

DIGITAL HUMANITIES IN THE INDIA RIM

CONTEMPORARY SCHOLARSHIP IN AUSTRALIA AND INDIA

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11. Hypertext as a ‘palimpsestuous’ construct: Analysing Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl*

Lopamudra Saha and Ujjwal Jana

Abstract

This chapter analyses how the hypertext fiction *Patchwork Girl* (1995) functions as a palimpsest in its postmodern multimodal rewriting of the myth of *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* (1818). Since digital culture is one of the major postmodern offshoots, and the idea of the hypertext is the product of literary culture and digital innovations, new possibilities have been brought about that unsettle the traditional conceptualisation of the novel as the printed word. This chapter, therefore, proposes the study of the concept of the hypertext as ‘palimpsestuous’ relativity, with special reference to *Patchwork Girl*. To serve this purpose, the traditional idea of the ‘palimpsest’ as a parchment undergoes revision in the light of the affordances of multimedia. This enquiry also uncovers the changing dynamics of readership that the new media intervention has brought about. Finally, the discussion highlights how hypertextual rewriting induces the ideas of multivocality, fragmentariness, non-linearity and interactivity through the application of the inter-semiotic paradigm.

Keywords

Palimpsest; hypertext; multimodal; *Patchwork Girl*; *Frankenstein*.

Introduction

The digital era has diverted the attention of the traditional book reader from turning pages to browsing web pages across digital screens. In 1997, Espen Aarseth defined this new coda of literature as ‘ergodic’ where “non-trivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text” (Aarseth, 1997, p. 1). In other words, the reader must be engaged in the active creation of the text with a traversal dynamic previously unattained. The process of narrative co-construction was furthered by David Ciccoricco (2007) in *Reading Network Fiction*, where he posits that network fiction not only blurs the boundary between author and the reader, but by analysing formal elements and aesthetic novelty he argues that they enter into a dialectic with the cultural and technological shifts brought about by the proliferation of digital technology. With the ever-existent and all-encompassing presence of the digital in our everyday life, and the prevalence of multimedia technologies—images, videos, audio, graphics, animations—on the screens of our electronic devices such as smart phones and laptops simply through a click, the scope and possibilities of ergodic literature grew rapidly. Digital Humanities, as an area of scholarly activity that functions at the intersections of these new digital innovations and literary culture, has gained global scholarly attention in recent times.

Electronic Literature, which is a subgenre of Digital Humanities and an instance of ergodic literature, basically embodies a multimodal genre of writing that aims to associate multimedia technologies with the printed word. N. Katherine Hayles’ (2008) understanding of electronic literature, in her seminal *Electronic Literature: New Horizons for the Literary*, as integrating computational processes and interactive structures, situates this genre of writing as giving birth to and interacting with issues of identity, embodiment and narrative aesthetics in the digital age. These are born-digital works of literature that are also meant to be read digitally on the various social media platforms, blogs, and YouTube videos that are the very sites of Electronic Literature production. Here, the Electronic Literature Organisation (ELO) definition of Electronic Literature aptly fits—that is, Electronic Literature refers to works that make use of the materiality of the computational culture. One of the various forms of Electronic Literature that have come to exist in the digital age is hypertext fiction.

The idea of the hypertext was introduced by Vannevar Bush in 1945¹ and was simultaneously realised and given its contemporary shape by Theodor Nelson. Nelson coined the term 'hypertext', which refers to:

[...] non-sequential writing—text that branches and allows choices to the reader, best read at an interactive screen. As popularly conceived, this is a series of text chunks [lexias] connected by links which offer the reader different pathways (Landow, 2006).

According to Paul Delany and John Landow, hypertext can be defined as "the use of computer to transcend the linear, bounded and fixed qualities of the linear text" (Delany & Landow, 1994, p. 6). The earliest instance of literary creation that used this method was *Afternoon, a Story* by Michael Joyce in 1987. The work was written in 'Storyspace', a software program developed by Joyce himself along with Jay David Butler, for creating, editing, and reading hypertext fiction.

The hypertext fiction *Patchwork Girl* (1995) was written by the American author Shelley Jackson and published by Eastgate Systems. The myth upon which this electronic fiction is based, calls to mind the famous gothic novel published by the British author Mary Shelley in 1818, *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus*.² The narrative of this hypertext fiction, *Patchwork Girl*, documents the resurrection and journey of the female monster, forsaken by Dr Frankenstein in the original novel, across a span of 175 years, where, unlike her male predecessor, she successfully evolves to become an independent member of contemporary American society. This chapter aims to highlight the palimpsestuous relation between these two texts, the latter of which has often been explored as a new-media rendition of an old Promethean myth. It will also analyse how new digital art forms revolutionise traditional concepts of

1 Bush introduced the revolutionary idea of the 'hypertext' in his essay "As We May Think" (published in *The Atlantic*) through the hypothetical machine called Memex, which enables its users to browse through a wide range of documents stored on microfilm, connected through linkages, thereby anticipating the hyperlinked structure of the internet today. Ted Nelson, the pioneering figure in the introduction of hypertext, is indebted to Bush's vision.

2 *Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* was considered to be one of the earliest examples of gothic science fiction. It is an epistolary novel that narrates the life experiences of the scientist Victor Frankenstein after the unnatural creation of his assembled Creature.

adaptation, thereby enhancing the tech-savvy reader's understanding of the postmodern concepts of fragmentation, multivocality and multilinearity.

The revised idea of the 'palimpsest' in the digital age

The term 'palimpsest' generally refers to a parchment or some other writing surface on which the original text has been effaced and then overwritten by another. In the Middle Ages, these parchments were recycled pieces of vellum treated by chemical agents to erase the existing text. The new text was then superimposed upon the erased surface. Thus, a palimpsest becomes a multi-layered record upon which the remnants of previous writing persist.

Sarah Dillon (2007) extended the meaning of this word beyond its paleographic status. She argues in her doctoral thesis, *The Palimpsest: Literature, Culture and Theory*, that palimpsests have "a continuing contemporary relevance" (p. 12). The imperfect retention and co-existence of the new and old texts "change the very way we interpret and know the past" (p. 12) and at the same time they intrigue the readers by simultaneously capturing "the mystery of the secret, the miracle of resurrection and the thrill of detective discovery" (pp. 12–13). Dillon uses another term, "palimpsestuous", that refers to the "simultaneous relation of intimacy and separation" whereby the distinctiveness and individuality of each text is preserved and, at the same time, "essential contamination and interdependence" (p. 3) is allowed. Therefore, a palimpsest is a composition of different writings that are interwoven in an elusive manner.

Hypertext, as a genre of writing, acts as a palimpsest and exhibits the properties of fragmentariness, association and dissociation simultaneously, through its basic configuration as an association of hyperlinks. The re-emergence of the erased texts render the structure with a unique heterogeneity. In this context, Dillon also closely develops the concept of intertextuality initially introduced by Julia Kristeva in her essay, "Word, Dialogue and Novel" (1986). Although the palimpsest does not essentially seek to explore the relation of the text with its context, a constructive relation could be drawn between the concept of palimpsest and the concept of intertextuality. Derived from the Latin

term, 'intertexto', meaning to intermingle while weaving, intertextuality, according to Kristeva, perceives any text as a constructed "of a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (Kristeva, 1986, p. 66). The very idea of the coalescence of different textual fragments unfolds palimpsestuous properties.

A general note on the selected text

The author of *Patchwork Girl* invites the reader to virtually 'patch together' the female monstrous counterpart of Dr Frankenstein's creation. As the reader enters the textual narrative, they encounter five routes to explore the story at the very title page, which qualifies as a sort of sequential narrative progression. The story is divided into five sections, namely "A Graveyard", "A Journal", "A Quilt", "A Story" and "Broken Accents". The graveyard section enlists the names and stories of the donors of the various patched-up body parts of the monster. The section, "A Journal" captures the relationship between the author of *Patchwork Girl* and her creation, narrated through the voice of the fictional authorial presence of Mary Shelley as the creator of the female monster. Hence it is a repository of Mary Shelley's emotions. Predominantly narrated from the creator's perspective, "Crazy Quilt" entails the process of the Patchwork Girl's construction, weaving together textual appropriations, references, and citations from various texts. The next section, "A Story" is narrated by the Patchwork Girl and offers her perspective on her life. Finally, "Broken Accents" offers reflections on the process of hypertext fiction writing.

To explore *Patchwork Girl*, the reader can either enter the text in the prescribed format given on the title page, or they can opt for a non-sequential narrative progression wherein entering and exiting each section is guided by one's own choice of nodes. The textual threads that comprise the body of *Patchwork Girl*, known as "lexias", construct a web of relations between the various units of the work either in the form of images or chunks of texts. The term "lexia" had its genesis in Roland Barthes' essay *S/Z* (1970). It is referred to there as "a series of brief contiguous fragments" (p. 13). In the present hypertextual context, the individual screens of texts or images that form the units of the multimedia novel are referred to as a lexia. Overall, this hypertext fiction consists of "323 lexias, which are joined by over 400 links" (Sarkar, 2020, p. 3).

The reader ensures their virtual presence within the body of the hypertext using the cursor icon as a navigational tool. With every click, the reader is transported via hyperlinks to the different sections. By concretising the narrative possibilities of the text with his critical engagement through a virtual presence, the reader is transformed from a passive consumer to an active participant in the meaning-making process.

Discussion

The present study argues that *Patchwork Girl* can be said to qualify as a palimpsest at two levels in an initial analysis. The text of *Patchwork Girl* as a reworking of *Frankenstein* is united with the source text through an eternal chain of reference and significance. The source text, itself, however, has undergone a preservatory procedure and developed as a palimpsest, despite an array of corrections and editing made by Mary Shelley's husband, the famous Romantic poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley (Henthorne, 2018). Mary Shelley's authorial instinct has been 'checked' and simultaneously 'framed' by her husband, and therefore *Frankenstein*, very much like the piece of vellum, the surface of which endures rewritings and erasures post-chemical processing, has survived as a document paradoxically preserving, underneath its story, the voices of both Mary and Percy Shelley. The re-emergence of the authorial voice of Mary Shelley finds expression within the layers of the palimpsestuous construct, *Patchwork Girl*, a voice that was repressed through editorial interventions.

Secondly, the body of the monster itself functions as a palimpsest as the different constituent parts encapsulate stories of the different donors of her limbs and organs. As the reader enters into the first section, "A Graveyard", the protagonist states: "I am buried here. You can resurrect me, but only piecemeal. If you want to see the whole, you will have to sew me together yourself". This leads us to a "Headstone" lexia in which the various body parts are listed: "Here lies a Head, Trunk, Arms (right and Left), and Legs (Right and Left) as well as diverse Organs Appropriately Disposed May they Rest in Piece". The pun on the word 'piece' exhibits the very idea of the fragmentariness of the monstrous frame. It highlights how 'piece by piece' the structural whole has been

woven together so that the various constitutive elements assimilate to give life to the monstrous whole and at the same time retain their individuality. The numerous voices that emerge from the gravestone detail the donors of the monster's body parts to assert the same idea of individuality and fragmentation, "intimacy and separation" (Dillon, 2007, p. 3), that captures the essence of a palimpsest. Furthermore, Jackson endowing each tale with a distinctive voice creates scope for Bakhtinian multivocality.

An exploration of the various body parts of the monster suffices to indicate the inference. For instance, on clicking on the monster's "left leg" we encounter a lexia that encapsulates the history of its donor. The left leg belonged to:

Jane, a nanny who harbored under her durable grey dresses and sensible undergarments are membrane of a less sensible time: a tattoo of a ship [...] 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 (Jackson, 1995).

On clicking on the "right arm" lexia we witness that it has two parts: "the upper belonged to Tristessa, a woman known in the ship yards for her deadly aim with a bottle", while the lower portion encapsulates the tale of a "lady very dexterous with the accoutrements of femininity". However, this cohering of pieces to create a disjointed whole that makes the digital reader aware of the materiality of the medium also foregrounds the fragmentariness of both the medium and the product. The monster is an artificial construct—both at an anatomical and a metaphorical level. Her artificiality is foregrounded by the reader's physical presence on the screen of the text as a virtual entity, who, through his clicks, invokes life into the story.

In another lexia titled "metaphorme", the monster claims that the "metaphorical principle is my true skeleton". Here the hybrid nature of the Patchwork Girl as a mixed metaphor of borrowed organs finds further expression. Her hybridity is anatomical and textual for she has been birthed twice, "under the needle, and under the pen". A relation between the body and the text as an artificial construct has been established. In

the lexia “lives”, this metaphorical principle has been elaborated: “we live in the expectation of traditional narrative progression; we read the first chapters and begin already to figure out whether our lives are romantic comedy, or high tragedy, mystery or adventure”. Here, the idea of linear progression undergoes palimpsestuous rendition through the medium of hypertext. The expectation of a traditional reader for an author-guided progression is subverted through the array of choices the virtual reader can exercise with the drag of the cursor.

The body is also described in the lexia “swarm” as “a multiplicity of anonymous particles” with “no absolute boundaries: I am a swarm”. The idea of being constituted through a multiplicity of particles evokes the existence of discrete elements with no significant agent of association, yet bound together through a complexity of disparate connectivity. This, however, time and again, underlines the fragmentariness of the body of the monster. The materiality of the body is emphasised in the lexia “seemed adhesive”, where the patched-up body “being seam’d with scars” was both a fact of 18th-century life and a metaphor for dissonant inferences ruining any finely adjusted composition. In the lexia “her”, the graphical presentation of a woman’s body dissected using multiple dotted lines exhibit the scars of her patched-up anatomy. Similar dotted lines intersect in the lexia “phrenology”, where the image of a giant head divided into different sections is given a sideways glance. Aesthetics of fragmentation and assemblage pervade the work.

The very idea of the dotted line has a palimpsestuous quality, for it signifies both association and dissociation between the various pieces it moves across. The association is established when the dotted line functions as a thread that joins disparate pieces. Dissociation is constituted by the non-dilution of the borders of each piece into a unified whole. However subtle and fine the sewing of the entrails might be, the idea of a patched entity ultimately persists throughout the work. This idea finds expression in the “sequence” lexia: “An electronic river washes out my scent in the intervals. I am a discontinuous trace, a dotted line”.

The revival of the once-discarded bodily elements of the female monster becomes the site of palimpsestuous inquiry. Her multi-layered identity is evoked through her fragmented, hybrid constitution. While in *Frankenstein* the idea of fragmentariness is limited to the

body of the Creature produced by Victor Frankenstein, in *Patchwork Girl*, fragmentariness is embodied even in the essence of the digital medium. It is an inherent quality of the hypertext format, as pages of the hypertext fiction pop up as lexias or text chunks. In this respect, even the functioning of the internet posits itself as a palimpsest. Each webpage, like a parchment of vellum, undergoes continuous refreshment and re-inscription with the click of a button. The hypertext, with its multi-linear embodiment, facilitates play across multiple screens of texts. Not only does the literal body of the Patchwork Girl exhibit fragmentariness but also its very gender encompasses the essence of convoluted identities. In the lexia "I am", Jackson's creature accepts that her confused, and electronically constructed gender identity makes her "belong nowhere". Her androgynous nature is the result of the assimilation to form a disparate whole, as can be explored in the stories of the organ donors. It is because of this reason that "women and men alike mistake my gender and both are drawn to me".

A further point of association between the two texts begins when the real-life author of *Frankenstein* is portrayed as a character in the hypertextual context. Hence the author herself becomes a site of intertextual relativity. In the section "Journal", Mary Shelley recounts her relationship with her creation. The very idea of the Creature as a "hideous progeny" (Shelley, 1831, p. 11) undergoes extensive erasure and rewriting or revision in *Patchwork Girl*. Although the female monster does consider herself "a disturbance in the flow", thereby reinforcing the idea of the grotesque or the inhuman that is usually associated with the image of a monster, the reaction of the creator upon beholding her progeny for the first time speaks the contrary. While Frankenstein's disgust is voiced in the line, "[b]ut now I went to it in cold blood, and my heart often sickened at the work of my hands" (Shelley, 1818, p. 118), the sympathetic acceptance and compassion, followed by the simultaneous erotic, incestuous, homosexual feelings that the fictional character of Mary Shelley feels towards her female creature are a palimpsestuous reworking of the terror and disgust that Frankenstein once felt at the very sight of his progeny. The lexias "my walk" and "sight" within the section "A Journal" illustrate the observation:

Yesterday I went for a walk down the lane that branches off at the holly tree from the main road [...] when I saw on the far side of the span a sight that made me stop ankle-deep in mud and stare (Jackson my walk). It was my monster, stark naked, standing still as if I had not yet breathed life in to her massive frame, and waiting for me [...] I could not help but quail before the strangeness of this figure, from which, I fancifully imagined the very blades of grass seemed to shrink, but curiosity, and a kind of fellow feeling was the stronger impulse, and I forced myself to continue.

This could be read in comparison to the experience related by Frankenstein at a similar sudden encounter:

I looked on the valley beneath; vast mists were rising from the rivers which ran through it, [...] I suddenly beheld the figure of a man, at some distance, advancing towards me with superhuman speed [...] his stature also, as he approached, seemed to exceed that of man. I was troubled: a mist came over my eye and I felt a faintness seize me, but I was quickly restored by the cold gale of the mountains. I perceived, as the shape came nearer (sight tremendous and abhorred!) that it was the wretch whom I had created. I trembled with rage and horror, resolving to wait his approach, and then close with him in mortal combat. He approached; his countenance bespoke bitter anguish, combined with disdain and malignity, while its unearthly ugliness rendered it almost too horrible for human eyes (Shelley, 1818, pp. 97–99).

Though each textual extract describes a reaction from the beholder, the stronger sympathetic impulse of the female creator overshadows the fear of the male creator.

The subversion of the terror upon beholding an anomaly functions as a reworking of the properties of gothic novel as a genre of writing that revels in the macabre, the grotesque, and the horrific. The notorious excerpt in which Frankenstein confronts his male Creature with terror in the creation scene, finds a magical fairy tale rendition in the hypertext fiction. Frankenstein's visits to charnel houses are subverted by the description of "magic lanterns, peepshow box", "materials necessary to new creation" to frame the female counterpart. The next lexia, "labor", relates to the moment of genesis of the female monster and copies extensive quotes from the source text: "My candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open". Furthermore, there is a reference to "a

magician lean[ing] over" the monster to shake" from the bottle some grains". The various layers of palimpsest that form this lexia voice are working of the old myth through a new medium. As the traditional conceptualisation of a monster as hideous undergoes reworking in the hypertext novel, various terms usually identified with a monster, such as grotesque, deviant, abject or abnormal are given a positive connotation when the monster herself states in the lexia "why hideous?": "every part of me is human and proportional to the whole. Yet I am a monster because I am multiple, and because I am mixed".

The idea of the palimpsest is, therefore, contained within the configuration of the creature, the act of its creation, and in the very functioning of the medium as well. The intertextual association between the two texts begins with an examination of the two titles. The subtitle of *Patchwork Girl* as *A Modern Monster* can be seen as a rewriting of the subtitle of *Frankenstein*, as *the Modern Prometheus*. The erasure of the mythological status attributed to the scientist in Shelley's text has been revised to demonise the progeny at the very outset of the hypertext novel. Hence the creator as the subject is replaced by the creation as the subject in the digital adaptation. The refashioning of the title of the hypertext brings about the "simultaneous relation of intimacy and separation" (Dillon, 2007) that the concept of the palimpsest embodies. The two titles are intimately related to and, at the same time, dissociated from their individual peculiarities.

The association however extends beyond the titles and finds expression in the first part of the section "A Story", which literally incorporates quotes from Shelley's novel. Seen in the light of *Patchwork Girl*, the various allusions function as implants of alien tissues in a piece of fiction. In the section "Crazy Quilt", Jackson produces a palimpsest of direct quotations from Derrida,³ Baum (2013), Stamford's (1991) *Body Criticism* and so on. The narrative becomes a mosaic of textual fragments synthesised through intertextuality. The virtual quilt with its dotted lines invokes the traditional arts of sewing or weaving to form a "palimpsestuous surface [wherein] otherwise unrelated

3 In the lexia entitled "Mementos", Derrida comes "home mumbling about a she-monster who beset him in the woods" (Jackson, 1995). Jackson intertextualises fragments of excerpts from Derrida's *Disseminations* (Derrida, 1981) into her own work.

texts are involved and entangled, intricately woven, interrupting and inhabiting each other" (Dillon, 2007, p. 4). Hence the remnants of the previous writing persist, coexisting and contending with the newer appropriations upon the body of the text to produce new meanings, as was the case with the inscriptions on the vellum. The lexia "plea", for instance, records the Creature's request to his creator Frankenstein to gift him with a female counterpart. The lexia "promise" entails the initial agreement and the lexia "treachery" captures the ultimate refusal on the part of the scientist to fulfill the Creature's wishes. The fear of the female counterpart "becom[ing] ten thousand times more malignant than her mate and delight[ing] for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness" (Shelley, 1818, p. 165) accounts for Frankenstein's refusal of the Creature's demands. It is this resurrection of the female monster from the relics that were once thrown into the sea that is secretly accomplished by the fictional Mary in Jackson's novel.

A being that was thought to be too hideous and uncanny by the scientist, transforms herself into a modern woman in the digital paradigm and ventures across the American metropolis until death or disintegration dismantles her. Unlike her male counterpart, who encountered a catastrophic fate and ultimately vanished in the northernmost extremity of the globe, the Patchwork Girl re-instantiates her identity as a global citizen despite her monstrous selfhood. In this aspect, the death of each monster is comparable:

The dispersal and multiplying of identity is not seen as monstrous by Jackson but as an acceptable and even normalizing experience. The final message carried by the image and metaphor of the hybrid subjectivity of the cyborg is that the only chance for individual coherence is not striving towards unity and balance, but accepting one's multiplication (Glavanakova-Yaneva, 2003, p. 73).

Contrary to the romantic disposition of the male Creature, the Patchwork Girl disintegrates to underline her postmodern assemblage as she recognizes herself to be "gathered together loosely [...] in a way that was interesting". A similar interest is aroused in the audience to undertake the whole journey of constructing the plot of the story in the multimodal medium.

In the context of the palimpsest, the term 'grafting' bears special significance, as the concept from gardening can be seen as a reworking

of the traditional idea of giving birth. While exploring the hypertextual relationship of hypertext with "hypotex", Gerard Genette brings in the metaphor of grafting in his famous book *Palimpsests* (1997): "any relationship uniting a text B (which I shall call the hypertext) to an earlier text A (I shall, of course, call it the 'hypotext'), upon which it is grafted in a manner that is not that of commentary" (Genette, 1997, p. 5). Jackson plays with this concept in the literal 'grafting of skins' in two consecutive lexias, namely "surgery" and "join", where a piece of skin from the body of Mary Shelley is grafted upon the body of the monster. The female monster is not born 'biologically' through a woman's womb; rather her constituent parts are grafted or implanted in the digital medium through sewing as evidenced in the presence of the dotted line. The sexual identity of the monster is simultaneously grafted, thereby giving an androgynous layer to her seemingly feminine frame. As has been stated by Hayles (2002) in her book *Writing Machines*, the relationship between different media could be a parasitic one; the grafting of a story from a printed novel into a virtual medium entails the parasitic remains of the printed word being brought into the digital ecosphere. The new art form becomes the repository of the older and therefore is like the parchment where the source text, despite undergoing revision and erasure, still exists. The transition between different mediums, however, invites questions about traditional reading habits.

Finally, the hypertextual adaptation exhibits the very properties of a palimpsest through the act of creative writing and reading. A connection is drawn between writing and sewing in the lexias "written" and "sewn" which could be read as delving into the various layers of creative writing as an artist and engaging in the traditionally feminine art of stitching. The material moment of undertaking the act of writing by the fictional authorial persona of Shelley Jackson is incorporated in "this writing" lexia. The peculiarities of the processes of hypertextual creation and consumption are stated as:

[...] assembling these patched words in an electronic space [...] as if the entire text is within reach, but because of some myopic condition I am only familiar with from dreams, I can see that part most immediately before me, and have no sense of how that part relates to the rest (Jackson, 1995).

Jackson elaborates how the linear, page-bound construction of a printed novel is “restful” and its very act of reading is “spatial and volumetric”. On the contrary, the multifarious digital configuration of the hypertextual novel evokes a sense of getting lost among the multitude of reading options: “But where am I now?” This is followed by the lexia “reading”, where the confusing and often exhaustive process of exploration in hypertext fiction is given emphasis.

Conclusion

In *Patchwork Girl*, the discarded idea of the female companion to the “hideous progeny” created by Dr Frankenstein in Shelley’s text is seen to be resurrected by Shelley herself through the hypertextual medium. That the male predecessor was the outcome of extensive technological invention has been virtually realised by Jackson’s multimodal text. The medium facilitates a real-time encounter with the very process of the scientist’s sewing together of the various parts, thereby reinforcing an act of witness to the anatomical process of resurrection, which was limited simply to the imaginary in the reading of the printed novel. The hypertextual medium can function as a palimpsest only through the implementation of multifarious digital tools. The new media platform is facilitated by multimedia technologies that were once unthinkable in print. Jackson’s text adapts the myth of the Romantic era to the postmodern environment. *Patchwork Girl* reinforces the idea of fragmentariness and hybridity when analysed under the lens of palimpsest. The reader, at once, is turned into a scientist and a creative artist in the process of weaving together the textual fragments of the text. The resurrection of the digital monstrous entity is superimposed upon her predecessor.

Exploiting the interactivity of hypermedia, hypertext fiction caters for its audience with a mosaic of hyperlinks. This, in turn, initiates interactivity on two levels—to begin with, the audience enters a play with the screen of the electronic device using the cursor. Secondly, the various hyperlinks initiate a sort of play within the body of the text. Hence, multiple dimensions of interactivity can be understood in *Patchwork Girl*; firstly, the navigational intent initiates an interactive relationship between the medium, the work and the reader. Interaction

occurs when the reader uses computer interfaces such as the mouse to click, drag, and scroll across the body of the text. Secondly, the various hyperlinks create a web of interconnected relationships wherein clicking on one, effortlessly transports the reader to a gallery of simultaneous links. It is perhaps in this context that Landow suggests "all writing becomes collaborative writing" with hypertext (Landow, 1992, p. 88).

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