reassembled through a non-linear structure which challenges the readers to piece together the parts and decide which sequence of events to follow.
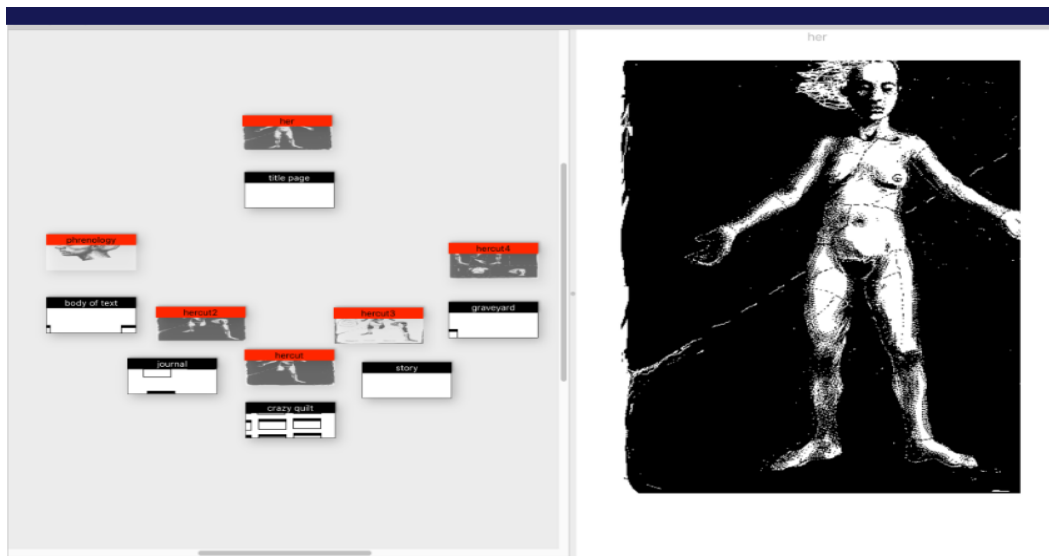

Figure 1: the title page of *Patchwork Girl*

The first image to encounter the reader when opening the software is that of a female body. The portrait features individual body parts which are connected with stitched lines .When clicking on these parts, the reader is taken to various histories of Patchwork Girl in the form of different lexias and blocks of texts. Graveyard recounts the histories of the different women from whom the body parts originated . Journal retraces the genesis of the monster from Mary Shelly's perspective . A Quit introduces the reflections of Shelley Jackson and contains quotations by writers like Mary Shelley , Frank Baum or theorists like Derrida's Dissemination, Cixous's Coming to Writing, Gilles Delueze and Felix Guattari's A thousand Plateaus, Harraway's A cyborg Manifesto and Lytod 's The Postmodern Condition. Story , written in the Patchwork Girl's voice, represents the section where extracts from Frankenstein are interwoven in others that tells the story of the female monster in contemporary America as she travels from Europe to California over a period of 175 years . Finally, Body of text/broken accents alternates between narration of the monster, and theories of hypertext and the human body as well as references in the novel This section seems to be written in the voice of the author from Europe to the USA like the protagonist. Throughout the sections, the author's identity remains fluid and difficult to pin down   thanks to the use of hypertext and the dynamic nature of the narrative . She writes,

I am not predictable, but neither am I random. I might very well be in the cafe predicted, and am-sitting in white light, espresso souring my mouth, jazz piano tinkling over a slurred bass line, as I read fragments of flyers taped to the walls-

but could equally be anywhere else, so if you think you're going to follow me, you'll have to learn to move the way I do, think the way I think; there's just no way around it. (think me)

Her headstone reads: "Here Lies a Head, Trunk, Arms (Right and Left), and Legs (Right and Left) as well as divers Organs appropriately Disposed. May they Rest in Piece" (headstone). Headstone that reads " rest in piece" is not simply a pun on the fragmentary nature of the monstrous body but also expressive of the text's critique of fragmented narratives as well. These pieces are not parts of a former whole, or a narrative that we as readers are trying to reconstitute. They are points in a design or a network that the architect of which is the reader. When you click on " leg ", or " Trunk " , it would lead you to different Lexia or fragments of text and images which continue with the unfolding of the story of the female body parts that make up the monster. She tells us that these parts are" as strong as my unfortunate and famous brother but less neurotic (I Am). If you click on the right leg, you learn that.

In *Patchwork Girl* , the monster experiences different exchanges with her body parts as each preserves the memories of their previous owners. She engages in conversations with the owners of her body parts. Her memory is essentially composed of the memories associated with each body partThe monster struggles with her body parts, as they retain the original traits of their donors. This ultimately leads to the memories of the body parts influencing her choices and shaping the path of patchwork girl, their new owner. In the lexia "graveyard/the everywoman monster's right arm ," the monster shares the story of that particular limb. The right am for instance was borrowed from two women with distinct stories which are elaborated up in the following section :

My right arm has two parts: the upper belonged to Tristessa, a woman known in the ship-yards for her deadly aim with a bottle—at stray dog or man, for she let fly at the one with as little or as much cause as she trounced the other. Indeed, she claimed to see no great distinction between the two: "You're neither of you safe to pet but in captivity, and there you're naught but a middling bed warmth, a gaping maw, and the bugs you bring home in your pelt." …The lower part was Eleanor's, a lady very dextrous with the accoutrements of femininity. She wielded a fan like a weapon, unfurling and snapping it shut with militant flirtatiousness. She swung a calf's weight in whalebone, metal hoop, linen and lace around her frame with no appearance of strain, and could hold a smile like a trapeze artist who swings by the teeth. The crook of her little finger

as she cut her meat would silence a table. She liked her solitude, and had won it with the techniques of a perfect sociability. One part of me hurls weapons for a welcome. One part uses welcome as a weapon.(Right Arm)

The rest of the lexia belonging to the headstone section details how the different body parts dictate the present and future of the monster according to the past and histories of their original owners. They continue to affect Patchwork girl who speaks of how the left leg belonged to a Nanny and how it still shows traces of the life of her previous owner. In the lexia, " Headstone/Left Leg", she says :

> My left leg belonged to Jane, a nanny who harbored under her durable grey dresses and sensible undergarments a remembrance of a less sensible time: a tattoo of a ship and the legend, Come Back To Me. Nanny knew some stories that astonished her charges, and though the ship on her thigh blurred and grew faint and blue with distance, until it seemed that the currents must have long ago finished their work, undoing its planks one by one with unfailing patience, she always took the children to the wharf when word came that a ship was docking, and many a sailor greeted her by name. My leg is always twitching, jumping, joggling. It wants to go places. It has had enough of waiting. (Shelley)

As a result, Jackson's female monster not only differs from its male counterparts but also explores different facets of the conceptualization of cyborgs in fiction .Shelley Jackson's version explores the corporeality of the cyborgs, being" half animal, half machine" creation.. Shelley Jackson foregrounds the materiality of the body,which is depicted in the lexia, "body jungle" . In this dreamlike narrative, the monster travels through the body exploring a jungle of organs. As she journeys through ovaries and ribs , patchwork girl reflects on death and life describing the process of aging. Her reflections on the decay of the body echo the monster's innate fear of their inevitable demise

> Before long the blood in my veins will be the blood of the body jungle. My skin will fall away in scrolls, my palms and fingertips will drift down like aged leaves. My veins will unweave and reweave themselves into the network. My heart will swing free from my ribcage and roost on a branch […] I do not know how my skull will open, or if, I will still know myself when my brain drifts up to join the huge, intelligent sky. (story/falling apart/body jungle)

The poignant description of the process of aging equally draws on the relationship between the body and the concept of the monster. The monster is made like "a quilt" as its corporal existence is defined by the pieces that have been assembled from other corpses. It becomes a hybrid, and a metaphor for the text/body interdependence. When the reader interacts with the body map, they enter a complex loop where the monster's figure and her story are both anticipated and distorted. The modern, or more convenientlypost-modernist is grounded in the multiplicity of paths that this labyrinthine writing offers. The hyper-linked content of the novel punctuates the genesis and journey of the postmodernist monster, " Patchwork Girl". In digital hypertext, there is no singular authorial voice; instead,the reader assumes the role of authority. In interpreting the text Evidently, re-creating the monster would conjure up the creator of the original monster . In *Writing Machines*, Kathryine Hayles, comments on the experience of reading *Patchwork Girl* saying:

> In an important innovation, it drew connections between the electronic text and the female monster's fragmented body. One of the screens showed a large head in profile, presumably the monsters, divided into sections after the style of a phrenology chart. Clicking on one of them took Kaye to the stories of the women whose body parts were used to make the monster. (Hayles , 38)

The text, much like the body of the protagonist, is also an ongoing process of construction. As you decode and interpret the text,you will find links that are intricately connected to each other. Throughout the narrative, the links are woven together and the text even borrows elements of language from the internet and from other sources. Most critics, discussing patchwork girl, comment on the protagonist's role as a modern cyborg. Indeed, the metaphor of a cyborg is central to the understanding of both the original monster and the female monster as represented in the hypertext novel .To begin with, cyborgs are hybrid creatures that embody the concept of boundaries. Furthermore, cyborgs often emblemize the instability of the human subject in post-modern times. Commenting on the cyborg's potential for transgression, Wolmark[8] says , " the cyborg propensity to disrupt boundaries and explore different embodied subjectivities could, therefore, be regarded as its most valuable characteristics (6)." This observation is certainly applicable in the case of Patchwork Girl where the protagonist's ability to challenge physical and metaphorical boundaries guides the reader through her narrative

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[8]   Wolmark, Jenny. 1999."Introduction and Overview." Cybersexualities: A Reader on Feminist Theory, Cyborgs and Cyberspace. Ed. J. Wolmark. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

In the lexia, "body of text/body," Jackson expresses her views on writing and on the body, " the body could be said to be the writing of the soul." Albeit fictional, the story reflects on the female body which is both hybrid and akin to a quilt. The metaphor of the cyborg highlights the hybrid nature of the patchwork girl. Cyborgs exemplify the fluidity of human subjectivity in modern times. In Patchwork Girl, Shelley Jackson also constructs the body of her monster from scratch, utilizing intertextuality and fragments of texts that she explores as organic body parts of the electronic form that her monster embodies during the experience of reading the hypertext novel.

The scars of the monster illustrate the author's exploration of hybridity and fragmentation. These scars, visually represented as dots, connect various lexia and thereby link the different body parts and textual elements , highlighting that Jackson's monster is composed of both physical and textual components. The scars emphasize the fragmentation of both the narrative and the body while exploring the impact of scars on the story and the protagonist. Scars not only signify fragmentation but they also highlight the joining of two body parts, of two stories, two histories as she comments :

> You're right, I did pity you, but no longer," I said, "because I see that your scars not only mark a cut, they commemorate a joining.""More than that, she said. "Scar tissue does more than flaunt its strength by chronicling the assaults it has withstood. Scar tissue is new growth. And it is tougher than skin innocent of the blade. (Jackson)

Furthermore, hypertextual writing facilitates a dialogue between Shelley Jackson,'s text ,Mary Shelley's original work and the narrative of protagonist Patchwork Girl which interrogates the referentiality and remediation of the subject . An important question arises here. Using hypertextual writing deconstructs the traditional notion of writers . By navigating the hypertext links, the writer's role is suspended . Unlike traditional views that define reading as a passive act, Jackson's novel centers around the notion of text materiality. The text is the body and the body is the text ,both influenced by the physical act of clicking on links.

4. READER AGENCY

While reading Patchwork Girl, the reader is piecing together the fragments of the story in a way similar to sewing a quilt. As the body parts are assembled, the reader weaves together various narratives from different sources. Throughout reading, Patchwork girl constructs its own narrative, thereby forming her own identity using these body parts as reference points grounding her narrative and history. The fragmented nature of the hypertext structure and the content parallels the patchwork process that the reader engages in when reading. Both the

character and text are a patchwork of parts from other narratives as well as other works ultimately coming together to form a cohesive whole. The text imitates the content which in itself portrays the fragmented nature of a cyborg monster, a hybrid nature. The multiplicity of the lexias provides the reader different paths to choose from. In " Stitch Bitch" , Jackson further develops her theories and reflection on the body proposing a unique conception on the body as an entity that transcends the authorship of the soul.

> It reports to us in stories, intensities, hallucinatory jolts of uninterpreted perceptions: smells, sights, pleasure, pain.Its public image, its face is a collage of stories, borrowed images, superstitions, fantasies. We have no idea what it "really" looks like.(Jackson)

In *Patchwork Girl*, the body parts reveal their autonomy as independent body parts that are not always under the control of their owner. In some instances, instead of following the commands of Patchwork Girl, they revert to the memories, and habits of their original owners enforcing their own rule. This reflects Jackson's own views which are stated in her essay, "Stitch Bitch" [9]. The body tells stories and voices our memories . She writes:

> In hysteria, the body starts to tell those stories back to us--our kidneys become our accusers, our spine whines, our knees gossip about overheard words, our fingers invent a sign language of blame and pain […]But that body-bag is also a treasure-trove, like any junkyard. It knows stories we've never told.

Another striking feature in *Patchwork Girl* concerns the monster body parts which retain their autonomy speaking of their origin selves. The body parts speak of the memories and histories of their original body parts that stand on their own revealing their owners' memory and stories. Jackson herself speaks of writing the hypertext as an act of digging and burial. She recognizes her own limits . Jackson explains:

> Every page-moment is both expectant and memorializing, which is certainly one reason why I have buried the patchwork girl's body parts in separate plots in a zone called the cemetery, while in the story zone they are bumptious and ambulatory.[10]

In this context, Shelley Jackson explores hypertext links as a medium for preserving the memories and history of the original owners of the body parts that now make up belonging to patchwork girls. The hypertext links make up the physical and visual body as well as the text

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9   Jackson, Shelley. 1997. "STITCH BITCH: The Patchwork Girl". Web.Mit.Edu. http://web.mit.edu/m-i-t/articles/jackson.html.

10   Ibd

which narrates the journey of the fated monster. Despite the novelty of hypertextual writing, Shelley Jackson effectively uses hypertext writing to develop her style:

Assembling these patched words in an electronic space, I feel half-blind, as if the entire text is within reach, but because of some myopic condition I am only familiar with from dreams, I can see only that part most immediately before me, and have no sense of how that part relates to the rest. When I open a book I know where I am, which is restful. My reading is spatial and even volumetric. I tell myself, I am a third of the way down through a rectangular solid, I am a quarter of the way down the page, I am here on the page, here on this line, here, here, here. But where am I now ? (1995)

The body, akin to the text, is stitched and fragmented. Visually, the body is stitched by a dotted line .In the body of text/dotted line, Jackson writes :

The dotted line is the best line :

It indicates a difference without cleaving apart for good what it distinguishes.It is a permeable membrane : some substance necessary to both can pass from one side to the other.It is a potential line, an indication of the way out of two dimensions (fold along dotted line) : In three dimensions what is separate can be brought together without ripping apart what is already joined, the two sides of a page flow obviously into one another. (1995)
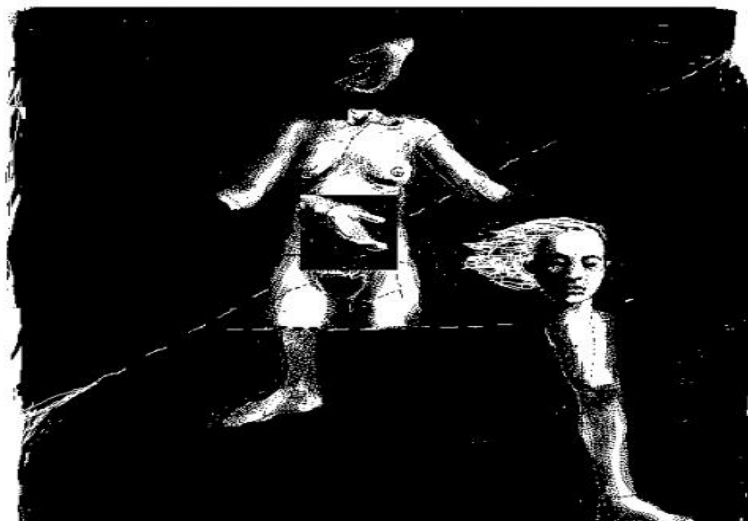

Figure 2 : body parts page from the hypertext novel

In her essay, *My Mother was a computer,* N, Katherine Hayles observes how hypertextual navigation transitions the reader from the fictional world of Mary Shelley to a realm where Mary Shelley lives and writes. The dotted line serves as as a scar where fiction

and meta-fiction intertwine, as described by Gerad Gennette 's concept of Metalepsis[11](2004,43) , which refers to the blending of two genres that are typically distinct and separate . In this context, Hayles goes further to explore the relationship between digital technology, and literature . The computer is presented as a metaphorical mother that births new modes of thinking and writing. By invoking the concept of intermediation, she emphasizes how various systems influence and inform one another, resulting in the emergence of hybrid forms of textuality and subjectivity. Indeed, the traditional view of literature has been challenged with the rise of hypertext novels like *Patchwork Girl* where the digital technologies discussed earlier enabled fluidity in the text, highlighting the role of the medium in shaping interpretation.

The five sections of Patchwork Girl foreground the centrality of hypertext as a technology that reshapes subjectivity. The work is an assemblage whether from the reader'sor the writer's perspectives as they assemble the fragments of her multiple subjectivity which are tangled within the technologies of hypertext. The fragmentation of the narrative has led theorists like Landow to stress how notions of gender, identity are rewritten thanks to using the tool of hypertext . In " All written" , Jackson writes, " You could say that all bodies are written bodies, all lives pieces of writing."

5. CONCLUSION

Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* significantly departs from traditional narrative structures to question storytelling and identity through the lens of a digital medium, specifically hypertext. This innovative approach allows readers to engage in an interactive reading experience. Rather than passively following a predetermined storyline, readers become active participants as they piece together the narrative's fragments and construct the identity of the hybrid monster at the center of the story.

The fragmented nature of the text does not represent a stylistic choice as it reflects the very essence of the hybrid monster, which serves as a female counterpart to Mary Shelley's iconic creature from *Frankenstein.* Similarly to Shelley's monster grapplings with questions of existence and identity, Patchwork Girl embodies a complex interplay of voices and experiences, inviting readers to explore notions of selfhood, agency, and the intersections of gender and technology.

By blending hypertext with traditional text, Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* exemplifies how technology offers new possibilities for narrative exploration. The hypertext

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11   Genette, Gérard. 2004. Métalepse : De la figure à la fiction. Poétique. Paris : Seuil.

format encourages readers to navigate the text in a nonlinear manner thereby dismantling conventional storytelling's confined borders. This dynamic interaction between reader and text opens up a myriad of opportunities to examine various themes, including the construction of identity in a fragmented world and the potential for collaboration and community in storytelling.

To conclude, *Patchwork Girl* challenges readers to reconsider their understanding of narrative, urging them to recognize the impact of digital media on literature and individuality. It stands as a testament to how contemporary storytelling can evolve, resonating with the complexities of modern existence. Through its innovative use of hypertext, not only does the work redefine narrative possibilities but also invites deeper reflections on the nature of identity and the stories we weave together in the tapestry of our lives.

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