

Correspondence, trace and  
the landscape of narrative:  
a visual, verbal and literary dialectic

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## Abstract

This thesis examines what literary theory can bring to the practice of visual story telling. Through praxis it examines underlying systems and techniques relative to works of fiction, investigating what impacts and advances narratology can bring to visual communication approaches and methods. This thesis will argue that literary concepts and methods produce new thinking and perspectives on visual methodologies, by establishing a dialectical relationship between the visual and verbal in creative practice; and in respect of literary theory and visual communication.

The sources underpinning this research are threefold. Firstly, a visual/verbal practice, in which particular materials play a crucial role. A specific approach to story telling is taken, with the aim of producing fragmentary, enigmatic tales exploring memory as traces of the past. The second source is a letter and postcard – correspondence written in 1917 between a soldier and his sweetheart. The letters are part of the ‘Semple Collection’, sourced from the archives at the Imperial War Museum, and have been used to examine literary concepts, memory and visual story telling. Thirdly, Roland Barthes’ *S/Z* and Gerard Genette’s *Narrative Discourse* provide a theoretical framework. This research questions what literary concepts can bring to the analysis and understanding of the source material (the letters); whether literary concepts extend conceptual and developmental approaches to creative materials; and what impact literary codes may have on visual methods and approaches to visual/verbal development and composition.

Barthes’ and Genette’s theories are discussed in separate chapters, and each theory is cross-examined reciprocally through visual practice. They make critical and reflexive accounts of the transferral and translation of literary codes into visual practice. They analyse and evaluate the process, including noting differences, similarities, tensions and how resolution was found. Finally they appraise the impacts literary concepts have on visual forms of communication.

Barthes discusses the ‘migration of meaning’ – this concept underpins the examination made of a selection of practice materials through different thematic layers, including sensory, narrative and memory. The final chapter discusses this examination, and the awareness it gave me of the ‘network of relations’ potentially immanent in my materials, adding significations, correlations and connotations not previously considered. It heightened my sensitivities to those materials, building on visual communication perspectives and methods.

The final submission is practical and written, comprising critical discussion of the translation of literary codes into visual practice, and documentation of the impacts on such practice. Each chapter outlines the specific responses made to *S/Z* and *Narrative Discourse*, highlighting the ways in which this has produced new thinking, perspectives and methods in visual story telling, and visual forms of communication. This is evident in 5 ways: 1) migration and the visual/verbal relationship; 2) migration and materials examination; 3) analysing source material; 4) composition; and 5) perspective and narrative space. As such, this research adds to the existing sum of knowledge in the identified field.

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I have paid attention to my own connection with the people in my stories, and what effect, if any, this might have on my responses. I have found that all of the characters in my tales, however remote or tentative, have ceased to feel like strangers. A very special thank you goes to the people of the past, whose hidden histories have inspired this research, and without whom my tales would not exist.



## Declaration

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

Signed

Date

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## Notes

Throughout this thesis the terms 'reader', 'viewer' and 'audience' are interchangeable, with no particular prominence.

The referencing system used in this thesis complies with the conventions of the School of Arts and Communication at the University of Brighton.

All images are responses to the Semple letters, unless otherwise stated. Chapter title pages include an image of work that has relevance to the content of that chapter, but may not be specifically referenced in the text.

Images other than the work of the author included in this thesis are for the purpose of academic, non-commercial discussion and as such are covered by 'fair dealing' in respect of copyright. Low resolution copies of those images have been used, and references and links are included.

Scans of photocopies of the Semple letters are also included under the description of 'fair usage', for non-commercial use (Anthony Richards, Head of Documents and Sound, Imperial War Museum). The Semple Collection can be found at:  
<http://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/1030005821>



# I n t r o d u c t i o n

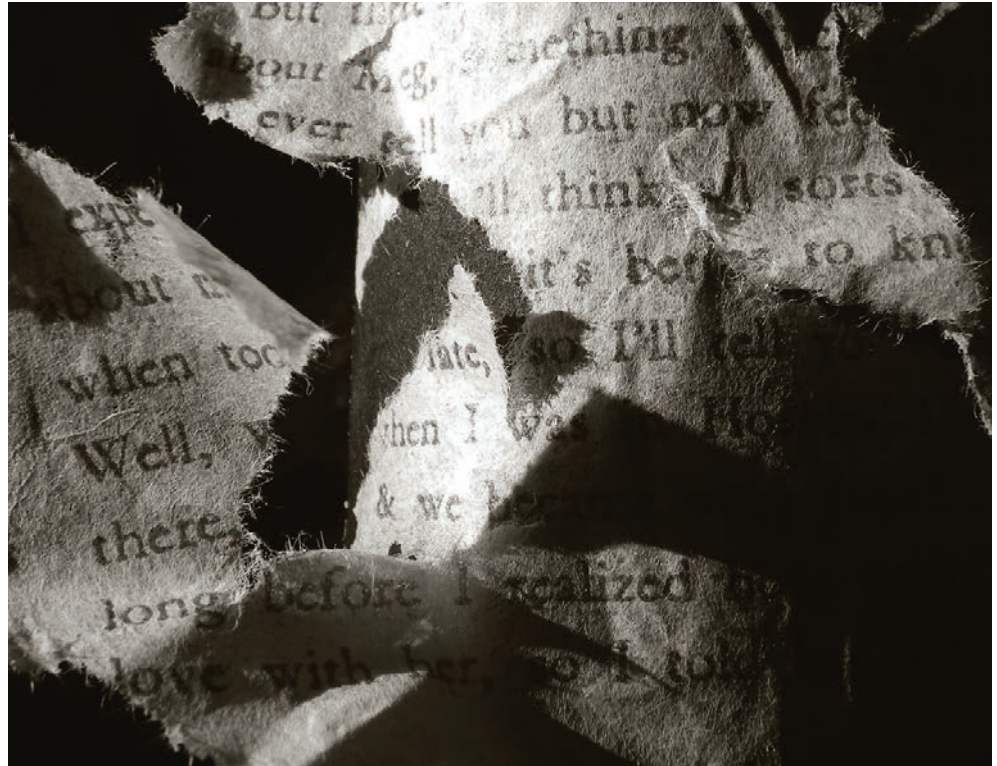
## Background

The creative practice at the root of this project builds upon my professional background in graphic design and illustration – although these descriptors fall far short of the interdisciplinary field in which my practice has become situated. This expansion includes the differences in materials used, the ways in which they are developed, and a shift in focus as to the relationship between the stories I tell; their implicit and explicit meanings and the viewer or reader.

My Masters degree in 'Sequential Design/Illustration' re-told dark family secrets through the parallel perspectives of biography and social history. The final outcome was an installation, entitled *Disturbing the Dust*, comprising clothing, text and found and made objects. Haunting events from my grandmother's and, unexpectedly, my great grandmother's life stories were the basis for my narrative. Through specific materials and the design of space I attempted to express and articulate a story based on their lives as evocatively and sensitively as possible.

My grandmother had to be coerced into discussing her life – a reticence, I was later to discover, connected to a deep rooted shame she felt relating to her past. Sensing my interest she slowly revealed her story to me, indicating how tragic events had significantly impacted on her life in tangible, emotional and psychological ways. My grandmother's story altered with each re-telling, and depending on whether others and who, were present. Perhaps most intriguing of all was the fact that she slowly revealed intimate details about her mother that, on reflection, seemed implausible for her to know about, given the mother and daughter relationship, and also accounting for conventions of the time, when such openness would be unlikely.

Such memories are mercurial and inventive; they are constructed, recalled, misremembered. They take on new meanings as 'truths', forgetting and exaggerations are absorbed into the re-telling. Memory may shield inconvenient truths, utilise narrative to make sense of experience, to shape those experiences into acceptable new 'realities'. Therein were the beginnings of my interest in the correspondences between memory, time passing and narrative.



This thesis examines what literary theory can bring to the practice of visual story telling. Through praxis it examines the underlying systems and techniques relative to works of fiction, investigating what impacts and advances narratology can bring to visual communication approaches and methods. I have investigated what narratology can bring to the reading, analysis and understanding of the Semple letters; assessed the ways in which literary perspectives may produce different creative responses to the development of that resource; I have examined what the edge of memory may entail; and investigated my materials through literary, and other physical and metaphysical thematic layers. In so doing, I have aimed to explore and maximise the narrative potential of my sources and story telling.

I will argue that literary concepts and methods produce new thinking and perspectives on visual methodologies, having established a dialectical relationship between the visual, verbal and literary. I have examined the ways in which texts and images are read, specifically using the Semple letters, which are both visual and verbal, through which to investigate how those correspondences can be variously analysed and comprehended. I will demonstrate that literary methods differ from visual communication methods; providing different, literary perspectives through which to analyse and consider the letters. This subsequently informed a range of previously unconsidered approaches to how the letters could be developed and visualised in my story telling. Further, I will demonstrate how this reciprocal exchange between the visual, verbal and literary has been achieved through the transferral and translation of ideas between literary theory and visual forms of communication.

*Figure 2: 2014, the story world; Genette, the page and expansion of the story world*

## Telling tales

This thesis examines what it can mean to communicate visually (defined below), specifically asking if literary theory can bring different ways to consider and explore visual story telling. I have developed a conceptual project approach to story telling, creating fugitive tales; fragmentary stories which aim to be enigmatic and evocative. Memory is examined through my story telling in what I describe as ‘the edge of memory’ – not dealing with personal memory, but through the traces of the past and elusiveness; time passing and distance; and remembering, forgetting and retelling. The correspondences between narrative and memory are a basis for how I have chosen to develop the Semple letters through the project. In responding to the letters, I have produced tales through which I have attempted to capture an essence of the past, to explore the echoes and remains of long forgotten events. This is not by looking at the sequence of events (this happened, then that) but by observing the cadences of the story, the residues of lived experience, emotions and feelings. I have examined how these imagined traces of past lives become abstracted and made elusive by distance and the passing of time. What I describe as tales, stories or tissue texts are my responses to the letters through my research – relative to both my practice and literary theory.

## Sources, methods and methodology

In chapter one, *Fugitive Tales and the Edge of Memory*, I discuss my sources and methods. The first of them is my creative practice based on my professional background in graphic design and illustration. There have been a number of changes to the project in line with on-going research. The most significant of these was the introduction of what I describe as ‘the Semple letters’ – a letter and a ‘draft’ response written between a soldier, Jock, and his sweetheart Meg, in 1917. I discovered the Semple Collection in the archives at the Imperial War Museum. Jock’s letter also makes reference to other people, Will, a soldier ‘in the trenches’ and a nurse, whose name is not given, but as shall be seen, is pivotal in the narrative. This letter is part of a collection of letters, photographs and other material belonging to Meg Semple, catalogued by the museum as ‘Item 5821’. Examining literary concepts through the letters and my practice prompted me to alter the focus of the project, to work exclusively with the last letter from Jock and Meg’s draft reply. Accordingly, my second source is ‘the Semple letters’.

My interest in the project has been to create fragmentary tales through which to examine the edge of memory. The Semple Collection in its entirety provides details relating to Meg, and some references to Jock. As stated, it is not personal memory that is my concern, I am not seeking to recreate the story of Meg and Jock. In working solely with one letter/draft I have aimed to explore and maintain elusiveness and enigma in my narratives.

In chapter one and throughout this thesis I will discuss the letters and their impact on my research. The transferral and translation of literary concepts into my practice enabled me to read the letter/draft through a range of different thematic perspectives, providing multiple and varied ways to comprehend those texts. Over 80

different creative and conceptual responses have resulted. Copies of both Jock's letter and Meg's draft are included in the chapter. The text from each can be found in Appendix one and two. The letter, as far as I have been able to ascertain, has not been the subject of creative or academic discourse before.

Thirdly, I have analysed two literary theories: Roland Barthes' *S/Z* and Gerard Genette's *Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method*. When I use the term 'literary theory' or 'narratology', this refers specifically to *S/Z* and *Narrative Discourse*. I will clarify why these specific texts have been investigated, and briefly discuss their broader narratological context.

This research is practice-based, meaning that the final submission is through two pathways; a body of practical work, supported by the thesis. What constitutes 'knowledge' in an artistic context, and how to evaluate the relevance of any 'findings' resulting from such an endeavour, whatever form that may take, are questions much debated in this mode of study. They are, what seemed to me, 'grand' questions appearing impossible to contemplate answering at the beginning of my research. Initially, the idea of having a specific 'question' to answer seemed implausible in the context of art practice.

As I will demonstrate, it was through praxis, by examining literary codes directly through my practical work, and reflection and reflexivity, that I began to perceive how these questions could be answered. I have taken my pre-existing visual practice and established a theoretical, literary framework against which to explore my research questions (page 3). I have examined whether Barthes' and Genette's literary theories (which relate to works of fiction) have relevance in respect of visual practice; I have questioned whether they are a productive way of dealing with narrative, whether implicit or explicit, in visual story telling.

My discovery of the Semple letters had a significant impact on the research. In refining my focus to deal only with Jock's last letter and Meg's draft reply it enabled me to challenge the literary concepts and address the research questions through the same source material. As will be discussed throughout, literary theory has impacted on my thinking and approaches in visual practice. Barthes' and Genette's literary concepts share similarities with visual methods and approaches, but they also bring difference. It was by challenging and examining those similarities and differences that narratology altered my conceptual understanding. Through on-going assessment and reflection I became aware of my growing comprehension of, and changing responses to the literary codes. These literary perspectives produced new thinking and have been incorporated as productive methods and approaches in how I communicate visually, supplementing my pre-existing visual methods and informing my story telling. Literary theory has enabled me to make an original examination of the letters.

I have developed a reciprocal relationship between the dual pathways; a cross-pollination of ideas has informed and supplemented both theory and practice. As I shall discuss, the transferral and translation of literary codes has relevance to not only my own visual/verbal practice, but is also of relevance to those in an identified field. Examining narratology through visual forms of communication offers fresh insights and new perspectives from which to reconsider what it can mean to communicate visually.

As I have discovered, there is no set model for what it means to do 'practice-based research'. Each body of research will, necessarily, be different. One of the many research challenges has been to establish methods that are productive and meaningful, to both creative and academic pathways. As such I have been able to specifically address those 'grand' questions, which have gradually ceased to feel so unanswerable.

## Context

What visual communication means and how it is enacted varies across the many, and different, disciplines which are embraced under this term. The context of visual communication within this thesis relates to my background in graphic design and illustration, and also refers to the expansion of that practice – to a more multi-disciplinary one, merging graphics and fine art practices.

However, the question of to whom and in what ways this research could be of interest or relevance needs to be further refined. I have established a more specific contextual framework within which to locate this body of research: those analysing visual story telling; visual practice where the use of specific materials, such as stitch or clothing, are deployed for story telling; visual practice that incorporates both the visual and verbal; and memory and narrative in visual practice. Henceforth, when I mention 'visual communication', '-methods' or '-approaches' in this thesis, it is to this pre-defined context that I am referring. As I shall discuss, the outcomes of this research are of significance to not only those in the identified field, but also, unexpectedly, to some beyond the discipline.

## Thesis orientation

In this thesis I will argue that literary codes and techniques have different perspectives and considerations to visual ones. I will articulate how I have investigated and evaluated literary codes, discussing the tensions and problems I encountered, and how I resolved them. Examining literary concepts through visual story telling revealed some previously unconsidered ways to communicate visually. I will highlight the new methods, approaches and impact that this process of transferral and translation has made on my understanding of the letters, my materials and story telling. Examples of my practical responses are included in this thesis and are positioned alongside, as near as possible, relevant discussion relating to their relationship with the literary codes.

Chapter two, *The Migration of Meaning*, provides an overview of the key concepts of Barthes' *S/Z*. Barthes discusses lexia and five codes, which are used to demonstrate a potential for a 'migration of meaning' in fiction. This migration accounts for a relay of possible meanings found through difference and connotation in language and narrative. I discuss the different ways in which I have investigated Barthes' literary concepts; this is in respect of visual practice, not to critique *S/Z* from a literary perspective. As such I have analysed Barthes' concepts through the Semple letters and my visual practice.



This research includes looking at Barthes' codes directly and also by making a translation into credible and relevant visual methods, to account for perceived tensions between literary and visual methods. The transferral and translation raised a number of questions, such as how to account for some overlap and similarities I found between Barthes' literary codes and visual communication theory, and visual and verbal forms of representation. I had initially found some of the themes in *S/Z* troublesome in relation to both fiction and in respect of visual material; my own and that of others. As I shall discuss, by continuing to explore literary concepts through my practice it changed my responses to some of those literary themes, helping me to understand how they may be of relevance in both fiction and visual material.

Examining Barthes' concepts impacted on how I develop verbal elements in my work and the visual/verbal relationship. Literary codes exposed me to new ways to comprehend how words and language may be regarded as a network of relations, that the potential for meaning can be expanded through 'migration'. I started to consider verbal elements in terms of linguistic and narrative meanings, but also extending this thinking to physical, metaphysical or visual possibilities and connotations. In response, I develop text more integrally *into* the story worlds that I have created, rather than developing it separately as text and image. *The Migration of Meaning* chapter will discuss the visual/verbal in my work, such as in figure 3; it will outline how lexia and the codes altered my approaches to composition; how *S/Z* has impacted on how I consider my materials and how narrative is developed and composed.

I analysed the Simple letters using Barthes' five codes. Because of the chronology of research this examination took place after I had examined them through Genette's codes. Some of my findings are undoubtedly attributable to the findings resulting from the earlier research; particularly in respect of Genette's codes of mood and voice. Analysing the letters through Barthes' codes produced different perspectives and information to that gained by my 'reading' them through Genette's literary codes, with both theories leading to many new ways to consider the story.

Figure 3: 2013,  
examining the  
visual/verbal  
relationship



In chapter three, *The Landscape of Narrative*, Genette's *Narrative Discourse* is analysed through the Semple letters and my practice. I provide an overview of his key ideas. The first of these is the division of narrative into two distinct layers: *histoire* – the story or events; and *récit* – the narrative or means of expressing those events. *Narrative Discourse* deals only with *récit* which is examined through five codes – order, duration, frequency, mood and voice. Through these Genette demonstrates how stories come to us, how the narrative is organised, its pattern across the text, and how the reader traverses the narrative space.

Investigating Genette's codes through my practice raised questions and tensions, as had been the case with *S/Z*. It was necessary to assess which of Genette's codes were relevant. *Narrative Discourse* is highly detailed, using Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* through which Genette discusses his theory. Many of the themes under his dissection are not pertinent to some other, or shorter works of fiction; and were not always evident in or relevant to visual material, whether my own or that of others. As with *S/Z*, I also detected similarities between Genette's codes and some visual methods. Because of these perceived similarities, many of my early responses to *Narrative Discourse* tended towards an illustration of ideas, rather than making a specific translation. However, through continued practical research the differences that Genette's codes provide altered how I consider and compose my tales.

The division between story and narrative is not usual in visual communication. Illustrators and designers make an analysis of the totality of a story, to illustrate or provide an overall impression, or they may deal with events in a certain sequence (this happened, then that), looking at the design of how those elements come to the reader, and the order in which they are arranged, which may or may not run chronologically within the narrative.

Analysing the Semple letters through the different layers of *histoire* and *récit* – the events and how those events are expressed or evident in the text – along with the codes of mood and voice enabled me to differentiate between what happened, and how much space such events occupied in the story/letter, which was relevant to both the textual and narrative extent and space. This awareness altered my comprehension of the story and the people within the story – the characters – revealing new perspectives on those people, their relationships with each other and with the text. This informed my thinking as to how these aspects could be developed and visualised in my story telling.

My detailed thematic examination of the Semple letters through the layers of *histoire*, *récit*, and Genette's five codes produced fresh insights on, and different ways to read and analyse the letters. I have been able to extract different data, and to process that information through many different outcomes. This includes producing tales dealing specifically with an individual character, such as the nurse. For example, I have looked at the nurse's role in the story, her relationship with the other characters, and the differences between those aspects and the physical and numeric extent of text relating to her.

Genette's codes of mood and voice led me to notice and consider emotional and psychological aspects and implications in the text and letters. This allowed me to

respond to the letters through another perspective. An example of this is that I looked at Meg and how she may have been feeling as she read Jock's letter, in connection with her imagined emotions and physical reactions. I came to define a perceived emotional/psychological layer in narrative as *émotif* (borrowed and redefined from French) to account for these metaphysical aspects of narrative adding to Genette's layers of *histoire* and *récit*.

Both Barthes' and Genette's systems examine the underlying mechanisms at work in fiction. These techniques from literary theory are concerned with showing how narrative and meaning comes to the reader, working outside any logical flow of narrative, sequence, or syntax. Literary methods encouraged me to make more active readings of the Semple letters and prompted me to re-examine how I produce my stories, with literary concepts changing and supplementing my visual methods and approaches. The cross-pollination between theory and practice altered my comprehension of some of the literary ideas, some of which, as I shall discuss, I had questioned – both in fiction and visual material. My practice enabled me to explore and respond to literary codes through a visual perspective.

In chapter four, *Tissue Texts*, I discuss the examination I made of my materials and processes, as inaugurated by Barthes' concept of migration. This examination involved both a practical element and was the inspiration for the written chapter. Both Barthes' and Genette's narratological theories contributed to and informed that enquiry, each making an impact on the examination.

The influences in my research are literary, this relates to the theoretical framework and also in respect of my practical work. As part of my materials investigation I looked at the work of other practitioners in order to observe their visual methods and approaches. This gave me the opportunity to notice the differences that literary concepts were having on my thinking and methods. An example of some of the questions I raised in this evaluation can be found in Appendix three.

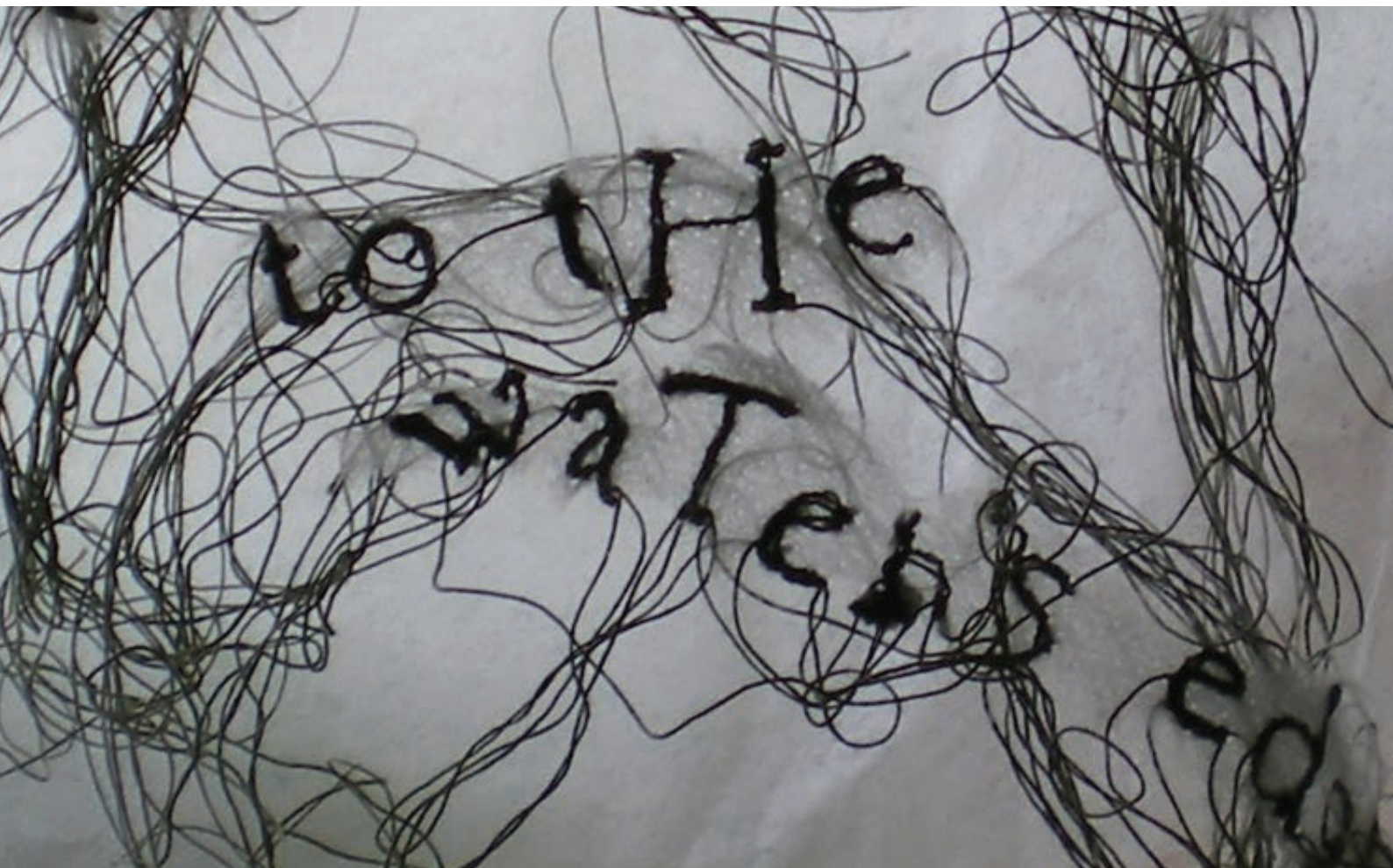
There are two categories directing that investigation, together making up the story world: that of 'landscape' – relating to the page and includes folds, surface and clothing (which may be paper, textiles, clothing or ice, for example); and 'woven voices' – referring to visual/verbal elements, such as text, stitching or knots; looking at how these are linked with the narrative and integrated with the page. I looked at a range of different ways through which I could explore my materials, creating alternate thematic layers. For instance, I examined folds, referencing Deleuze and his writings on the fold, which inspired me to consider folds and folding as mental landscapes, and through cartography, emotions, immanence, memory and narrative. My analysis significantly impacted on how I consider my materials and their uses.

## Findings and relevance

Dissemination of my research has been through display and exhibition, presented academically to peers through research poster displays, paper presentations and through published journal articles.

I have questioned what implications literary techniques and approaches have on visual forms of communication. My chapters document the ways in which Barthes' and Genette's literary concepts have been examined through the Simple letters and my visual/verbal practice. The chapters discuss my responses to the research questions, and how the process of transferral and translation of literary codes into visual practice was enabled. They discuss and provide evidence of the impacts the research has had on my thinking and practice. My practical work has been documented, analysed, evaluated and categorised in order to assess the impacts literary codes have had on my story telling.

This thesis and accompanying book of my practical responses to the research questions document the methods, responses, significance and findings of the research. They provide evidence that the research has challenged what it can mean to communicate visually. They highlight the contribution this research makes to the existing sum of knowledge in the field of visual communication, demonstrating its relevance to other practitioners.



Chapter One

Fugitive Tales  
and the  
Edge of Memory

sources and methods

*'It is  
half the art  
of storytelling  
to keep a story  
free from  
explanation'*

*Figure 4: 2008,  
Gertrude*

*Benjamin, Walter, in  
Hale, 2006: 365*

## Sources and methods: practice

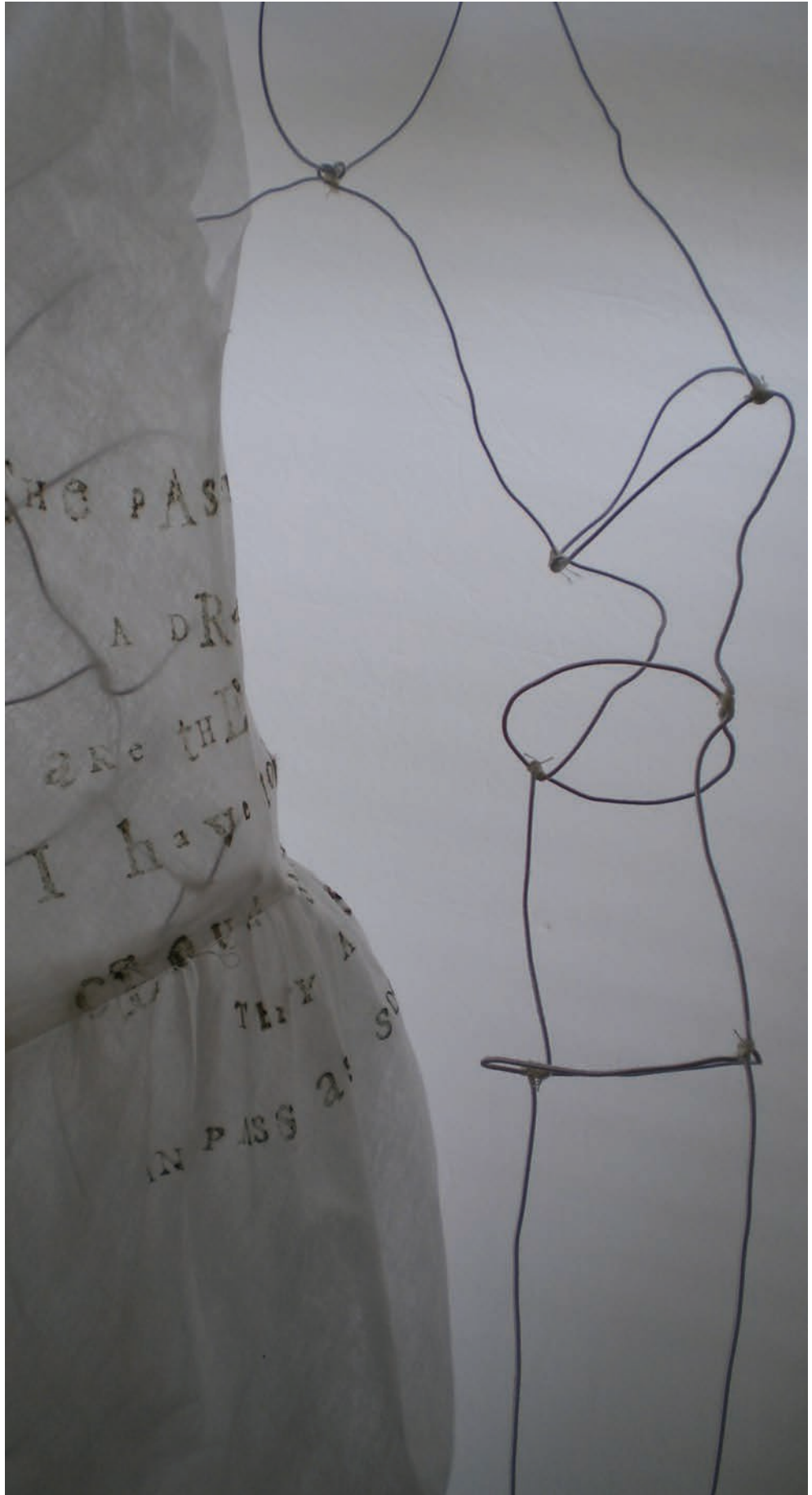
My interest in this research is with the dialectic of word and image, to consider how visual and verbal elements are integrated on and with the page. What I call my tales or stories are my responses to the Semple letters, using both visual and verbal means to do so. I am concerned as much with how to produce stories as I am with expressing the content (the 'events'). This division and difference between an event and the way that event may be expressed or evident in the narrative/narration is discussed later and in the chapter *The Landscape of Narrative*. The degree of 'content' differs throughout my tales, in response to the theme or aim of individual pieces and focus of attention in different phases of research.

### Materials

I use a variety of materials including clothing, thread, textiles, chalk, dust, mirrors and talcum powder. Each is developed to work sympathetically with my subject matter and specific approach to story telling – a correlation between form and content – in order to maximise the narrative potential of my tales. In addition to my materials contributing to the visual aesthetic they are increasingly used as an integral part of narration. A range of media are used, each developed to explore and express both the content (of the letters) and to correspond with the ways in which I have chosen to consider memory in the project, reflecting the elusiveness of the past. An example of early research correlating memory, narrative and form was explored by making dresses from tissue paper (figure 5) which I printed with fragments of text. The ethereal dress was supported by a wire 'body'; different sections of the dress were photographed to maintain an elusiveness. Accordingly, my materials, editorial aspects and composition contribute to both the conceptual and aesthetic approaches.

The materials I use reflect my interest in the past in that they sometimes include items that carry the marks that come with use and time, creating a surface patina – what we could call 'the textures of memory'. These materials include pre-used or old paper, fabric, ephemera and vintage clothing. In addition to the textures and patterns found in some of my chosen media, the physicality of materials may also be used to suggest age, to create a sense of the past. This may be by using a garment from a particular time period, where the style of the period brings with it chronological traces through the construction and specific shape of such a garment. I use and compose such clothing not to reference a particular time period, but to create a sense of ethereality and timelessness. The way I use clothing in my work has undergone a significant evolution in response to my engagement with literary concepts, discussed later in this thesis. This has moved increasing away from the figurative in order to work with the connotative and nuanced potential of fragmentation and abstraction of clothing; achieved through varying ways to crop such garments. This involves looking at such things as decorative details, fastenings, seams or internal spaces which are used to provide a different focus on the garment (figure 6). This may then be developed integrally with verbal aspects as part of a narrative.

Dust/talcum powder is another material I use which may be used to reflect aspects of the past, distance and time passing. I have used dust by considering it as unstable and



*Figure 5: 2007, development of specific materials, paper dress, wire, type. Exploring ephemerality and fragile surface*



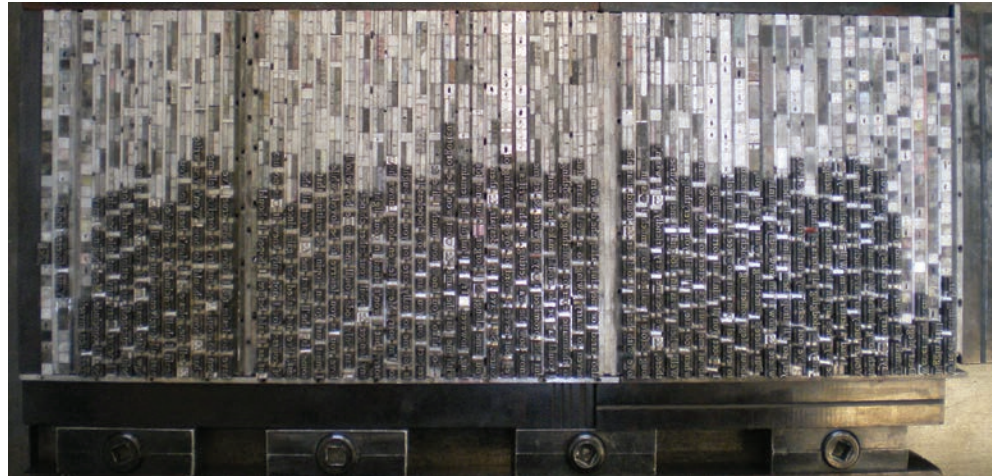
*Figure 6: 2014, 'she remains with me just the same, and won't be forgotten'; chiffon blouse, paper, cobweb and sunlight; fragmentation of composition, juxtaposition and narrative*

elusive. Dust is a trace, the remains of something, and is fragmentary. To dust can mean to disturb the surface, to clean away, but also to scatter, and is associated with both concealing and revealing.

Specific materials and ways in which they have been used play a pivotal role in helping me to exploit the narrative potential and visualisation of the Semple letters. My work attempts to suggest themes and ideas through subtle, sensory and implicated nuances and connotations, with oblique meanings being woven throughout my tales. Examples of my responses to the Semple letters/narratives are included throughout this thesis and accompanying book.

As stated, my story telling involves both the visual and verbal. My tales are inextricably connected to words and language, as such text plays a crucial role in my practice.





Verbal elements may be present in a range of ways: the information comes to me in written form (the letter and draft reply), it can be a physical embodiment, an object (again the letters); it is the content and substance – the story events; and type is used to develop the story and, as I shall discuss in later chapters, has increasingly been incorporated integrally with the surface, interwoven with the page, part of the very fabric of the story.

Text in my work varies in its physical format and may be, for example, handwritten, typeset (figure 7) or stitched (as in figure 4). I have investigated different means of developing text and type, ranging from lead type, set traditionally, or used independent of ‘galleys’, ‘blocks’ and ‘leading’<sup>1</sup>. Text has also been stitched by machine, by hand, stitched over or made from such things as wire or cloth. Stitching may replace type or act as embellishment, as an under note to a story. Sunlight and shadow have been used to add traces and emphasis to text.

### Composition

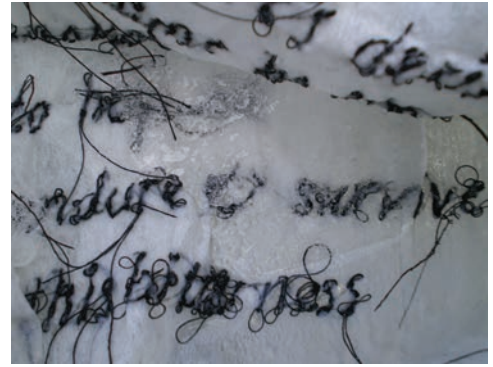
The format for my work varies, altering according to individual stories and ways in which I wish to develop them through varying degrees of fragmentation. I have examined how much content to include in any one outcome, ranging from traces of words through to a whole page of the letter. My narratives may be expressed through a variety of outcomes including books, collage, installation or monoprints. Different media and approaches to composition are selected according to the way in which a particular theme or element is under analysis, for example testing alternate ways to develop textual elements so as to be both enigmatic and offering differing levels of readability, such as those in the ice work illustrated in figures 8 and 9.

The ‘page’ may be singular such as a fragment of paper or be sequential as with a book. It may be new, old or reinvented, taking a pre-existing material as a foundation for my compositions, for instance using vintage cloth and clothing. In the narratology chapters I will discuss what may constitute a ‘page’ in my work and how my thinking to ‘what’ and ‘where’ the page may be has changed in response to my analysis of Barthes’ and Genette’s literary codes through my practical work.

Some of the tales I have produced are more ‘finished’ than others. I have focused on both the content and ways in which that content comes to the viewer/reader – with

*Figure 7: 2013, (side view), pages of the Semple letter, set in lead type*

*1: galleys – trays;  
blocks – wooden supports;  
leading – metal bars separating rows of text*



my responses to the letters investigating the method and means of story telling as well as explicitly narrating specific 'events'. This builds on ideas gained from my examination of Barthes' lexia and codes and Genette's literary codes. Varying formats allowed me to explore the potential for different meanings to be derived from the same starting point. I have found this beneficial as each re-telling produces new insights into how an event or theme may be variously considered and narrated, as Walter Benjamin notes 'the perfect narrative is revealed through the layers of a variety of retellings' (Benjamin, 2006: 365).

The translation between 3-D and 2-D form enabled through photography allows an outcome or story to be reinvented, offering additional ways of developing narrative and responding to the letters. This changes a tactile physical piece into a two dimensional work, where edges are created by the frame of the photograph and the surface quality is transformed. This framing or re-framing can alter meaning, changing the viewer's connection with the content. The vantage point or points the work is viewed from can also alter interpretation, 'the frame is the device which facilitates the change in the spectator's point of view from looking at the world to looking at the surface for meaning' (Pajaczkowska, 2005: 233).

Different photographic views can offer alternative slants on the same thing; this may encourage the narrative to focus on looking inwards, reaching outwards or looking back (as with time). Elements such as lighting and shadow are also incorporated into a work through photography, changing or altering emphasis and potential interpretations and meanings. Shadows and sunlight also provide the possibility to evoke a mood of ethereality and to create enigma. In terms of the visual aesthetic, colour may also impact on possible significations that affect the narrative, producing different interpretations or readings. I have examined the impacts of colour difference by reproducing the same photographic image through colour, black and white and duotone (two colours) finishes, observing how this process can lead the eye to focus on different aspects, and/or change the mood.

I am not attempting to create images that are technically 'perfect' photographically. Often my work is ephemeral, as with my talcum powder monoprints (figure 10); in such cases photography allows me to fix the work, to hold it in time. Photography also allows me to capture what I see, to focus in on specific areas of a physical piece. It creates the potential for different perspectives to be taken on the same physical outcome. I can draw attention to alternate elements in order to make a particular piece work in different ways; to say something different, according to how I develop the lighting, the angle and where the focus is. This may be change that occurs on the

*Figures 8 & 9: 2014, 'endure and survive this bitterness', ice and stitched text, testing varying amounts of story content*

surface in different lights, new correspondences created by sunlight and shadow, or by looking at what happens at the edges of the photographic print, which will differ to the original, physical work.

### Fugitive tales

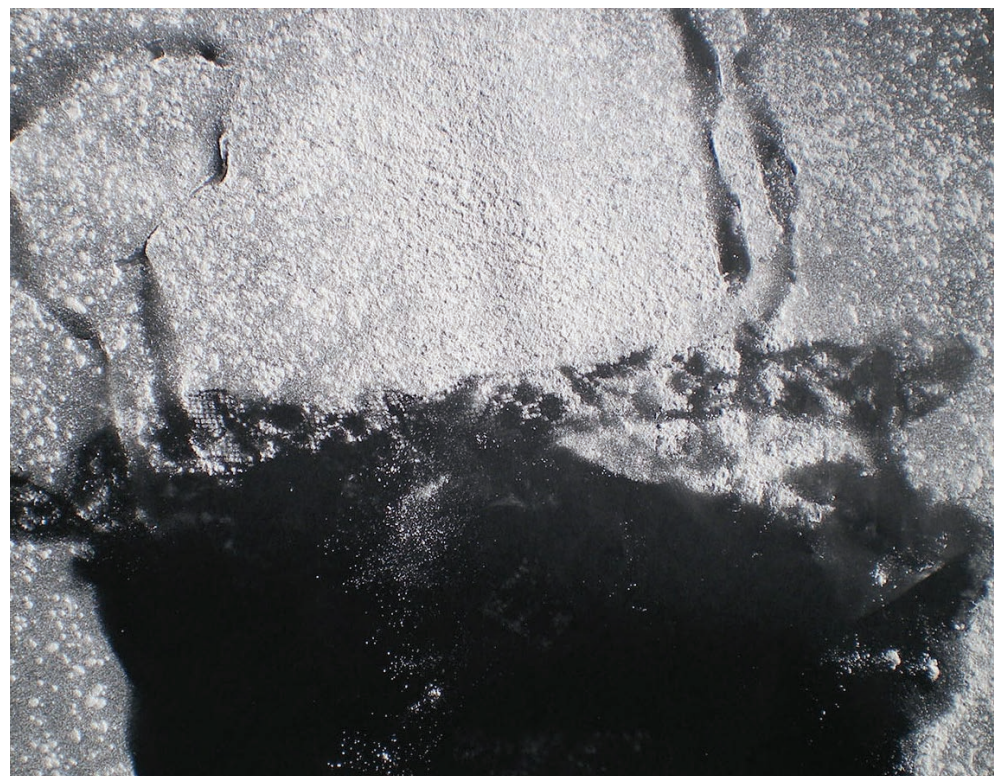
My interest and approach to my story telling has been to investigate the content of the Semple letters through the nuances that lie beneath the surface or beyond the immediate view, rather than articulate a sequence of actions, (this happened, then that). It is not so much 'the story, but the story's "image", its trace' (Genette: 167) that I have attempted to capture, to communicate the cadences of what I see and what is latent in the source material itself.

My tales are fragmentary: they are not complete, being without beginning, middle and end. They are removed from their sequence through fragmentation offering a fleeting, fugitive glimpse of an implicated 'other'. They are enigmatic, reflective spaces rather than being a recreation of the original source, so that 'the traces of the past can be woven into the fabric of a new story to illuminate the present' (Evans: 13). My narratives are impressionistic, they aim to evoke a 'subtle enchantment' (Nora: 14) with the past. They are elusive and enigmatic; the narrative may be barely perceptible, achieved through the specific choice and ways of developing materials and compositional design. I have created stories which are not just about what is seen, but attempt to tell tales which resist the effects of closure. I have attempted to create open spaces for the reader, aiming for the tales to be as much felt, as seen and read.

In *Camera Lucida* Barthes discusses 'the punctum'<sup>2</sup> as an element (in a photograph) that may be poignant to a specific person, an essence which has the potential to

2: as opposed to the 'studium' being more denotational

Figure 10: 2014, 'she remains with me just the same, and won't be forgotten'; perspective and the nurse; elusiveness and memory as trace, monoprint, black paper, vintage slip, talcum powder



'pierce the viewer' (Barthes, 1981: 27). This is enabled by a viewer recognising something in the image, through which they make reference to previous experience or prior knowledge. This connects the image with something from the past and has the potential to produce a more powerful response. My responses to the letters and how I develop stories from them share similarities with Barthes' concept of the 'punctum'. I have created narratives that I hope have the potential to intrigue or to captivate, by encouraging the reader/viewer to recognise things in my work which allows them to bring their own meanings to it, framed against their own experiences and the past. My narratives are oblique and nuanced, as well as sometimes being more explicitly articulated. Lessing states 'to make the ideas [the poet] awakens in us so vivid that at that moment we believe that we feel the real impressions... we should cease to be conscious of the means through which the poet uses for this purpose' (Lessing: 485).

I have looked at absence. What has been told or not told and what is left of a story. Specific edits that I make to the text and content of the letters plays a key role in the development of my tales. I have examined absences, gaps and spaces in my narratives. What is not said is important. I have attempted to develop narratives that are both explicit and implicit, by looking at the surface and what lies between the lines, in both the stories themselves, their distance in time, and the elusiveness of memory. My specific approach to the composition and visualisation of my stories is key. As I shall discuss throughout the chapters, literary concepts have enabled me to read and engage with the letters through specific literary perspectives, producing different ways to consider and explore absence, and the enigmas posed by the letters.

### The edge of memory

The way I have considered and developed 'the edge of memory' in this project has evolved, in line with on-going research and the introduction of the Semples letters into the project. The edge of memory is twofold relating to trace and time. Firstly, it alludes to the way in which memory itself works, as being not fixed or stable. Memory may be regarded as the mind's capricious and mercurial filter. It composes and recomposes its own truths, where subjectivities and imagination slip into the retelling; where such 'truths' are constantly overwritten and reinvented. In this regard, Annette Kuhn comments, 'the past is unavoidably rewritten, revised, through memory; and memory is partial', going on to say that, 'memory is always already secondary revision: even the memories we run and rerun inside our heads are residues of psychical processes' (Kuhn, 2000: 184). It is the elusiveness of memory that interests me – the 'edge' references the impressions and traces of experience, what is remembered and what forgotten; and distance and time passing and how this may be examined and expressed visually (figure 10 shows an example of an exploration of the edge of memory and materials research). My stories based on the letters attempt 'not... [to] reveal truth, but use the power that clings to [their] apparent traces' (Leslie, 2003: 181).

Secondly, the sources I have referenced and examined have the potential to be considered as being on the borders of living memory, another way to contemplate the edge of memory. The people are no longer with us but there may still be tangible connections with those people through their relatives or associates or other traces such as photographs. In this sense I consider them to be (enticingly) close enough in years with the present, but where such connections are nevertheless problematic

because of distance and the continual passing of time. Details get lost as events or stories are told and retold, becoming ever more subject to edits and alterations; the space where memory becomes narrative. The Semple collection acts as tangible evidence of the lives of Meg and Jock but it contains many gaps, poses many unanswerable questions.

I find this fluctuation in accessibility to the past and past lives intriguing. The abstraction created by time and distance make the human connection, the living memories, fall away, become ever more distant. As time passes people and their experiences are forgotten, traces of them 'slip and vanish like sand between the fingers' (Assmann: 102). In exploring the Semple archive my story telling is not about specifically remembering the actual people, touching on personal memories belonging to, for instance Meg or Jock. Those memories are theirs, it is the traces of their lives that provide my focus.

## Sources and methods: the Semple letters

The Semple Collection consists of a large folder of papers, including letters written by a soldier Jock McLeod to his sweetheart Meg Semple during the First World War. In the last letter he declares his love for another woman, a nurse, so ending his relationship with Meg. Working with this collection prompted a period of extensive creative research using extracts from Jock's last letter and Meg's draft reply. My discovery led me to alter the focus of my project such that the archive, or more pertinently, Jock's last letter and Meg's response were used as the basis for subsequent story telling. This shift in focus has meant that certain aspects of the ways in which memory was initially present in the project came to have less relevance.

The letter is not dated, but the postmark on the envelope is 27 May 1917, 10.15AM. Meg's draft reply is dated '13.6.17'. The museum description of the archive reads:

### Private Papers of M Semple – Imperial War Museum, Item 5821

The museum description reads:

*'A collection of 70 ms letters (133pp, plus 91pp photocopied ts transcript), July 1917, written to her by Jock McLeod during training at Invergordon as an NCO with the 3rd Battalion Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders, active service at Ypres Salient with the 5th Battalion (26th Brigade, 9th Division), then a period of hospitalisation back in the United Kingdom at Gosforth, Belfast and Bolton, Lancashire, with a lung wound, February 1916-February 1917, and brief service with the RFC at the Wireless Testing Park, Biggin Hill, providing useful descriptions of his training and anxiety to experience 'real modern warfare', the dress and traditions of his regiment, poor trench conditions on the Western Front, his narrow escape from mortar explosions, his frustration at being hospitalised during the wait for examination by the Medical Board, who pronounced him unfit for active military service, his intense hatred for 'the hun' and the Germans' alleged fear of the Scottish based upon rumours of crucified Highlanders, criticisms of high prices charged by the YMCA in France, and his regiment's contempt for conscientious objectors, with his final letter informing her of his love for another*

Wireless Testing Park,  
Biggin Hill,  
Westerham, Kent

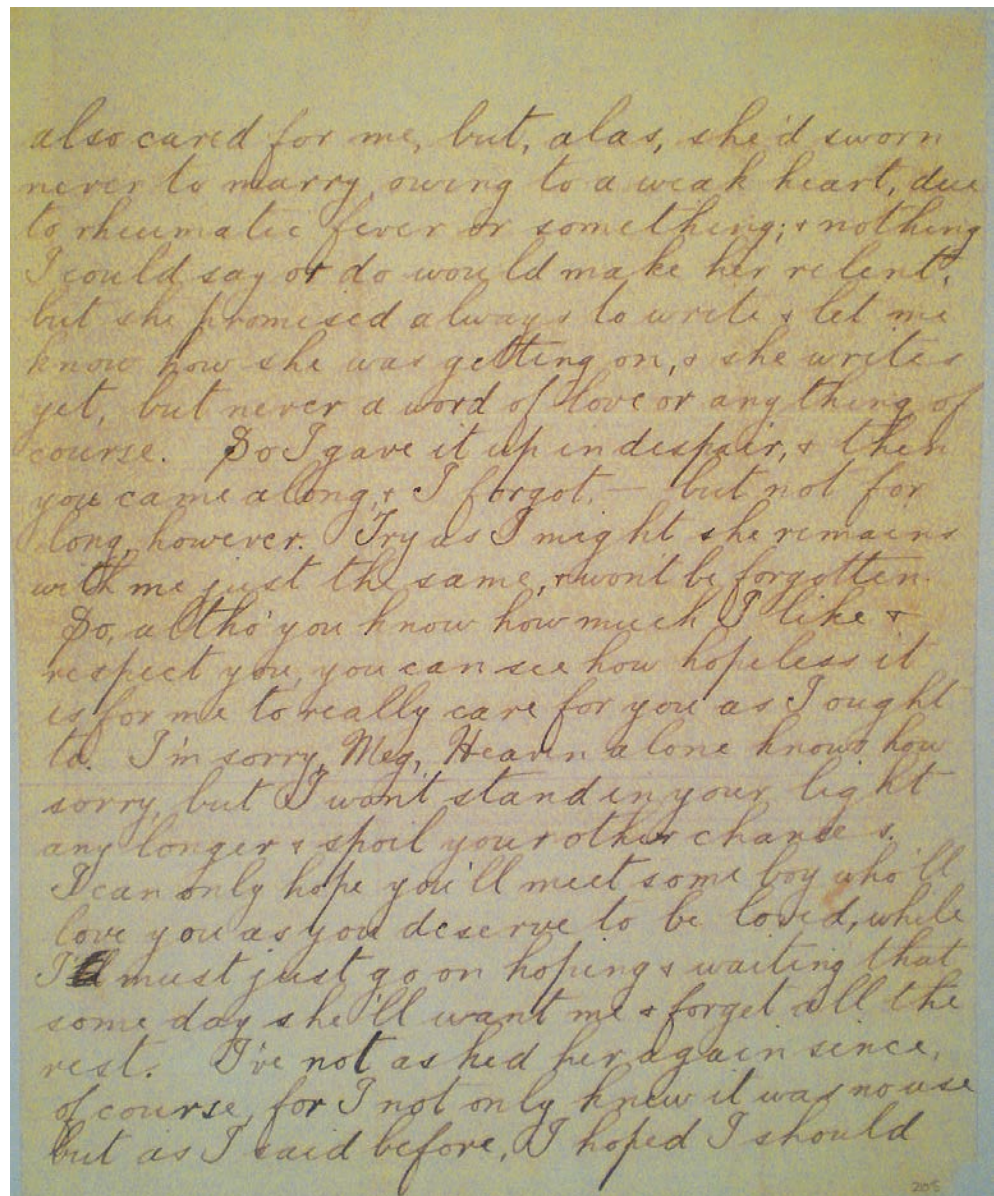
Dear Meg.

Thanks for youristo hand yesterday, + sorry to hear they make you work such long hours. You must be fed up now. You're lucky to have such a chap tho'. I had a letter from Will the other day, + he says he's up in the trenches now, facing Fritz, + dodging all sorts of things. I've not heard any further from the G.P.O. yet, so I'll drop them a line to tell them where, + how, I am now-a-days. I think. But there's something I want to tell you, about, Meg, something which I did not mean to ever tell you, but now feel I must tell. I expect you'll think all sorts of things about me, but it's better to know now than when too late, so I'll tell you everything. Well, when I was in Hospital I met a Nurse there, + we became very friendly, + it was not long before I realized how much I was in love with her, so I told her + found that she

girl; together with three ms letters from her (5pp), January 1914-June 1917, including her draft reply to Jock's final letter, photocopies (179pp) of ms originals and ts transcripts of letters sent to her from various correspondents, July 1911-December 1968, including material concerning her application and work for the Women's Legion and WAAC during the First World War, very brief diary entries and a chronology of her career; plus two photographs, of her and Jock'.

The Semple Collection contains multiple letters, those from Jock to Meg and some correspondence from Meg's friends sent to her after the war. There are also photographs of Meg and Jock, plus other items that provide clues and insights into what happened to Meg and Jock in later life. I have chosen to work with just the last of the letters from Jock, and also with Meg's 'draft' response. I had initially worked solely with Jock's last letter but in response to my examination of it using Genette's codes, particularly mood and voice, I noticed things in the letter that encouraged me to consider aspects beyond the content, such as how Meg may have been feeling as she read it. This prompted me to investigate the story specifically through her and how

Figure 11: Jock's letter, page one, ref, 204, Imperial War Museum (see page viii for full references for the letters)



much space she occupied in the narrative, compared to Jock (this analysis of narrative space and perspective was also made through 'the nurse', discussed in the *Landscape* chapter). I included Meg's reply as it provides a further perspective on the story and fresh insights on the effect Jock's letter had on Meg and how she responded to it.

Throughout my tales I have maintained a distance from the 'reality' of the characters, avoiding any personal associations or links to an identity. For instance, I have not referenced or used the photographs of either Meg or Jock. I have preferred to refrain from using these symbols of identity in my story telling – photographs in this context may be regarded as having the potential to 'fix' a story by connecting a perceivable sense of identity, character or person with the narrative. The ideas I have been exploring in my story telling rely on the narrative being enigmatic. I aim to provide more open spaces for narrative, interpretation and potential meaning.

Figure 12: Jock's letter, page two, ref 205, Imperial War Museum

Having examined the letters through Genette's narratological codes, and subsequently through Barthes' codes, I was able to respond to them in multiple and varied ways. Over 80 tales have so far resulted, with more yet to be produced. As such because

have no desire to. I know how cruel I've  
been to you, Meg, but try to forgive, & tell me  
what & how I should do now. Won't you write  
& tell me, please? If I don't hear from you  
again I shall conclude I've offended  
past all forgiveness, but you'll know  
how Fate treats me if ever you hear of me  
being engaged, or getting married, for  
I'll never marry but this one girl.  
So I'll conclude, Meg, hoping I may  
ever sign myself

Your sincere friend,  
Jock

Figure 13: Jock's  
letter, page three,  
ref 206

Figure 14: Meg's  
'draft' reply, ref 208,  
Imperial War Museum

No.1 OFFICERS Co.  
COMMAND DEPÔT,  
NORTH CAMP,  
RIPON.  
13.6.17

The heart is not of me to tell  
you what & how you must do  
May take one day & rans you  
your heart's desire, and I will  
be good enough to help me  
endure & survive this bitter need





those literary perspectives enabled me to comprehend and respond to the letters through a range and variety of formats and approaches I have not needed to refer to or examine any of the other letters, focusing instead on this one letter and a brief postcard reply.

When producing my narratives I have been mindful of the ways in which we understand certain events or cultures which are altered with time. Looking back provides a different view, one that has the benefit of distance and objectivity, as such 'the past takes on new meanings in the light of... the present' (Evans, 2003: 12). In the case of the Semple letters although set in the turbulent years of the First World War the story is timeless, universal. It is a love story. But it is a sad story and the cause of the sadness has its roots in that specific time in history though, as will be seen later, not as might be expected *directly* because of the war.

As stated, I have worked exclusively with the Semple letters in order to examine literary concepts. However in the early stages of my research, prior to discovering the Semple collection, other sources were used as a basis for my story telling, including from family anecdote, non-fictional literature and poetry. These preliminary sources were used to investigate some of the literary codes and in some cases played a part in my changing comprehension of some of those theoretical concepts. This is especially so in relation to Barthes' *S/Z* which I researched prior to my discovery of the Semple archive. In consequence, although the focus of my project has altered to concentrate specifically on the Semple letters some of this early developmental work is also referenced where necessary.

The letter, poems and texts I have referenced act not just as sources of information and events to visualise but also provide a stimulus, insight and inspiration. I have been asked, when disseminating my research (for instance by those viewing my work, reading my articles, or through presentation at conference) if my stories are true – to which I do not provide an answer. One of the themes of my investigations in this project is an exploration of the blurring between what may be considered 'truth' and what 'fiction', the authentic and invented – to explore the correspondences between memory and narrative.

Figure 15: 2008,  
section from  
Gertrude, fabric,  
stitch and hand  
pressed type

My early stories were connected, each tale becoming the inspiration for the next, a 'network of entangled memories' (Genette, 1972: 93). My initial source was an anecdotal reference – *Gertrude* – a family story about a couple whose relationship came to an embittered end when an unplanned pregnancy occurred prior to their planned marriage in 1910 (figure 15, and see Appendix 4 for the story text and brief discussion). I gained access to this information through my grandmother, who was initially reluctant to discuss the story. Gertrude was my grandmother's mother, meaning my grandmother was born illegitimately and was deeply ashamed of this. Despite her shame she slowly revealed more and more details to me in part because of my growing interest, but also, given that she was 98, I think to pass on the story.

Through my treatment of the Gertrude story I attempted to capture some of the imagined turbulence created by the situation, to draw on the invisible dynamics between the couple, to focus on the emotions and physical effects of the situation; referencing some anecdotal information, some imagined. Work resulting from this source formed part of my practical examinations of concepts from *S/Z* and this work is discussed in chapter two, *The Migration of Meaning*.

As a result of re-examining the Gertrude story through Barthes' literary codes and lexia (as well as through materials research) I was able to see new things in the story previously unconsidered. I also noticed correspondences between different sections of the text and its relationship with the composition of the garment. Literary codes enabled me to develop multiple different aspects of this story.

Further to the work with the Gertrude story I was keen to explore this particular time period further, moving just a little closer in time to the present day. This was so that the distance between the 'original' and the present did not become too far removed, beyond of the range of the 'edge of memory'. As such I turned my attention to the First World War. I explored relationships between women and soldiers in my tales, attempting to capture some of the emotional effects the war had on their experiences as a couple.

I initially used poetry as my source (such as Reilly's *Scars Upon my Heart: Women's Poetry and Verse of the First World War*) and non-fiction (for example Nicholson's *Single Out: How Two Million Women Survived Without Men after the First World War*, and also Glover's and Silkin's *The Penguin Book of First World War Prose*). This material was the basis for a further exploration of the theme of love and loss and these sources, whether poetry or prose, had personal experience as their foundation. My focus was to examine war as experienced on the home front. These were times of not just physical hardship but also testing emotional challenges and uncertainties, such as feelings of despair, of separation and fear for life or loved ones. Such emotions were compounded by the need to carry on and (daring) to hope for survival and return. Emphasising the 'edge of memory' I did not deal with specific cases or stories but used this theme as inspiration to explore the traces of those experiences, emotions and uncertainties.

Wishing to explore the theme of love and loss further I used a poignant poem by Vera Brittain *St Pancras Station, August 1915*, examining it through a range of different compositions and media, including an artist's book and installation. Vera's poem relates to her relationship with Roland, a romance tragically interrupted almost before it had begun by Roland's death in the trenches. This led me to consider other, less formal

relationships – love and loss were explored through what might be described as ‘the shadow of love’: the bright hope of sweethearts, blossoming romances, quiet loves unrealised and repressed feelings – relationships also disrupted by the turmoil of sudden departure to war, absence, fear and often by life changing loss.

In response to my continuing work with the First World War I went to the Imperial War Museum looking for a further source for my story telling relating to the First World War, with a special emphasis on the emotional or experiential. I was interested in continuing to examine life on the home front, rather than looking at letters sent between soldiers away at war and their families. Much of the material I found, although interesting, tended towards more pragmatic aspects of life on the home front, such as accounts of women’s experiences of war work. I searched the archives further and so discovered the Semple Collection.

## Sources and methods: narratology

I have chosen two specific literary theories to analyse the narrative component in my story telling, whether explicit or implicit – Roland Barthes’ *S/Z* and Gérard Genette’s *Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method*. My objective has been to examine whether those literary concepts (which relate to works of fiction) have relevance in respect of my visual/verbal practice, looking at the differences that literary considerations may bring to visual forms of communication (previously defined).

Both theories were written against a backdrop of political unrest in Paris in the late 1960s and 1970s. Both Barthes’ and Genette’s texts come from structuralist and post-structuralist positions. These works are situated within a contextual framework specific to that period of time. Other narratologists such as Claude Levi-Strauss, Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida and Julia Kristeva were also examining literary texts through a similar perspective to that of Barthes and Genette.

Narratology was a new literary criticism, not seeking to explain ‘what individual works mean but attempting to make explicit the system of figures and conventions that enable works to have the forms and meanings they do’ (Culler, 1972: 8). Barthes’ and Genette’s narratological methods discuss the underlying systems, structures and layers which enable works of fiction to come to the reader. Their methodologies employ an analysis of the underpinning structures found within texts, unlike in traditional literary criticism where ‘value’ was to be found by judgmental taste or biographic and historic aspects of an author.

Structuralism built on the semiological theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, looking at signs, signifiers and the signified. Structural linguistics studied the underlying rules and codes of language believing this would attach a ‘scientific’ credibility and objectivity to how meaning may be constructed. This narratological approach relied on defining meaning through a specific linguistic ‘network of relations’, both internal and external. Works of fiction were evaluated through the structural composition – language, grammar, syntagmatic and paradigmatic signs – with the resultant construction of language, or ‘speech’ being seen as providing its ‘value’.

Post-structuralists further developed the structuralist perspective, notably Jacques Derrida, who argues through the concept of 'deconstruction', that meaning is always achieved through a series of traces and contrasts. He suggests that there is no centre of meaning because language constantly refers outwards through a network of relations.

Barthes' and Genette's theories look beyond the meaning of a story. Narratology examines the underlying systems, structures and layers which enable works of fiction to come to the reader. I have questioned whether this methodological approach might have relevance to visual practice and visual story telling. I have examined whether literary theory produces different considerations and perspectives to those used in visual forms of communication.

*S/Z* and *Narrative Discourse* are both well regarded texts, but equally both have their critics. As I shall discuss, there were tensions in examining these literary codes through visual practice, but equitable resolution was found to those tensions. Barthes' and Genette's theories complement each other, each producing and bringing different perspectives on narrative and the story world. Barthes' focus is on language and the migration of meaning. Genette's is to show how narrative is organised in fiction. As far as I have been able to ascertain, these two texts have not been examined together *through* visual practice.

### **S/Z – Roland Barthes**

*S/Z* was published in 1970, it is a textual analysis or 'deconstruction' of *Sarrasine*, (a novella by Honoré de Balzac written in 1831). *S/Z* builds on Barthes' previous work on narrative, literature, textuality and language. In his essay 'Death of the Author' Barthes states 'it is language which speaks, not the author' (Barthes, 1977: 143), claiming that words and language have the potential to determine and expose multiple meanings. He argues that the meaning of a text is constructed not through a person, an author responsible for the process of its production but that the reader is regarded as being responsible as much as the author in determining potential meanings, challenging traditional literary criticism.

The concepts under discussion in *S/Z* revolve around the concepts of plurality and the migration of meaning. Through these Barthes demonstrates how interpretation and meaning can be expanded through intertextuality (referencing other sources/texts) and connotation potentially immanent in texts. This may be through cultural, linguistic and/or subjective multiplicities. In *S/Z* Barthes aims to show that works of fiction are plural, having no fixed meta-meaning (one established meaning). He argues elsewhere that 'every line of written text is a mere reflection of references from a multitude of traditions... the text is nothing but a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture' (Barthes, 1977: 146).

Barthes devised a set of literary codes created to highlight different semantic levels of meaning within texts. These thematic layers are isolated through 'lexia', or small units of meaning through which the codes are linked. Barthes' system is used to illustrate how meaning might be found through the structure, the development of themes, different layers or 'voices' present in words and language and narrative, and how

connotation and symbolic representation work together to both create and expand potential meanings. The codes are the hermeneutic (enigma), proairectic (actions), semic (connotation/denotation), symbolic and referential (cultural). The codes enable a text to be viewed thematically, simultaneously in a 'stereographic space' where Barthes shows us how multiple voices co-exist in the text.

The concepts discussed in *S/Z* have relevance to my own perspective on story telling in a variety of ways. My tales are fragmentary and enigmatic through which I aim to provide an open space for the reader/viewer. In *S/Z* Barthes discusses the production and migration of meaning and this has relevance to my own approach to narrative. I work with narrative both explicit and implicit in order to make my stories engaging and evocative; Barthes' literary codes examine varying layers of interpretation potentially immanent in fiction, working with connotation and denotation. As I will discuss in the *Migration of Meaning* chapter, concepts from *S/Z* have relevance in respect of my practice, such as analysing the Semple letters (non-fictional texts), with regard to my materials and also to the relationship between the visual and verbal.

### ***Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method – Gérard Genette***

Genette's *Narrative Discourse* is a comprehensive examination of and discourse on narrative theory. Using Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* as his main source Genette's study deals with the ways in which narrative is deployed within that and other works of fiction. Genette deals only with narrative in his text, described as the *récit*, as opposed to the story or events being recounted, the *histoire*. Genette's extensive dissection of *A la Recherche* employs a set of five rhetorical codes showing how underlying themes and mechanisms of narrative transcend the text and are not 'visible' or specific to individual works. The codes are order, duration, frequency, mood and voice. *Narrative Discourse* follows a structuralist and post-structuralist approach, which up to the point of *Narrative Discourse* had largely only been applied to much shorter texts, such as Vladimir Propp's work with folk tales. By analysing Proust Genette was able to 'prove' beyond doubt that this method could work equally and successfully when analysing much more complex works of fiction.

*Narrative Discourse* examines Proust's text through the five codes, demonstrating how the story is variously developed through the narrative using emphasis, hierarchy, repetition and varying perspectives through which Genette shows us how the story and narrative are dispersed *across* that text. I have been interested in examining *how* my stories are produced, as much as looking at the content of a story. Genette's conceptual approach has relevance to how I consider and compose my stories. His division of *histoire* and *récit* and his five codes were a productive way for me to analyse the Semple letters producing new ways for me to read and regard the letters; bringing about changes in composition of my work, my understanding of the story world, what and where the page may be, and how the story world can be traversed.

### **Methods**

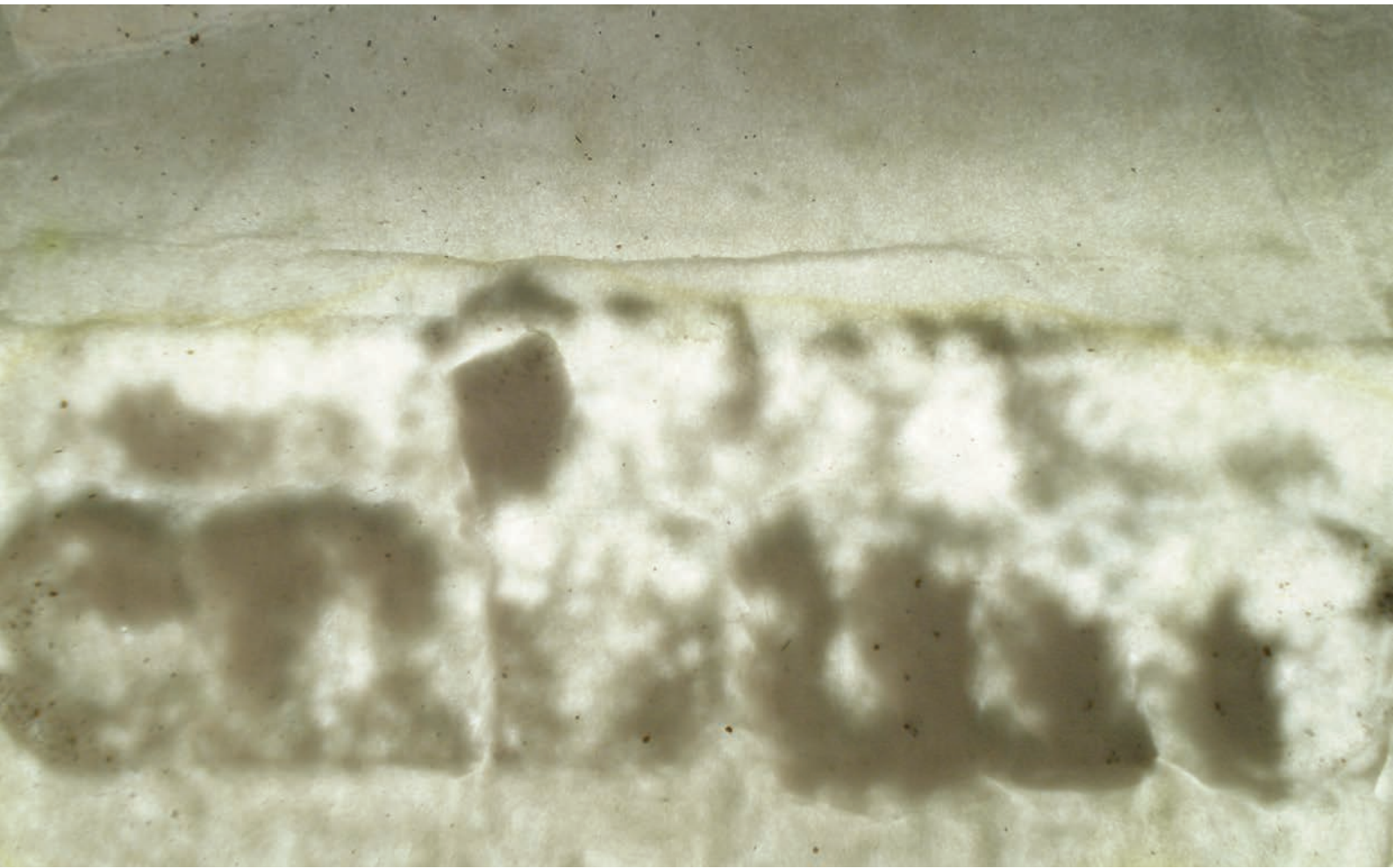
The following chapters discuss my examination and evaluation of Barthes' and Genette's literary concepts. I have observed and assessed the impacts literary codes

have had on my practice and story telling. This includes the analysis of the Semple letters, my materials and the way I use them, my treatment of visual and verbal elements, as well as examining how I compose my work. Through praxis my focus has been to critique these theories in respect of their translation from literary codes into visual/verbal ones; to test the credibility and relevance of such a transferral and translation; and to challenge how they might be incorporated into visual practice directly, conceptually and by adaptation. I include discussion of the arising tensions and problems I encountered when investigating the literary codes, such as the perceived similarities I noticed between literary concepts and some visual methods, and will discuss how I resolved those problems. This process includes critical appraisal of literary codes in respect of visual practice; production of practical work and documentation and evaluation of that work; and by keeping critical and reflective journals.

I have attempted to enhance the narrative potential of my responses to the Semple letters. I am not discounting what my visual communication experience and perspectives bring to the research, rather I have addressed the ways in which my practice could be extended and advanced by approaches and ideas from literary theory; ideas from outside the discipline of visual communication. As I shall go on to discuss, through my research I have established a dialectical relationship between the visual, verbal and literary.

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Chapter Two

The Migration  
of Meaning



*'Meaning is not  
"at the end"  
of the narrative,  
it runs across it'*

*Figure 16: 2014; brink  
of visibility; ice and  
lead type impression*

*Barthes, 1977: 87*

A range of ideas are examined and pursued by Barthes in *S/Z*<sup>1</sup>, these relate to works of fiction. I include, at the start of this chapter, an overview of Barthes' key concepts before opening my critical discussion of *S/Z* in relation to the letters and my practice. Not all of the themes included in the overview are included in that discussion; there are many similarities between the terms Barthes includes and uses, and which are interchangeable; an example of this is what Barthes describes as open/closed texts and the readerly/writerly.

I have not examined *S/Z* from a literary perspective. My approach has been one of praxis, to investigate *S/Z* through my visual/verbal practice in order to address the research questions; examining whether Barthes' literary codes are a productive way of dealing with narrative in my own story telling. Specifically, I have questioned what *S/Z* can bring to the reading, analysis and understanding of the Semple letters; assessed the ways in which literary perspectives may produce different creative responses to the development of that resource, including looking at materials and composition; I have examined and challenged what narratology might offer in respect of producing different conceptual approaches to the visual/verbal relationship; and I have examined what the edge of memory may entail.

I have examined *S/Z* in order to assess whether, and how, it may advance (rather than replace) my pre-existing visual communication knowledge and methods. I have investigated *S/Z* through an initial appraisal of Barthes' concepts; by making a narratological reading of contextually relevant practitioners' work; and through my practical responses, including analysis, evaluation and categorisation of that work.

I shall discuss the ways in which a transferral and/or translation of ideas between the literary and visual has been made; and highlight the ways in which that process subsequently altered and influenced some of my responses to *S/Z*. My evolving understanding of the ways in which literary concepts could be of relevance in visual practice (previously defined) are also discussed; as are the tensions that arose in respect of similarities between some of Barthes' literary codes and visual communication methods. *S/Z* inaugurated changes in my thinking, contributing to new discoveries significantly impacting on my research and on my practice.

## *S/Z*

Barthes' interest in, and writings on, narrative, literature, textuality and language share some common similarities; demonstrating a development of ideas; a flow of thinking. Similar themes come under his analysis, which are then built on, altered or subsequently rejected by Barthes. Allen comments that by viewing Barthes' work collectively and chronologically that it is possible to see 'significant relations between ideas' which would not otherwise be evident (Allen, 2003: 5). An example of this is Barthes often deploys binary terms, dealing with connotation/denotation, through which to examine literary and cultural themes. For example in *Camera Lucida* Barthes develops the terms punctum/studium as ways of considering photographic imagery through two thematic perspectives. In many of his books and articles he invites us to challenge our assumptions, to re-examine how we 'read' or experience things, suggesting that we do so through cultural codes and conventions, which he repeatedly

<sup>1</sup>: All citations and references in this chapter relate to Barthes' *S/Z*, unless indicated otherwise

argues are not fixed, stating 'reading is nothing more than a referendum' (S/Z: 4). In making such reference to culture and convention in order to look for meaning, the reader, Barthes suggests, brings the potential for difference.

Barthes' examinations of narrative, literature, textuality and language were undoubtedly influenced by his association with the progressive French intelligentsia of the late 1960s and 1970s, including Michel Foucault, Jacques Lacan, Jacques Derrida, Gérard Genette and Julia Kristeva. This was an anti bourgeois culture – with ideological roots in post modernism, existentialism, structuralism, post-structuralism and psychoanalysis. Barthes challenges established centres of thinking, the norms of culture and tradition through which he, and others, questioned generally agreed ideas and positions (Allen, 2003: 3). Barthes attempts to expose a decentring of language, to interrogate meanings that we consider to have 'authority', having a 'constant need to move on from one position to another' (Sturrock, 1979: 4). He does so, for instance, through accounting for the subjectivities of individuals and cultures, thereby opening up a greater potential for language, interpretation and meaning. In so doing, he reveals what might be considered a network of relations, showing that individual interpretation and meaning continually refers to implicit and connoted correspondences; and that these subjective and cultural responses are variable and therefore provide difference and a migration of potential meaning.

In S/Z, Barthes discusses the 'readerly' and the 'writerly'. Classic texts (where a prescribed meaning is established, preordained through literary norms and values), are described as being readerly, necessitating that one become a passive reader, playing no part in the narrative's intended meaning. The foundations of the story's narrative structure and plot move forwards in a linear order. Barthes postulates that the 'mass of literature' falls within the category of the readerly, and all canonical texts are readerly because their meaning is long established, endorsed by extent of readership, where meaning is undisputed. This literary and social conditioning, according to Barthes, 'plunges the reader into idleness – he is himself intransitive... instead of gaining access to the magic of the signifier, to the pleasure of writing, he is left with no more than the poor freedom to accept or reject the text' (S/Z: 4).

2: Extract from  
Finnegans Wake –  
'The great fall of the  
offwall entailed at  
such short notice the  
pftjschute of  
Finnegan, erse solid  
man, that the  
humptyhillhead of  
humself promptly  
sends an unquiring  
one well to the west  
in quest of his  
tumptytumtoes: and  
their  
upturnpikepointandpl  
ace is at the knock  
out in the park where  
oranges have been  
laid to rust upon the  
green since dev-  
linsfirst loved livvy'.  
<https://ebooks.adelaidede.edu.au/j/joyce/james/j8f/complete.html>

Barthes aims to show through S/Z that classic texts *can* be less passively read – to be considered more writerly. By focusing on connotation Barthes determines how the subjectivities of the reader provide the possibility for difference, working subconsciously in combination with the logical sequence of the narrative in order to construct meaning – 'it is ourselves writing' (S/Z: 5). This dynamic between the reader and the text gives words and language a more fluid and expansive potential. Meaning becomes dependent on shifting contexts that may be linguistic, cultural, chronological or subjective. In Barthes' discussion of *Sarrasine*, he illustrates how Balzac used multiple ways of saying the same thing, all of which support a central theme, which is built up through layers of connotation. Barthes' writing in S/Z also uses repeating themes of connotation in order to discuss his ideas and Balzac's text, discussed later.

Modern or avant-garde texts, those that break with 'traditional' styles such as James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*<sup>2</sup>, are described by Barthes as enjoying the benefits of not being classic. He considers them to be more open and writerly, where the reader has more freedom of interpretation. The reader of the writerly text is considered by Barthes to

be as much a part of the construction of the narrative as the writer. These texts can be approached from multiple points and be read and re-read. Barthes sees this action of re-reading as subversive; in defiance of what he considers to be a bourgeois need to consume, noting 'our literature is characterized by the pitiless divorce which the literary institution maintains between the producer of the text and its user' (*S/Z*: 4).

Barthes demonstrates how a text can work on many levels, aiming to expose disorder co-existing within the narrative structure, and as such to what extent texts could be regarded as 'open' or 'closed'. He aims to show that meaning is more plural, found beyond authorial or prescribed interpretations or meanings. Emphasis is placed by Barthes on the multiplicitous, reversible potential of texts, using thematic layers of connotation, symbolism and culture as a way of investigating non-linearity, and a consequent expansion of the possibility of narrative. The reader is described as being active in the construction of meaning, where an authorial 'truth' is never fully determined or substantiated. This active role references the subjectivities of the person, the cultural context and intertextuality (one's experience of, and relating to, other 'texts') in order to determine a work's potential meaning. Barthes aimed to show that a text can only come into being, is given meaning, by the act of reading which is 'an activity of production' (Barthes, 1977: 4).

Barthes focuses on internal and external intertextuality in *S/Z*. This is done in a number of ways, firstly through the alignment between the themes of Balzac's story (such as antithesis) and Barthes' development and explanation of his theory. Barthes' codes reference connotation/denotation, specifically relating to cultural, semantic and symbolic fields of interpretation, referencing knowledge gained from outside sources. In what might be regarded as a poetic utility, Barthes uses intertextual referencing between language and connotation as he explains the theoretical codes. Additionally, *S/Z* also references ideas discussed by Barthes in previous writings, such as in his earlier essay 'The Death of the Author', where he examines the role and scope of the author and potential for meaning in texts.

Barthes uses a deconstructive methodology in *S/Z*, examining Balzac's novella *Sarrasine*, fusing his theoretical threads against his own literary observations throughout. He unfolds his theory by using connotation rather than denotation. His text is littered with metaphor and antithesis, as Barthes states, 'the excess of metaphor... is a game played by the discourse' (*S/Z*: 58). He explains his method to his readers stating, 'we shall therefore star the text, separating, in the manner of a *minor earthquake*, the blocks of signification of which reading grasps only the smooth surface, *imperceptibly soldered* by the movement of sentences, the flowing discourse of narration' (*S/Z*: 13, my emphasis). His theory, is explicated in the writerly, encouraging the reader away from a passive reading.

*S/Z* is a 'play text', an intellectual game, contrasting the academic with the poetic. Barthes plays out a linguistic diversion in *S/Z*, with ideas being unravelled through connotation, antithesis and poetics, through which he reveals his method. Barthes comments that meaning will be 'spread like gold dust on the apparent surface of the text (meaning is golden)... denotation is not the first meaning, but pretends to be so' (*S/Z*: 9). Barthes compares play to intellectual activity, he teases his readers by introducing his own voice into the text through the poetics. Despite his stated desire

to deny any authorial presence underpinning a book's structure, his authorial voice is made evident through 'the rustle of [his poetic] language'<sup>3</sup>.

An initial point of interest with regard to *S/Z* and my research was Barthes' praxis – his poetics are an unusual means of communicating 'academic theory'. In the context of practice-based research, how theory and practice could harmoniously co-exist without perceived constraint or limitation was a matter of importance. Barthes' manner of expression, the poetics and connotation, led me to view 'theory' through a different light; a way of finding correspondence between theoretical concepts (relative to works of fiction) and visual practice (which also work with connotation and symbolism). Barthes states, 'to deny connotation is to abolish the differential value of the texts' (*S/Z*: 8).

As I shall go on to discuss, establishing a symbiotic inter-dependency between theory and practice led me to re-examine some of Barthes' literary ideas in the light of my visual examinations. This enabled me to overcome some of the perceived tensions arising through my research, such as the similarities between some literary and visual languages and methods, discussed later. This reciprocal exchange, in some cases, prompted me to re-think my responses to *S/Z*, with a dialectical relationship between theory and practice being established – between the visual, verbal and literary.

## Lexia and the codes

Barthes' methodology identifies blocks of text under headings which he terms 'lexia'. These perform like semantic wrappings, 'the best possible space in which we can observe meanings' (*S/Z*: 13). Through lexia the text is aligned to one of five codes, and these lexia have a 'specific effect or function different from that of neighbouring stretches of text' (Culler, 1975: 202). Lexia are a starting point from which the codes emerge, through them Barthes demonstrates how meaning is variously produced and scattered across a text; that connotation is a correlation immanent in the text' (*S/Z*: 8). This produces difference in the text, through the various 'tabular' layers that the codes enable. The codes reflect the individual nature of interpretation; Barthes is clear to point out that the codes and lexia he identifies in *S/Z* are his own, they are not meant to be prescriptive. Barthes was intent on highlighting the pluralistic and subjective nature of language and meaning, such as in literature and culture. In *S/Z* he provides evidence that even a classic text, such as Balzac's *Sarrasine*, has the potential for such multiplicity and non-linearity.

The codes, summarised below, are each assigned their own 'voice', addressing the literal and metaphorical relationship between the text (or signs) and their meaning, and how meaning is denoted and connoted. Barthes discusses how semantic meanings are subsequently interpreted by a reader. He argues how 'semiologically, each connotation is the starting point of a code, the articulation of a voice which is woven into the text' (*S/Z*: 9).

The first two codes, relating to enigma and actions, are described as being more acquiescent – together they constitute the main narrative structure and plot and are thus sequential or 'irreversible'. They are what Barthes describes as readerly or passive

3: to borrow a phrase from Barthes

– that is, they are constrained by structural and temporal sequence, working with the grammatical, chronological and narrative logic through the text. These two codes, in this regard, highlight aspects that are akin to closed texts and cannot be approached from any point other than through the prescribed narrative sequence.

- **Hermeneutic – ‘the voice of truth’**

Barthes defines this category as containing the story’s main structure and ‘units whose function it is to articulate, in various ways, a question, its response, and the variety of chance events which can either formulate the question or delay its answer’. (S/Z: 17). Elements of the text that contribute to the hermeneutic level include devices which ‘project, define, reveal or solve a mystery’ (S/Z: 17). For example, the title of the story is designated as ‘hermeneutic’, (lexia one) in that it raises a question or enigma: who or what is Sarrasine? This is not done through the actual word, but by its connotation (a drift away from the word) – the isolation of the word without a context immediately produces a puzzle and so may prompt curiosity in the reader. Barthes then comments that this word might be known to French people, as a female name, (through its spelling) and therefore gender is connoted (as is a cultural reference, discussed below). We learn much later in Balzac’s story that this very femininity is questionable, so a reference to a further mystery is subtly introduced in the title. A second enigma is highlighted by Barthes in lexia 14, referencing a section from Balzac’s text, ‘these people must have a huge fortune’, stating that the wealth of the family referred to is indicated here, but the source of this wealth is later questioned (S/Z: 30-31).

- **Proairetic code – ‘the voice of empirics’**

This code is closely related to the text’s narrative structure and applies to actions and their effects. Barthes notes, ‘the discourse, rather than the characters determine the action’ (S/Z: 18). An action is composed of data gathered under a generic title, which represents the sequence. By naming these actions, an author expresses their signification through recognition of the already written, seen, read (for example, to stroll, to murder, to rendezvous). The proairetic are founded on an entity of sequences that combine and produce effects. Barthes references an example of an action in Balzac’s text in lexia 6, ‘and *hidden* behind the sinuous folds of a silk curtain’ (S/Z: 21, my emphasis), linking a hiding place and to be hidden. It is the way such details are organised or ordered that facilitate the plot or actions, in order to impart meaning. Barthes comments that ‘in Aristotelian terms, praxis is linked to proairesis, or the ability rationally to determine the result of an action’ (S/Z: 18).

The following three codes are described as being more writerly, and work outside of the logical narrative sequence, being paradigmatic (interchangeable/variable). The semic, symbolic and referential codes reflect the subjective nature of interpretation. They are described as being more open, multivalent and non-linear, being without a specific order, without sequence. Barthes suggests that they have the capacity to disrupt the linear flow through intertextuality and cultural referencing.

- **Semic code – ‘the voice of the person’**

‘Semantically, the seme is the unit of the signifier’ (S/Z: 17) and uses the specific lexias (the language of the text that creates the possibility for its symbolic interpretation) within the text to suggest abstract ideas. The semic code

designates a special kind of signifier that marks the development of a theme. This connotation is, according to Barthes, implied 'nearby' 'a correlation immanent in the text' (S/Z: 8). Semes build up the qualities of the characters or actions through the narrative. This code is primarily metonymic, what is implied rather than explicitly told. For example, the statement 'in the trenches', may stand in for/be associated with, amongst other things, to be in battle during the First World War. Semes can be expressed and indicated without any order or link with a character, place or object – they are 'flickers' (S/Z: 19) or chains of meaning – something that builds on a particular theme, which is dispersed throughout the text and may provide a background or context. An early example of this is seen in the title of Balzac's book *Sarrasine*, where the idea of gender is suggested by association, making reference to things outside of the text – such as in the case of 'Sarrasine' which has gender implications established through this specific name. However, such comprehension relies on cultural values, the femininity symbolised, it might be argued, would be known only to French speaking readers. As stated earlier, the name Sarrasine has implications of both the hermeneutic and semic (enigma and connotation); links and similarities, such as those mentioned, are evident across all of the codes. Barthes acknowledges that all interpretation is culturally referenced; this perceived overlap between codes will be discussed later.

- **Symbolic code – 'the voice of the symbol'**

The symbolic code identifies details in the story that are interpreted on a figurative level, not by using words in their literal sense, but metaphorically or conceptually – by connotation, antithesis, opposition, substitution or variation. Barthes uses the example of 'daydream', linking these two adversative terms with antithesis. This code refers to the symbolic patterns present in the narrative, in the case of *Sarrasine* this is done through antithesis and opposition and also through mediation and conjunction. Barthes' example – lexia two – states the symbolic is represented by the mediation of inside/outside, shown in Balzac's text as 'then turning in the other direction' (between the garden and the house) (S/Z: 24). Another example of symbolic patterns found across Balzac's text are through what Barthes describes as the 'axis of castration' – relating to gender ambiguity – which is a recurring theme in Balzac's story. These symbolic groupings create links which are dispersed throughout the text, creating a non-linear network of meaning, which can accordingly 'be entered from any number of points and are reversible and multivalent' (S/Z: 19).

- **Referential code – 'the voice of science'**

These are references to 'types of knowledge that offer scientific or moral authority or a body of knowledge, for example 'physical, physiological, medical, psychological, literary, historical' (S/Z: 20). They represent the knowledge we possess as members of a particular society, as received through cultural codes and conventions. Barthes uses lexia 11 to provide an example of the referential:

*...a splendid salon decorated in silver and gold, with glittering chandeliers, sparkling with candles. There, milling about, whirling around, flitting here and there, were the most beautiful women of Paris, the richest, the noblest, dazzling, stately, resplendent with diamonds, flowers in their hair, on their bosoms, on their heads, strewn over dresses or in garlands at their feet. Light, rustling movements, voluptuous steps, made the laces, the silk*

*brocades, the gauzes, float around their delicate forms. Here and there, some overly animated glances darted forth, eclipsing the lights, the fire of the diamonds, and stimulated anew some too-ardent hearts. One might also catch movements of the head meaningful to lovers, and negative gestures for husbands. The sudden outbursts of the gamblers' voices at each unexpected turn of the dice, the clink of gold, mingled with the music and the murmur of conversation, and to complete the giddiness of this mass of people intoxicated by everything seductive the world can hold, a haze of perfume and general inebriation played upon the fevered mind.*

Barthes identifies referential links in this lexia; which he describes as 'ethnicity' and 'psychology', stating 'an adulterous ambiance is designated'; and 'it connotes Paris as an immoral city' (S/Z: 25).

### The stereographic space

The five codes individually act as corresponding 'voices' working on multiple semantic levels, each code being associated with a specific voice, woven throughout the text. Barthes compares this 'stereographic space' to a performance in progress, where 'off-stage voices can be heard' (S/Z: 21), creating an interweaving and convergence of voices. These layers provide alternative viewpoints, as different thematic layers or perspectives running through a text. In respect of Balzac's text, Sturrock show us that Barthes demonstrates how the stereographic weaving together produces 'many voices rather than the utterance of just one – that of Balzac' (Sturrock, 1979: 76) so establishing a plural, more writerly potential to Balzac's text.

### Practice, tensions, transferral

Jonathan Culler comments that Barthes' work should be 'pondered, developed or contested', (Culler, 1983: 6), and indeed this view is probably one that Barthes himself would support. In order to answer my research questions, I have 'pondered, developed and (sometimes) contested' S/Z, doing so directly through my practice.

In my early practical responses to S/Z, I concentrated on lexia and the codes, as I had initially found some of the ideas associated with these concepts troublesome. Barthes' poetics were an interesting way of demonstrating his concepts, but whether because of this style or my own initial interpretation and responses to his ideas, some of the significance of his points evaded me. The overall purpose of lexia and codes was perhaps becoming subsumed by Barthes' protracted dissection and discussion; their broader meaning lost in his poetics and in my own misunderstandings. It was my visual explorations that led to my changing comprehension and better understanding of the potential of lexia and codes, discussed later.

In respect of reading fiction, I had initially found Barthes' fragmentation process (lexia) of *Sarrasine* to be somewhat inconsistent, with his rationale for the individual fragmentations of Balzac's text seeming to vary enormously. Barthes does state that the cutting up 'will be arbitrary in the extreme; it will imply no methodological



responsibility' (S/Z: 13). This arbitrariness makes understanding of his process somewhat difficult (a brief comparative discussion of two *lexia* can be found in Appendix five). Barthes comments that connotation relies on meaning being found 'immanent in the text' (S/Z: 8) and that 'each *lexia* should have *at most* three or four meanings to be enumerated' (S/Z: 13). Referring back to *lexia* 11 (page 38), discussed in respect of the referential, this block of text is 173 words long and is rich with potential connoted meanings, certainly more than three or four. Barthes focuses in on three codes, the semic, referential and symbolic, but all of the codes are evident in this block of text. Enigma is implicated, such as 'some overly animated glances darted forth... stimulated anew some too-ardent hearts'; and actions are also present, 'milling about, whirling around, flitting here and there' (to mill about, to whirl, to flit).

I also looked at other works of fiction in an attempt to examine those texts through my own *lexia*, but found the process of isolating and assigning specific codes to blocks of text problematic. Differentiating between what was pertinent to individual codes was not always straightforward, particularly so with the writerly codes – the semic, symbolic and referential, with perceived overlaps and similarities between them being noticed. As I shall go on to discuss, this tension was also evident in visual material, whether my own or that of others, but more so.

I had disputed the process of dismembering sentences through similar, but different sub divisions (sentences versus *lexia*). I reasoned that it is still possible to isolate symbolic references in a sentence, with the same capacity for the writerly and plural being found through connotation. I considered that perhaps Barthes' dissections – a modernist departure from traditional methods of literary analysis – might have been intended more as a means of subversion, moving away from what he regarded as bourgeois literary criticism, which would make reference to an author and 'unique expressions of authorial consciousness' (Allen, 2003: 60), than to abide by any 'rules' of methodology.

In retrospect, my *aporia* with some of Barthes' ideas may be attributed to my regarding his theory too literally, to perceive it as a rigid, and therefore possibly limiting grid. The poetics of Barthes' text creates the potential for ambiguity of meaning, which although in one sense is exactly what he was aiming for, in another makes his text lack clarity. Further, in trying to understand Barthes' ideas, I focused in on *lexia*, and in the process of trying to make sense of it, lost sight of the fact that *lexia* and codes work *together*. I came to better understand the concept of codes and *lexia* through my practical examinations; to comprehend them as a means of producing an expansive and fluid potential of words and language, creating a network of relations. A network that brings difference; and through thematic readings offers a way of opening up texts, moving beyond any narrative or grammatical order. By focusing on a specific code, or codes, these can be used to link non-linear sections of the text, and as such meaning is dispersed across and throughout the entire text connecting previously unconnected fragments. Examples of how this is evident in my practical work are discussed later in respect of 'dodging', 'endure' and 'departure'.

## Lexia, codes and the visual

According to Barthes a lexia is defined as the 'best possible space in which to observe meaning' (S/Z: 13). This poses the question, what constitutes a lexia in visual forms of communication? In 'reading' an image, a viewer will likely regard the entirety of the work first, then the process of interpretation begins through the individual components that constitute the work. Fragmenting visual media into lexia might be a case of isolating divisionary components within a composition, 'a scene made up by blocks of meaning' (S/Z: 60), that may individually contain specific meanings, but are also integral to the mass, a 'great final ensemble' (S/Z: 12) relying on those elements that are situated nearby for context.

Barthes' codes relate to works of fiction. There are many more 'units of meaning' in a work of fiction than in a work of art. Verbal texts provide linguistic signs which lead to and produce meaning, from which the imagination creates a visual impression. Artworks provide visual signs, from which words emerge through interpretation and then meaning. In respect of verbal texts, meaning is deployed successively by the conventions of reading, the rules of grammar and the turning of the page. Texts have a greater potential capacity to lead the reader to intended interpretations, achieved by the volume of information they provide, as compared to that contained in most artworks. Contradicting Barthes' concept of writerly and plural texts, Sturrock comments that 'the words an author provides will be purposeful and unambiguous' (Sturrock, 1979: 65). S/Z attempts to overturn the idea of such a singular source of meaning in fiction; replacing such a meta-meaning through a network of intertextual referencing. Barthes shows us the possibility for plural meanings are obtained through connotation, symbolism, subjectivity and culture. Barthes' concepts of migration and writerly, plural texts correspond more closely with the way visual material is read.

Visual media may contain fewer identifiable signifiers or semantic wrappings than fictional texts, they may not contain as many as 'three or four' meanings, depending on the composition, which may be single (a portrait for example) or sequential (such as childrens' picture books); they may be detailed (figurative works or those with a strong narrative content) or abstract (a painting consisting of blocks of colour). Visual material is interpreted subjectively and culturally, generally relying on connotation, symbolism and cultural references in order to be 'read'.

As stated, Barthes' specific (literary) codes share many similarities to visual language and forms of communication, relying on connotation, symbolism and cultural knowledge in order to be 'read'. As part of a particular culture we learn how to read colours and symbols, *exactly* through connoted meanings and culturally prescribed references. A very basic example being the colour 'red', which has implied culturally influenced significations, such as 'passion' or 'danger' in many Western cultures, but in some Far Eastern cultures is associated more with prosperity, luck, or ceremony, especially weddings. Taking this further, the signs of 'red' and 'bus' may be understood by some people to connote 'London'.

The varying cultural and connoted voices that Barthes applies to, and exposes in, literary works, are arguably already present in visual forms of communication. Visual material is read through the understandings and knowledge of a particular culture;

connotation, symbolism and cultural references provide a framework through which the viewer is able (with varying degrees of ability) to 'read' visual symbols and signs. Enigma and actions are also culturally bound, referring to society and culture in order to produce certain understood meanings and references. For example, understanding 'murder' relies on and requires pre-knowledge of the term and phenomenon, and this will vary according to, for instance, age, education, social and other personal experiential factors. These provide the potential for difference, as individuals will bring their own interpretations and experiences to what 'murder' may potentially mean or involve.

### Early development and practice

Although visual and linguistic languages are different forms of communication and representation they nevertheless share many similarities, as well as having differences. Having observed the resemblances between Barthes' literary codes and visual communication, it posed the question what, if anything, the codes could offer to visual practice. I focused on my research questions in order to address this. In investigating literary ideas through my practical work, I examined *if, how* and *which* literary concepts could make a credible and relevant translation into visual practice. In so doing I acknowledged that this process would not necessarily be a prescribed or straightforward framework, but may require equivalence, compromise or rejection. In respect of reading text and image, William Mitchell encourages us to ask 'what differences do the differences (and similarities) make?' (Mitchell, 1994: 91). Accordingly, I have identified how and where such differences between the visual and literary are evident; and will demonstrate that these differences have produced new perspectives on visual forms of communication.



Figure 17: Anselm Kiefer, *Shevirat Ha-kalim*, 1990. (<http://arttattler.com/archivekiefer.html> 20.7.15)

I investigated literary codes through my practical work and also looked beyond my practice, by analysing the work of contextually relevant practitioners, using the codes to 'read' those works. This research included Anselm Kiefer, whose work involves memory and the use of specific media, including clothing (figure 17); Gerhard Richter because of his interest in examining elusiveness; and Punchdrunk's *Masque of the Red Death* theatre performance, which was analysed because the starting point for the performance was a verbal text (Edgar Allen Poe's *Masque of the Red Death*) developed as narrative fragments. These examinations further highlighted the difficulties already perceived in identifying and differentiating between the individual codes when reading visual material; further emphasising the similarities between Barthes' literary codes and the way visual material is read. This analysis was made prior to my discovery of the Semple letters.

In response to these tensions, in my early developmental work with the codes I considered devising a set of bespoke project codes, taking Barthes' framework as one to re-configure. This would have involved producing my own thematic layers which

could be embedded in production stages, accounting for specificities of my research. For instance this might include a thematic 'code' relating to memory. However in questioning this potential thematic coding as a concept, and in practice, it quickly became apparent that these themes were already considered when producing my narratives; the idea of creating bespoke codes was rejected because it would represent a duplication.

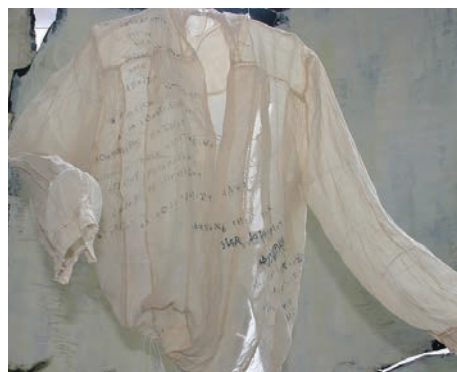
## Practice

Because of the chronology of research my early practical investigations do not include the *Semple* letters, but this early work was nevertheless valuable developmental material and so is included in my discussion below. I critically examined Barthes' literary concepts through a range of materials and compositions, including work with clothing, installations, artist's books, projections, textiles and stitched texts.

Despite the tensions discussed earlier, I continued my assessment of the codes and *lexia* directly through my practical work. By documenting and evaluating this research I started to notice a change in my working methods and how I was approaching my story telling; observing the ways in which literary concepts were informing my decision making. For example, I had been concentrating on working with clothing, looking at different ways to intersect text and garments. This included projecting text and textures onto different garments – mostly blouses, shirts and dresses – working with the concept of *lexia*/codes to isolate and fragment text. One of the ways in which this was investigated was using features of the construction of a garment, such as gathering or seams, and how this could affect nearby text; and also through folding the clothing in various ways in order to alter the linear ordering of the narrative.

In order to analyse the codes and *lexia* further, I re-visited some work I had been unhappy with – an installation comprising a blouse, text and paper panels (figure 18). I re-examined the original piece specifically through the codes and *lexia*, looking at the relationship between the physical garment and the connotative and migratory potential of the text<sup>4</sup>. The text had originally been letterpressed and embroidered onto an Edwardian blouse, following a diagonal path from shoulder to opposite hip.

I investigated the text linguistically, visually and narratively (see Appendix four for a brief discussion of this text); and also examined the garment and text together in respect of whether any *lexia*/codes could be identified. In so doing, I noticed connotative *thematic* correspondences between some of the words, such as 'unite',



'bound', 'bonds', 'constrained', 'union' and, in antithesis (the symbolic), 'part' and 'departed'. This linked themes *across* the story which did not rely on any logical or linear sequence of the text or narrative. The thematic reading highlighted aspects that I had not perceived prior to the analysis, producing a different and deeper reading of the text, enabling me to extract more from the original story.

Figure 18: 2008, *Gertrude*, original installation (view)

*4: Two lovers unite, bound by the bonds of love and desire, a passion unwilling to be constrained by convention. But met in innocence, their union, naïve and without precaution, becomes clouded by the shadow of new life, and beauty dies away, as cold reality dawns, causing them to part.*

*Her love departed, abandoned and disgraced, she trembles for pity of her strife and pain, and turns upon her thoughts, that lead her to the water's edge...*

In a single image, visual communicators tend to 'read' or deal with a story as a totality, as an illustration or overall impression of something; what Barthes describes as a 'final ensemble' (*S/Z*: 12). This would also involve considering the arrangement of visual and verbal elements, treated separately. The blouse was originally designed symbolically and figuratively as a 'final ensemble'. I had used its apparent antiquity to reference and signify the past, and because it is made of delicate silk chiffon this was used to suggest the person and fragility, connecting with the theme of the story. Barthes argues that fiction is made more writerly and plurality by moving away from a 'great final ensemble', by demonstrating that words, language and narrative extend possible meaning through fragmentation and connotative migration. As a result of my investigations, I have found that this is equally true in respect of visual material.

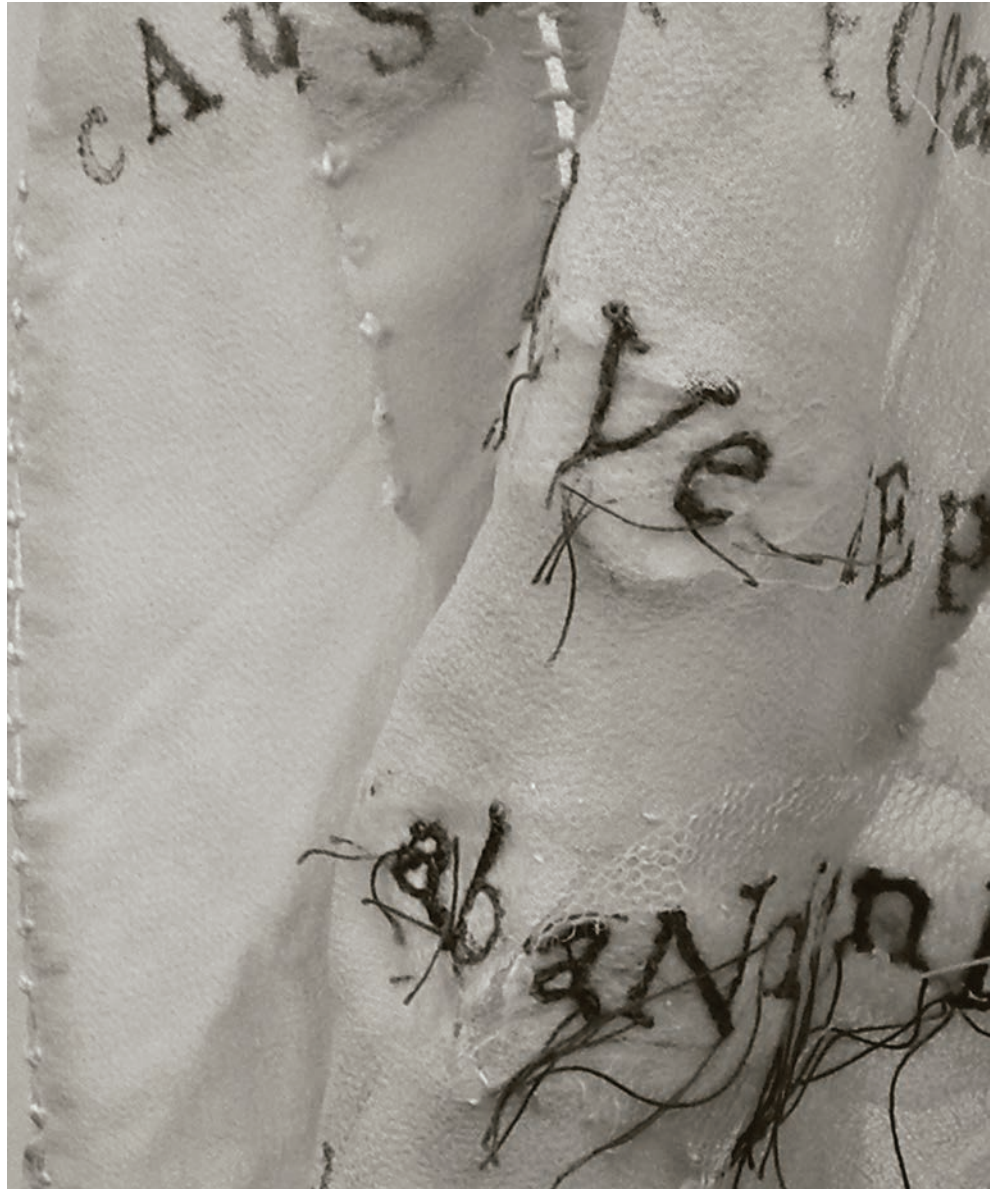
The textual correlations I observed through 'reading' this work through Barthes' thematic codes subsequently impacted on my thinking, as to how this garment could be composed more harmoniously as *part* of the story. In the original design I had not considered that my text could have been incorporated with the surface textures, marks of construction or decorative features of the blouse; to make the text correlate with elements of design and construction. *S/Z* led me to reconfigure the blouse to accommodate the story, and the story's implications and imagined emotions.

As part of this research, I also looked at different 'zones' of the garment, and how this could be connected with the story and imagined emotions associated with it. These features, I came to see, could have been developed as an integral part of the narrative expression. For example, the decorative knots and filigree patterns on the blouse could be made to correspond with poignant words from the story, such as 'love' or 'unite'. The text and story could be designed more sensitively, for instance gaps created by the decorative embellishment (blanket stitch in figure 19, centre top) could be linked with the text such as 'abandoned'.

I examined the potential of folds and folding of the blouse in order to produce new configurations of the story; using folds to create different links between words and the physical surface. This produced 'difference' (of story, of meaning and of connotation) created by the multiple permutations and enigmatic potential of folds. The recesses and edges of folds were also developed to enhance the narrative potential of the text in relation to the story, such as highlighting text on the edge of a fold or concealing text, and therefore the story, in the hidden recesses. An example of this work can be seen in figure 19. Contemplating *lexia* in this work also drew my attention to what happens surrounding any visual or verbal elements, whether on or off the page.

Folds and folding allowed me to develop text using the surface to give visibility and physicality to language. Examining migration through text and my materials had the effect of augmenting the enigmatic and implicit meanings potentially present in my work; whether through the words, threads, textures, contrasts or immanence by creating 'drama at the level of the sentence' (Culler, 1975: 106).

These examinations encouraged me to re-consider how I develop visual and verbal elements in my work. Figure 20 shows a different outcome of this investigation, where I looked at ways to make text both visual and verbal; reading the word linguistically



and visually; and by considering how this relates to the narrative. My use of folds in this research was also informed by the examination I made of my materials, as inaugurated by *S/Z*, discussed in more detail in the chapter *Tissue Texts*.

Crops and edits to this story (visual and verbal) were developed photographically and through various forms of wrapping, boxing, and containing. Different formats and configurations of composition enabled me to variously edit and highlight different aspects of the text, working with the new 'data' from the text which had resulted from my 'reading' it through Barthes' codes. Analysing texts through the literary codes produces subtle differences through migration and connotation; these differences add alternative perspectives, emphasizing different aspects of the same story derived from the same starting point.

Figure 19: 2008, *Gertrude*, exploring lexia and codes in clothing and text, folds and thematic correspondences; visual/verbal

I also looked at types of lighting to test the impacts that different light sources might have on the text and reading; and how light could be used to extend the possibility for meaning, such as through shadows. Examples of light sources include candle light, sunlight and spotlight. Fragmenting the text, story and garment through the concept



of codes and lexia enabled me to create multiple 'versions' of the same story. This was achieved without having to destroy the garment.

My critical appraisal of lexia and the codes enabled me to produce and develop this story in ways I had not considered prior to my research. The reconfigurations I developed in response to Barthes' concepts changed the way I think about composition; as a result my tales have become increasingly more fragmentary and enigmatic.

The concept of migration is important. Lexia are 'units of meaning' which may be syntagmatically and narratively distanced, but which provide correspondences *within* a story, but dispersed connotatively *throughout* a story; providing different perspectives on the same text. In my early responses to *S/Z* I had overlooked the fact that the codes and lexia work *together*. My practical investigations, and critical reflections on this research, altered my responses to *S/Z*. A reflexive dialogue between theory and practice caused me to re-think the relevance of lexia and codes – in respect of not only fiction but also how those concepts could be adopted as credible and productive methods and approaches in visual practice. This subsequently altered the ways in which I communicate through my story telling. I looked at the work of other practitioners using my research questions as a basis for examining their visual methods. I also used them to help me notice or log any changes in my own evolving approaches and knowledge (a brief example is included in Appendix three).

Figure 20: 2008, 'that lead her to the waters' edge', fragmentation and cadence of a story; examining the visual/verbal

In his work, Barthes continually encourages us to challenge how we read things, to resist the effects of 'assimilation'; and to 'challenge received ideas and question the orthodoxies which inevitably dominate' (Allen, 2003: 4). I have attempted to keep pushing my process, methods and thinking. My responses to *S/Z* have undergone continual reflexive analysis, observing what, and how, to assimilate from Barthes. My practical investigations with Barthes' codes have provoked me to reappraise some of

my pre-existing visual methods and approaches, including the ways in which I gather and process information; how I consider my materials and approach composition; and how I develop verbal elements in my work. As well as changing my visual practice, this new thinking has, in turn, had the effect of altering my comprehension of some of the literary ideas – lexia and the codes being a prime example. Mitchell states that ‘difference is just as important as similarity, antagonism as crucial as collaboration, dissonance and division... as interesting as harmony and blending’ (Mitchell, 1994: 89).

## ‘Dear Meg’ – the Semple letters and S/Z

I initially analysed the letters through Genette’s narratological codes, as discussed in *Narrative Discourse* (following in the next chapter); this accounts for the chronology of research. In the light of the success of that analysis I returned to S/Z, in order to examine the Semple letters through lexia and the codes – making a second, and different, narratological reading. This later investigation of the letters through Barthes’ codes cannot discount the insights gained from my analysis using Genette’s narrative codes. This is particularly true of the codes of mood and voice, which produced significant changes in my thinking and approaches to how I consider characters, perspective and narrative space when reading and also responding to the letters.

In the discussion that follows relating to Jock’s letter and Barthes’ codes, there are points made which are also discussed in relation to Genette. An example of this is the nurse, and her rejection of Jock’s marriage proposal on the grounds of ill health. Here, this aspect is explored from a social and medical perspective, and in Genette the focus is more on personal and emotional aspects. Some of my findings have relevance to Barthes’ codes, but are also further elaborated on in the next chapter, as appropriate. The two literary theories deal with different aspects of narrative, each of these theories provided me with different ways to read the letters, producing new perspectives and deeper insights into the letter, revealing details that visual methods would not have produced.

My background in visual communication (previously defined) meant that as well as decoding the letters (which are both visual and verbal) through a narratological perspective, it was also analysed using visual methods. The fusion of approaches – the literary and visual – gave me fresh insights on some visual methods. An example of this is linking the physical position of a word with the potential network of meanings of that word, whether linguistic or other, and how these may connect with elements in the narrative; rather than looking at the signification of the visual position of a word on the page.

As I had found in works of fiction and when analysing visual material, the identification and isolation of individual codes in the letter was not always a straightforward or simple process. There are overlaps and similarities between the codes and this makes it problematic to assign a particular code to a word or block of text. For instance, to be ‘in the trenches’ can be linked to all of the codes. What it actually felt like to be ‘in the trenches’ would differ depending on whether it was experienced first hand. For Will it is a present reality, he is in the moment, experiencing the ‘event’, dealing with the uncertainties of battle, facing danger, ‘*up the line to death*’ (Gardner: title). For Jock it



is a memory, a past reality, though he would have physical reminders of being in the trenches due to his lung wound (gas attack, shrapnel?). Meg, and those on the home front would have a secondhand knowledge of what it was like to be there, being able to build a picture based only on available references and sources of information. These more tangible links might be further augmented by what an individual might imagine of life in the trenches. These perceptions might be extended by hearing accounts of trench life from returning soldiers, which may have been filtered by the men in order to play down the horror, or perhaps because they felt unable to discuss it. Equally, media coverage was controlled by the government in order to keep up morale by continually presenting positive news and withholding accounts of losses and atrocities.

To be part of trench warfare 'in the trenches' had implications of danger. It is an action, to be physically present, but also has strong connotative/denotative elements, such as being in a wet, muddy and uncomfortable furrow in the ground. It has connotative and symbolic implications of danger, and all the horrors of the physical and psychological inferences we are aware of because of cultural and societal knowledge. An antithetical connection is that the trench, as well as being part of the battlefield, may also be connected with protection (however limited) in relation to attack from the enemy.

Likewise, to be in hospital raises a varying range of considerations involving all of the codes. Culturally we may 'know' the implications of 'to be in hospital' – beds, nurses, doctors, equipment, pain. Through contemplating this theme through the varying thematic codes leads to subtle connotations and migrations away from this starting point. This relates to being not just in hospital but being in hospital during the First World War, so moving the potential implications even further away from the initial point. The hospital may have been overseas, opening up the idea that Jock may have met the nurse in a different country, somewhere near the trenches perhaps, or Malta, where many war wounded were sent depending on their condition. If the nurse was refusing to marry because of a heart condition, then being a nurse during war time raises other implications (the hermeneutic). If she was too weak to marry then would it also follow that she would be too frail 'to nurse' – an activity well documented as being very hard work during the First World War, for instance because of working conditions, or having to deal with high numbers of wounded soldiers, and the severity of some of their wounds. It is more likely that she was a nurse in England dealing with rehabilitation and soldiers returning home, rather than being near the front line.

The Simple letters and archive raise many uncertainties. These are filtered through numerous layers. The story – what happened to the characters? Did Meg meet someone else? I have the answer but choose not to reveal it. As stated previously, I have attempted to maintain a distance from the 'reality' of the characters, avoiding any personal associations or links to an identity. Further questions raised include did the nurse 'relent' and eventually marry Jock, or someone else?

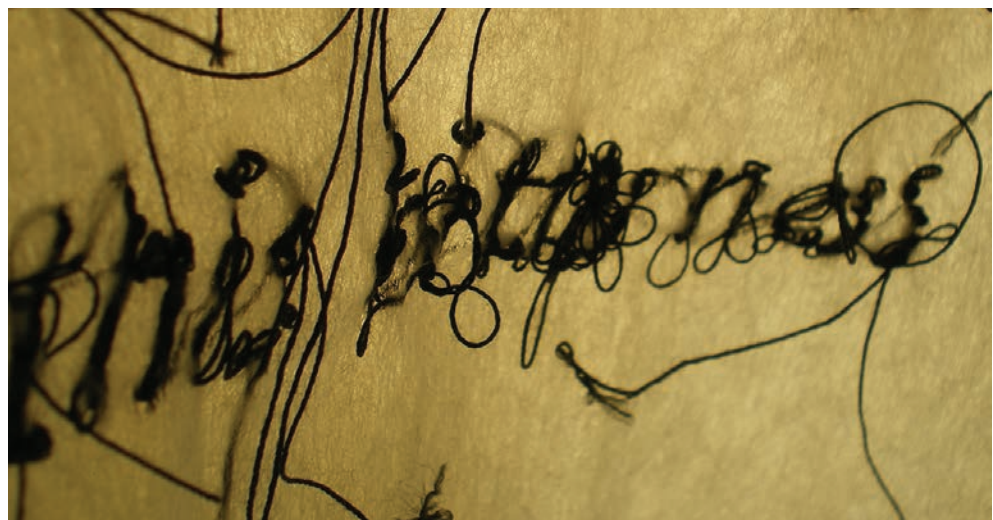
The incompleteness of the letterform lends further enigmatic qualities to the story world. The one-sidedness creates further enigma since it contains only a single perspective on what might be considered a conversation, one that has many ellipses and unanswered questions. Edits to a letter may be designed to inform, but equally can be used to conceal and deceive, to keep the reader happy, oblivious, through

economies and absences. The letter and its relationship with the Imperial War Museum has the potential to be considered as a 'memory' – a trace of the past – and the passing of time play a part in the enigma found in the source material. The museum describes Meg's card as a 'draft' reply – but in what sense was it a draft? A practice for the real thing (she makes a mistake, running out of room for the final word – 'bitterness') or referring to the act of writing, implications of her intentions? This poses the question, did she make a new copy and send it?

In response to noticing this, I examined 'bitterness' in a series of practical investigations with Meg's draft reply. I explored the word by looking at its physicality, texture, linguistic meaning and its significance in the story. Using Barthes' concept of migration to explore the relationship between the visual and verbal, I examined ways to develop the visibility and effects of language, or language in use, in relation to the word and surface. In figure 21, building on earlier research with the visual/verbal in my work, I was interested to look at the word bitterness through phonics, or speech sounds, as a way to consider different potential of the word and its links with the story and time; a method I had not considered previously.

The 't's produce a hard sound and so were emphasised with thread and knots, linking with the linguistic implications of the word (in respect of the story particularly). The 's' at the end of the word, and correspondingly at edge of the page, were similarly linked to speech sounds and potential significance, using thread and looping. This was a further way in which I could investigate how to make language 'visible'. Looking at the word through phonics, and tying this in with the visual and physical development of the word led me to consider how 'bitterness' carries across time. In emphasising the edge of memory, and referencing lexia and the narrative space, I looked at the distance between the word 'bitterness', the original time of the story, time passing and the present. 'Bitterness' is left permanently on the edge of the page; the word, its meaning and linguistic effect endures across time, like an echo. The word is given particular narrative prominence by becoming the final word on the relationship between Meg and Jock.

Meg kept the letters and her 'draft' reply for the rest of her life, possibly signifying their importance to her. There are multiple stories found in the letter, what Genette describes as 'meta-narratives' that are not part of the main story (discussed in more



*Figure 21: 2014; 'endure and survive this bitterness'; linguistic meaning, emphasis, narrative space and time passing*

detail in the following chapter). For instance, what was the fate of Will? Did he return from the trenches? What is a 'Wireless Testing Station'? What work does Meg do? Her job title is 'Officer's Boy' (an ambiguous title, a post no doubt held prior to the war by a man). The letter and archive are enigmatic. There are references made to people, places and events, all of which remain mysterious, with missing information, gaps and spaces. The passing of time makes the characters and their stories ever more abstract and elusive, providing little or no resolution or answers.

Deconstructing the letter through the Proairetic code finds the actions 'to correspond' (to send and receive), 'to be in the trenches', 'to be in hospital', 'to be in love', and 'to be broken hearted' (these last two extend to Meg, Jock and the nurse).

Reading Jock's letter through the semic code led me to notice correspondences within the text that I had not noticed prior to my analysis. Jock refers to his friend Will in the opening paragraph of the letter, stating he is 'facing Fritz' (itself embracing all of the codes: did he survive? What must it have been like to be there? German-ness, the dangers of trench warfare, that he is 'dodging all sorts of things'. This evasion, the 'dodging' is echoed in the way in which Jock delays telling Meg about the nurse (repeating the word 'tell' three times – this repetition was also examined in response to Genette's codes). It may also correspond with Jock frequently changing his location, he states 'tell them where and how I am', suggesting he has relocated several times. Jock's expression 'didn't mean to ever tell' has symbolic antithesis; Jock was unable to keep his secret because he did then tell ('didn't mean' is also discussed in the next chapter).

The expression 'stand in your light' is, of its time, historically and culturally referenced. It also has deeply symbolic connotations, in that Jock is 'releasing' Meg from their relationship, in order (as he states) that she may find happiness with someone else – an antithesis is implicated through the darkness of their break up, to the bright hope or glow of a new romance. This may be Jock trying to highlight his own self sacrifice, made on Meg's behalf, in order to ease his guilt. Jock references Meg being 'fed up' at having to work so hard, another correspondence, as he is about to make her even more fed up! The nurse has sworn 'never to marry'; this self-sacrifice corresponds with the idea that Jock is also letting Meg go 'for her own good'.

A hospital, and Jock's time there are discussed. His wounds and recovery express antithesis (his wound/the nurse heals), as does his falling in love, but being rejected (happiness/sadness), and to him subsequently rejecting Meg, wounding her heart. Indeed, all three end up with broken hearts (wounded, but with no healing). The correspondence between Jock and Meg, presumably came to an end with this letter. Thus the pattern of sending and receiving ceased, whereas, in contrast, Jock mentions that the nurse continues to write to him.

There are many cultural references found in the letter, including those already mentioned. This is also evident in the use of language, the way things are expressed, such as in Meg's draft, 'the heart is not of me'. It may also be reflected in the way words are physically written, perhaps driven by conventions of the time. For example, Jock's use of a capital letter for Hospital, and Nurse. Official, printed material from the same year suggests that a similar extended use of capitalisation for words was not

uncommon (see Appendix six for examples). The media he used, pen and ink, are also linked to a time period. The Scottishness of Jock is evident in his name, Biggin Hill (in the address) was an airport in South London, the G.P.O the General Post Office, facts known to some, not all. The concept of being unable to marry due to having a 'weak heart' may reference attitudes to women during this moment in history (discussed below), rather than an actual medical condition. Many geographic, medical, gender, chronological and historical implications can be found in the letter.

The symbolism and meanings of the words in the letter, the specific use of language, would likely be more clearly understood by someone reading the letter in 1917. Expressions used reflect the time period – 'yours to hand' (figure 22) – Jock's way of referring to Meg's letter previously received, may not be understood by someone in the present day. Genette notes, 'we read the past by the light of the present' (Genette, 1972: 265) – when looking back at events in the past, it will be through our own subjectivities and knowledge that we hold as part of a different chronological context. Being in the present may help us to understand events of the past by providing a different perspective obtained through the objectivity that distance and time allow. Equally some aspects may remain oblique to us, because of the distance in time and different ways in which we approach and understand things.

The people in the Semple story are shifting signifiers of absence/presence 'leaving nothing of permanence except those fragments' (Ewing: 9). Meg and Jock are partially known to us, there are some physical links with them and the past through names, dates, places, photos. These details allow the viewer to piece together – to imagine – their lives, but they remain, nevertheless, elusive, since only limited information is known, and time separates and distances us from the detail. Will is mentioned in passing. He is left permanently in the trenches in this version of the story, perpetually facing 'Fritz'.

The elusiveness of the nurse is particularly evident, she has no name, no identity and is more intriguing because of this. Her absence and obliqueness are emphasised by this enigma. Her life appears so tragic, she is even further removed from view and from the story. Her 'character' is harder to grasp because of this distance, ethereality and mystery. The medical references that impacted on her decision to reject Jock's marriage proposal make her story even more compelling. As discussed, she had a 'weak heart', a 'condition' that may have been fuelled by class or cultural influences. Women were sometimes encouraged to consider themselves as 'frail', too weak to marry, or engage with wider society. In the early twentieth century women were often encouraged to remain single in order to look after aging or sick parents (Nicholson, 2007: 157). It was considered their duty. Either of these may be true of the nurse, the cause of her heart condition may be of dubious origin, being described by Jock as 'due to rheumatic fever *or something*' (my emphasis). Nicholson states that 'at the turn of

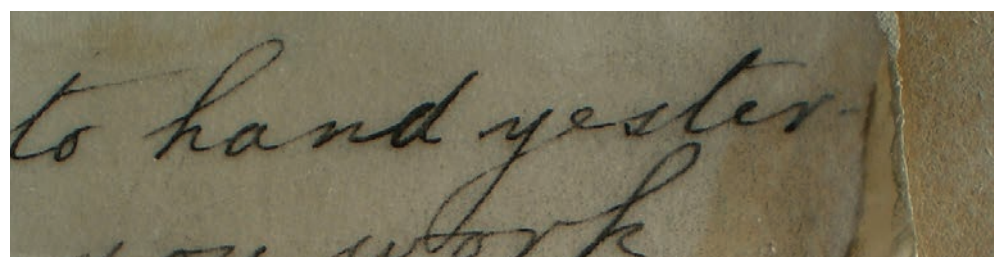


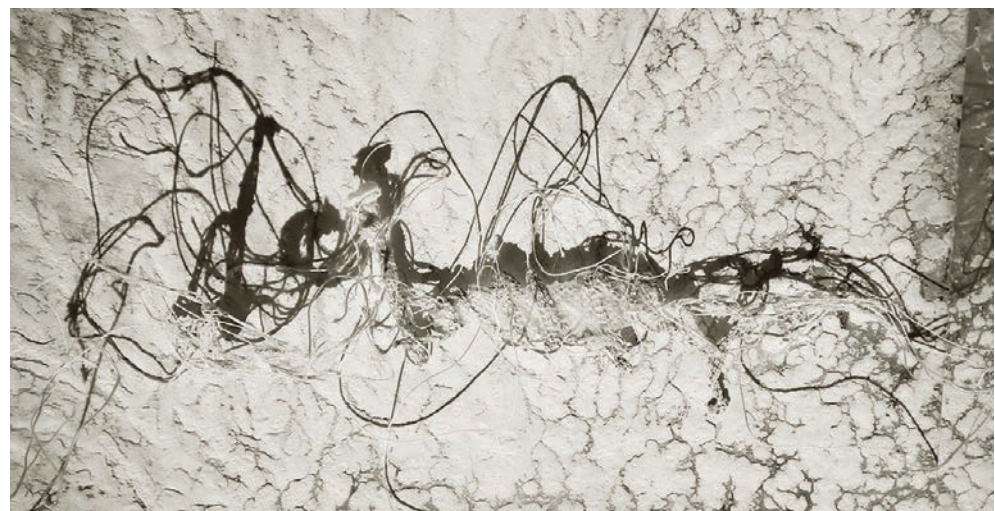
Figure 22: 2014  
'yours to hand'

the century an estimated 300,000 women were at home looking after their elderly parents' (Nicholson, 2007: 158). If this, or the notion of considering herself, perhaps unduly, 'frail' were the case with the nurse, (bearing in mind she must have worked hard as a nurse), this would make her life changing decision not to marry, an unnecessary and tragic one.

A further example of the different readings and correspondences found as a result of my analysis of the letter through Barthes' codes was through the theme of 'departure'. Genette comments that 'as soon as there is an action or an event, even a single one, there is a story, because there is a transformation, a transition from an earlier state to a later and resultant state. 'I walk' implies (and is contrasted to) a state of departure and a state of arrival' (Genette, 1988: 19). Departure has relevance to Jock, Meg and the nurse. Jock is absent geographically from Meg and the nurse, he is absent romantically from Meg and the nurse, one by choice, the other by design. Meg has been separated from Jock by his rejection of her. The nurse has been parted from Jock by her poor health. The passing of time is another form of departure, as the characters and the story move further away, distanced, as time elapses between the past and the present.

A departure has been made from the original intended reader of the letter (Meg), to its subsequent life in the archive, to my reading, and further still from the original in my explorations and visualisations. The theme of departure spans across all of the characters, the letter, the archive, linguistic meaning, physical, emotional and conceptual aspects.

I investigated 'departure' through this thematic link, testing ways to develop the visual/verbal dialectic, and how this may be linked with narrative space and time passing. Figure 23 shows stitched text, which has been given extra possibility for meaning through sunlight and shadow. This blurs the boundaries between what is text and what page. This enigma is further highlighted through contrast, between dark and light, and by using different textures. The space between the linguistic word, the stitched letters and the shadows of the letters produce multiple layers of narrative and traces of potential meaning, however oblique; merging text with the surface. In visual communication, the page is a background on which text and image are separately arranged. In testing Barthes' ideas through my practical work it provided different ways for me to approach the organisation of visual and verbal elements and how they



*Figure 23: 2014 'she remains with me just the same, and won't be forgotten'; departure as traces of the characters*

interact with the page, and so prompted me to re-consider the surfaces I use in my story telling.

I noticed links between Jock's letter and Meg's draft reply. The theme of 'endure' runs across both – a correspondence leading to new correspondence. Meg uses the words 'endure and survive this bitterness', demonstrating her heartbreak and unhappiness. Jock says 'whilst I must go on, waiting and hoping...', and 'if you ever hear of me...'. The nurse endures her weak heart and the resulting impact on her life. 'Endure' also has relevance to the collection in the museum, that a kind of memory, a trace of those past lives survives; this story or parts of the story endure (figure 24), by remaining in the archive.

The themes of 'departure', 'endure' and 'bitterness' are aspects that are not what might be considered to be part of the main story, the subject matter, they are subtle themes found beneath the surface. These thematic correspondences were noticed through my analysis of the letters using Barthes' codes and lexia. Literary perspectives opened up a greater narrative potential of the story, by enabling me to notice such subtle details. This information gives the characters the possibility of moving outside the main story, to escape the words on the page. This produced deeper insights and new ways to consider the letter, its story, and characters.

The handwriting of Meg and Jock can be linked to what they say and how they say it. The tone of what they say, their differing ways of corresponding, might be considered to be reflected in their handwriting styles. Jock's hand is fluid, cursive, it leans forwards and correspondingly his language is open and conversational. He asks many questions in his letter, he ponders, discusses. His letter spans two and a half pages and its material substance is lightweight. Meg's writing and language is solid and more finite. She closes the discussion between herself and Jock through her choice of words, 'not for me to tell you...' and 'I must'. Her draft reply is written on a single side of an opaque postcard. Perhaps her final act of closure was in not sending a reply? Meg kept



Figure 24: 2014,  
Meg's 'draft' reply,  
'endure'; time  
passing and trace

this draft, it remained with her throughout her lifetime. Whatever her reason for keeping it, in doing so it maintained a connection with events of the past, acting as a tangible trace of a past experience. These aspects of the materiality of the letters are discussed in the following chapter.

The thematic codes, as discussed, were one way to explore the letter. I also logged the denotation in the letter, this produced similar results to those gained by dividing the letter into the events and narrative in response to *Narrative Discourse*, and so will be outlined in the following chapter. Additional analysis of the letters was made, including looking at numeric data in respect of the letters (see Appendix seven for examples).

I was able to make correspondences in the letter that worked outside of any logical or linear flow of narrative, such as 'heart break', 'dodging' and 'departure'. Mapping the letter through lexia and the codes revealed previously unnoticed connections, drawing attention to divergent, narratively distanced potential meanings in the text, or meanings immanent in the text; those beyond any syntactic or narrative ordering. This migration of meaning produces different emphases, hierarchies and coordinates, whether internally between the people and events, or externally to the distance in time, the edges of memory, with society and the past.

I examined lexia and thematic links I had identified in the letter, using stitching and thread to create correspondences between different sections of the letter, not connected with the linear ordering of the text. Figure 25 is an example of this where stitches were used to create links across the story. In this work I was attempting to put lexia to the test, using perspective to pull the viewer into the story world, to reference the entire story whilst also being focused on one part of it. I considered how lexia, and this angle, could link the past – the original time of the letter – and the present reading of it. The framing and perspective were also composed to highlight correspondences potentially immanent in the text. Thread and knots were used to provide emphasis to particular words, and also spaces on the surface of the letter. Comprehending that lexia have the potential to work across the entire story altered my thinking in respect of how I considered and composed this tale, regarding 'the page' as more expansive narrative space. Different sections of a story can be connected using lexia, working outside the actual meaning or organisation of the story.

I also looked at the relationship between the visual and verbal in this work, taking migration as a framework to inform how I developed the text. I made a facsimile of the handwritten letter and used stitching, thread and knots to give mobility to language, to extend the words and narrative away from the surface of the page. This was also augmented by shadows which created a further movement away from the initial word, blurring the boundaries between the visual and verbal. The examination I made of my materials and processes also informed this work, particularly in respect of stitching and knots.

Barthes' codes have provided me with new perspectives through which to assess the letters compared to those produced through my analysis using Genette's codes. The two literary theories complement each other and together expand the ways in which I could read, comprehend and respond to the letters.



Figure 25: 2013,  
thematic  
correspondences in  
the letter;  
visual/verbal  
relationship

### Readings and the writerly

Barthes invites us to challenge our assumptions, to re-examine how we 'read' or experience things, asserting that fictional texts have no fixed or established meaning. His framework of *lexia* and codes provide the potential for meaning to be made more plural and writerly, enabled through the reader and difference; through connotation, symbolism and culture. In *S/Z* Barthes demonstrates that even classic texts, such as Balzac's *Sarrasine*, have the potential to be more writerly, that difference is enabled by what each individual may bring to a text.



Barthes states that a text can only come into being by the act of reading (Barthes, 1977: 4). In his deconstruction of *Sarrasine*, Barthes may well have produced 'meanings' that were not intended by Balzac. My analysis of the Semples letters may also be questioned. My readings and interpretations of the story and its characters, whether cultural, emotional, physical or psychological may be far from the 'reality' of the lives of Meg, Jock, Will and the nurse. I have to return to my earlier statement about the 'truth' in telling tales. What is significant and has relevance to visual practice is the way in which a literary examination has produced different and non-visual ways to consider and unravel this source material. Additionally, *S/Z* gave me a greater awareness of the active role a reader takes, or may take in the construction of potential meaning of a work, which has relevance to how my own tales may be 'read'.

### ***S/Z* and memory**

In *S/Z*, Barthes discusses the plural, the writerly, and ways in which meaning may be decoded and understood through connotation, subjectivities and cultural referencing. These themes are also pertinent in respect of memory. Susannah Radstone comments that 'memory is to be decoded, not regarded as a lost reality rediscovered' (Radstone, 2000: 10). Memory may be considered as working in non-linear and plural ways, where selective remembering may focus on certain themes, or ways of recalling an event, like *lexia* and the codes, exposing differing impressions of the same thing.

The afterlife of memory, references the previous recollection rather than the 'original' event, as such memories are to be read as 'narratives of [interpretation and] meaning, rather than of the event (Radstone, 2003: 26). Memory can be linked to the writerly; an event may be remembered differently each time. It is evolutionary; is constantly subject to change through embellishment and reinvention, which may be according to differing moods, subjectivities or evolving knowledge – such as those which may come with age.

### **Fugitivity and the edge of memory**

Barthes' literary codes have relevance to, and have extended my conceptual approach to story telling. My aim of creating fragmentary tales, exploring the edge of memory relies on enigma, and looking beyond the content of the story. I have dealt not so much with the 'facts' (this happened, then that) but to notice what was going on beyond those facts, to examine and visualise the cadences and underlying rhythms associated with a story.

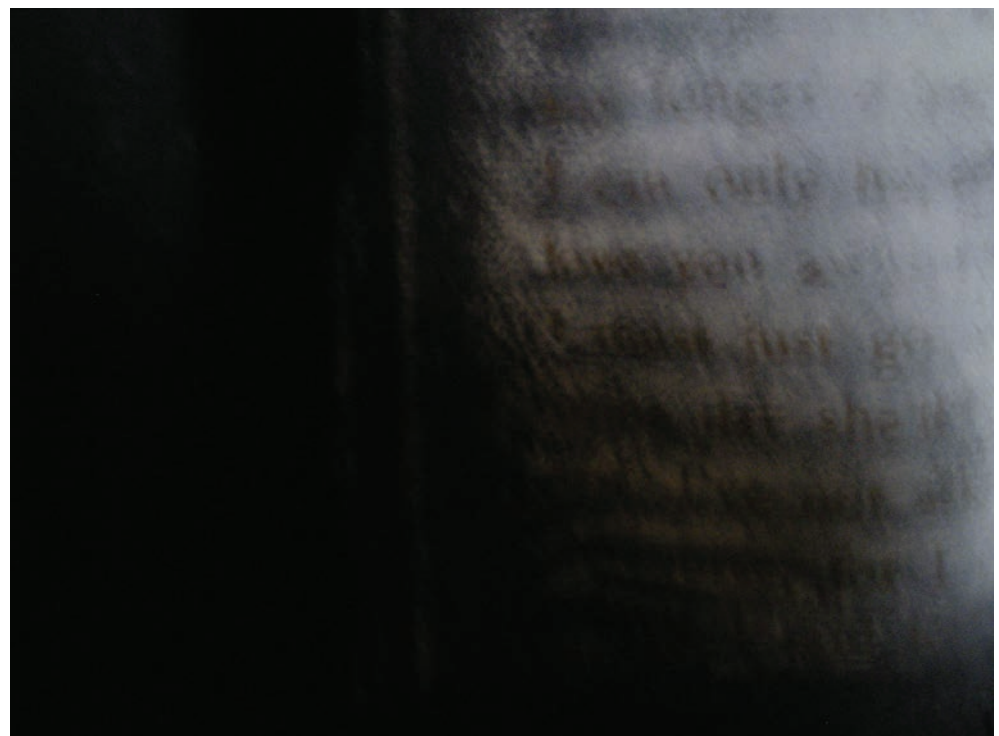
Different layers of thinking and potential meanings now inform my story worlds and may be visible, implicated, overlaid or inferred, 'sutured in a network of associations whether sensory, semiotic or metaphysical' (Mitchell, 1994: 154). My fragmentation draws heavily on connotation, on silent, elusive or immanent meanings. It is only the traces of a story that I attempt to visualise; a suggestion of possible meaning is made through both visual and verbal elements. How my tales may be viewed relies on a network of relations – 'reading' them makes reference to the already seen, heard and read, (the proairetic) and this writerly engagement produces a 'vision [that] takes us to something we have known before' (Leslie, 2003: 178).

Memories may be regarded as impressionistic, as interactions between remembering, forgetting and an unstable (story) world. The 'facts' or data relating to an event migrate away from a fixed truth or centre, detail is lost through forgetting and recollection in a flow of narrative. Barthes proposes that we read things with (questionable) ideologies or perspectives, this contention may also apply to remembering, to memory and the way in which we construct, or rather re-construct the story of our lives, based on (possibly) unfixed foundations, destabilising what we may regard as the truth (of our lives).

The passing of time also shapes and influences the way a story is recalled or recorded. This moves away from personal recollection to what endures of the original through time and distance. What I describe as the edge of memory references these traces of the past, a cadence of the original, which may be considered as what Barthes describes as 'flickers' of meaning.

Figure 26 shows an example of how I examined the edge of memory and time and trace (of a story) specifically referencing and testing lexia. I looked at lexia in relation to the development of the 'page' and the story world. I questioned whether lexia might provide the opportunity to link the past with the present; using the concept to provide correspondence between two times – the past and present – linked through the expansive narrative space of the story. Examining ideas from *S/Z* led me to reconsider 'the page', and what and where it may be; the darkness at the left edge of this 'tale' can be considered as a page, the past is connected with the present via that dark space and the blurring of the intersection between two pages, the transition between dark and light, between absence and presence, through the flow of narrative and time the Semple story comes to the reader in the present.

The story is brought into the present through the expanse of the narrative space running *across* the story world. This provides movement from the obscurity of the



*Figure 26: 2013, distance, time and fading; traces, and language at the brink of visibility*

past, across the surface of the two pages, and emerges in the present through a hazy visibility, making the story a trace rather than a record of something. In this way, the story, page and language move between two worlds, linked by lexia.

In examining Barthes' concept of migration and the visual/verbal relationship in this work, I developed the text to be enigmatic but also recognisable, on the brink of visibility. It can be seen and partially read and because of the perspective and framing, (and the mood I have attempted to create), the enigma pulls the reader into the story world, giving the 'tale' the potential to also be 'felt'; a way of linking the visual, verbal and literary.

Lexia enabled me to examine the edge of memory, and what it may entail. Despite my early reservations, Barthes' literary perspectives brought new thinking to my story telling. As well as providing new ways for me to analyse the source material; they have informed and altered my decision making, this has had the effect of altering my understanding of what it can mean to communicate visually.

## The migration of meaning: discoveries and impact

### Analysing source material

I questioned what *S/Z* might bring to the reading, analysis and understanding of the Simple letters (and other non-fiction). Lexia and semiological codes have the potential to produce different perspectives on the same story, increasing the ways in which it may be interpreted, how meaning may be polysemically present. Thematic layers provide different perspectives and insights from the same source, such as those noticed in Jock's letter and Meg's reply, discussed earlier.

Barthes' literary codes have provided a framework for extracting, processing and interpreting information differently to those used in visual communication. Literary analysis produces new 'data' not necessarily connected with the main story. Barthes states that 'the greater the syntagmatic distance between two data, the more skillful the narrative' (*S/Z*: 22). Deconstructing the letters through lexia and codes brought about significant changes in how I have analysed and responded to my source material. It has encouraged me to have a less finite view of the story, to look beyond the totality, providing a method to read the story through its traces and cadences; those found beneath the surface. This not only has significance to visual practice, but also has relevance to those who may be concerned with reading or working with non-fictional texts, such as letters and so may also be of interest to epistolary scholars.

### The stereographic space – examination of materials and processes

My investigations with Barthes' codes and the 'stereographic space' led me to examine my materials and processes through different and layered viewpoints, both physical and metaphysical. As a result of this investigation I developed more acute

perceptions and heightened sensitivities to my materials and processes, subsequently informing my story telling. Having an awareness of the possibility of migration through multiple conceptual 'voices' extends the possibility of those materials, informing visual and verbal elements in story telling, as well as approaches to composition. The examination and its impact on my practice is discussed in the *Tissues Texts* chapter.

### 'Visible language' – suturing the visual and verbal

I have questioned what *S/Z* might offer in respect of producing different conceptual approaches to the visual/verbal relationship. I have attempted to intertwine the visual and verbal in my work in order to increase the narrative potential, by bringing into play 'new types of relations from language's infinite set of possibilities' (Culler, 1975: 246).

Ekphrasis references different creative representations of the same thing, 'to bring before the mind's eye (Mitchell, 1994: 153) two (or more) perspectives, designed to help us to see something more vividly. Authors use linguistic signifiers to enable the reader to follow a fictional narrative, helping the reader to 'see' the story. Visual language works towards appealing to the senses, to lead to certain feelings – interpretation and potential meaning is then made through linguistic language. When considering visual and verbal elements I have attempted to visualise language 'in use', to suture the visual and verbal, and the traces, impressions and oblique meanings which might be considered to 'press around' (Culler, 1975: 106) such words, language and narrative. I have developed my tales to be as much felt, as seen or read, encouraging the viewer 'to see... alphabetic forms with [their] senses, not just read through them or past them to the signified speech or concept behind them, but to pause at the sensuous surface of calligraphic and typographic form' (Mitchell, 1994: 147).

Figure 27 shows an example of early research examining a poem from the First World War. I was attempting to express the content and theme of the poem (love and loss) through the physical development of materials. I used almost transparent cloth as a backing for hand written text. The cloth was draped in order to create an ethereal,

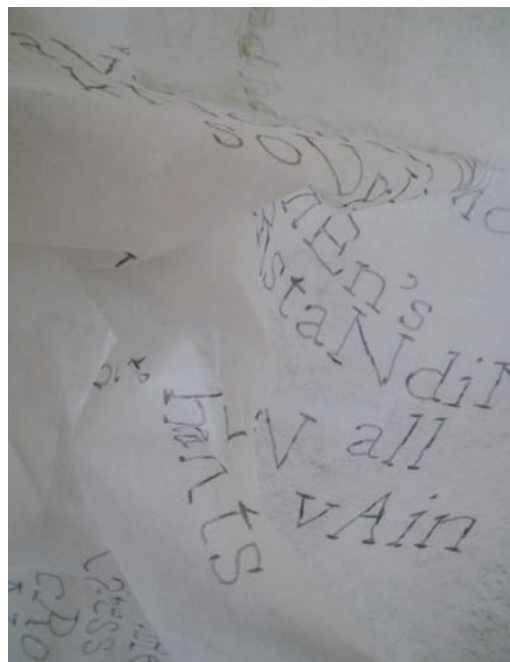


Figure 27: 2010, text and cloth, WW1 poem

hazy effect, and was composed to distance words from linear order. Additionally through the undulations and folds I was attempting to reference time passing, distance and forgetting.

In figure 28, this much later work examines similar ideas, but shows how my treatment of verbal elements is significantly different as a direct result of my increasing understanding of Barthes' concepts. The text is developed through a migratory perspective, attempting to blur the boundaries of the physical, visual, linguistic and sensory. The text has been extended and augmented by a layer of 'dust' (talcum powder) in order



to create a distance between the surface, language and meaning; and distance between the story and time passing. I have sought to make language and narrative 'visible' in my work, as well as (partially) readable. By developing language enigmatically in this way it produces 'a language which reveals what it does not say – precisely because it does not say it' (Culler, 1975: 105).

I have established a dialectical relationship between the visual, verbal and literary. Barthes' concept of migration made a significant impact on how I develop visual and verbal elements in my story telling, producing new methods and processes in respect of my materials; and how I compose my work. This framework has relevance to those whose practice also involves both visual and verbal representations.

### The page unbound – lexia, materials and composition

Barthes shows us how meaning and narrative run *across* a story; to deny text its 'naturalness' and disrespect the narrative logic in order to establish multiplicity. Lexia and the migration of meaning encouraged me to think about narrative away from the linear order or narrative logic. This conceptual mobility opens up the story world and its potential. In respect of visual composition this idea offers different ways to consider the organisation of narrative and space. I questioned what and where the page may be, and how visual and verbal elements might be correlated with a page or pages; whether such pages are physical or implicated; and what differences any interactions or processes I may put these pages through may make in terms of any narrative expression.

The thematic reading I made of the 'Gertrude' text and blouse (discussed earlier) outlines some of the compositional changes that have resulted from my research. This includes how lexia encouraged me to make connections between a surface (whether paper, cloth or other) with specific sections of the narrative, linking specific words

*Figure 28: 2014, visible language, dialectic of visual, verbal and literary*

with details on the surface, such as decorative embellishment (knots for example) or surface patina, and to consider clothing through its construction and how this can also be used to inform the narrative expression.

I no longer treat clothing as a 'final ensemble', a complete or figurative garment, as had previously been the case. Clothing in my story telling has increasingly been developed through fragmentation and abstraction. This may be through such things as working with the construction of a garment (bodice, sleeves etc), through surface textures, seams and points of tension (such as elbows), fastenings, intersections, internal spaces, or the traces of making/use over time. These elements of construction can be correlated with any text, and incorporated into narration and developed as an integral part of the story world.

Barthes literary concepts have the potential to bring different thinking and approaches to composition, extending those methods used in visual communication. Other compositional changes have also taken place in my work, in response to my research with lexia and the codes, which work outside of the linear ordering of narrative. This encouraged me to think about my tales as a more expansive narrative space, whether physical or implicated, an example being my work with text and ice. These changes in my approaches to composition are further discussed in the *The Landscape of Narrative* chapter that follows and in the *Tissue Texts* chapter.

### Symbiosis – practice and S/Z

Returning to S/Z in respect of literature, in a critique of his codes Culler notes that in respect of the referential code that cultural backgrounds are not the only models of human wisdom, arguing that Barthes' dissection of *Sarrasine* does not account for this. He continues, referring to the 'problems of differentiating between the other four [codes]' (Culler, 1975: 203), as I had found in my analysis. Culler also notes that Barthes does not deal with narration or perspective in S/Z, stating that his five codes are not exhaustive or sufficient (Culler, 1975: 203). Barthes provides a conceptual framework, it is evident that the codes are subjective, and in some senses ambiguous, but they have the potential to be overwritten. Barthes states that his set of codes may not apply to everyone and are not intended to be prescriptive, that each act of decoding may inevitably lead to alternate understandings. This is equally true of the overall concept of the codes. Barthes' ideas may be regarded as a starting point, if he does not deal specifically with perspective in S/Z, it does not detract from the point or purpose of migration, which lexia and the codes are entangled with.

The codes, lexia and migration have significance to visual practice. They are a productive way of analysing (reading) different thematic layers in non-fiction or other texts (such as letters). Through the codes such material can be analysed through various lenses and points of attention, producing more detailed readings. This provides the possibility for extracting information beyond the surface content; data that visual methods would be unlikely to produce.

Culler comments that 'Barthes system is fundamentally ambiguous', his starting point relies on 'collective knowledge and shared norms thereby giving the text a centre, which Barthes sought to refute (Culler, 1955: 243). Barthes specific codes may be

ambiguous, but they nevertheless highlight difference, and this difference brings richness, providing multifaceted and subtle nuances and connotations, extending and enhancing the quality of the 'data'. The codes may not be exhaustive but they are effective. Sturrock states that Barthes manages to 'flood [Balzac's] text with meanings' (Sturrock, 1979: 75). I have found this equally true in respect of my analysis of the Semple letters.

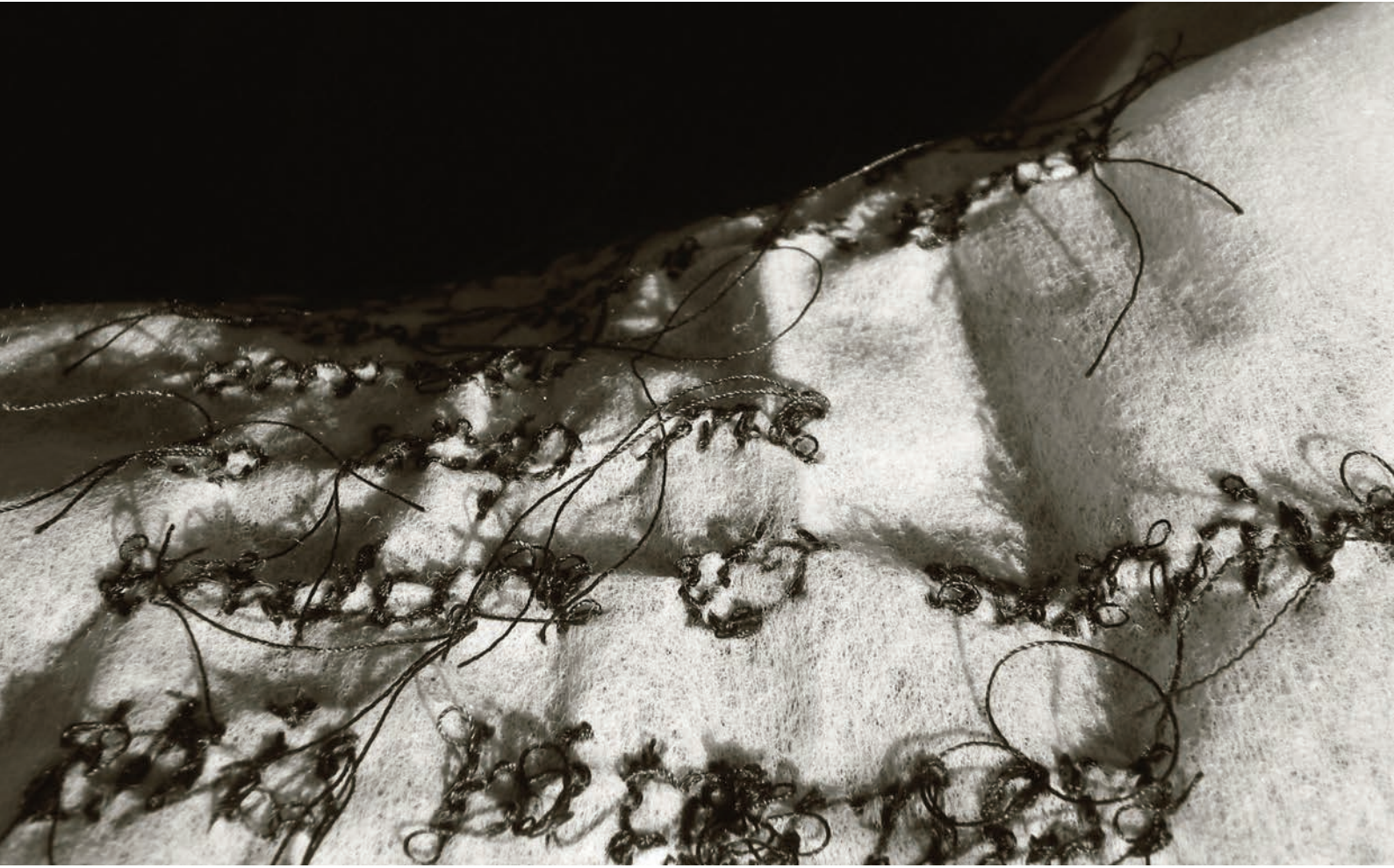
Literary codes examine the underlying systems at work in fiction, looking at how the text comes to us, rather than dealing with the 'meaning' of a work, to look at 'how texts mean, rather than *what* they mean' (Sturrock, 1979: 58, my emphasis). *S/Z* has changed the way I read and interpret my source material; it has altered how I regard my materials and composition; and has led to significant changes in how I develop the visual/verbal relationship in my work.

Barthes is 'an incomparable enlivener of the literary mind... to read him is to be led to think more intelligently and enjoyably about what literature is' (Sturrock, 1979: 52). Literary concepts have altered my understanding and knowledge. My story telling has been transformed by methods from outside the discipline of visual communication, producing new insights on visual methods and approaches. The chapter that follows, *The Landscape of Narrative*, discusses Genette's narrative theory, which has a different focus than Barthes'. I will demonstrate how my investigation of Genette's theory has complemented and extended the knowledge I have gained from my examination of *S/Z*.

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Chapter Three

The Landscape  
of Narrative

*'Narrative always says  
less than it knows,  
but it often  
makes known  
more than it says'*

*Figure 29: 2014,  
'endure and survive  
this bitterness'*

*Genette, Gérard,  
Narrative Discourse:  
an Essay in Method:  
198*

Genette's *Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method*<sup>1</sup> is – as the title suggests – an analysis of, and discourse on narrative; using Proust's *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* as its source. Genette's theory is relative to works of fiction. I have examined his literary concepts through my practice in order to investigate whether his codes have relevance to visual forms of communication (previously defined). My focus has not been to critically appraise *Narrative Discourse* in respect of its relevance in fiction or its analysis of Proust, but to evaluate its potential significance and impact on visual practice.

This chapter commences with an overview of Genette's key concepts before opening my critical appraisal of *Narrative Discourse* in relation to the Semple letters and my practice. Genette's theory is highly detailed, being relative to Proust's extensive text. As such, not all of the concepts examined by Genette are included in this overview. I have examined Genette's literary codes through a range of different methods. I have reflected on *Narrative Discourse* in relation to its relevance to visual practice; I have analysed the Semple letters through the key concepts of *Narrative Discourse* – such as the five codes order, duration, frequency, mood and voice. I have investigated the literary codes through the production of my own narratives, including looking at the relationship between the visual and verbal and composition. As part of these practical investigations I documented and evaluated my visual responses in relation to the theoretical themes, by assessing what was working (or not) in terms of my practice. My discussion will include the problems and tensions encountered when transferring and translating literary methods and approaches to visual ones; including how resolution to those problems was found. I will highlight the ways in which literary codes brought new thinking to how I communicate visually.

## *Narrative Discourse*

Genette states that *Narrative Discourse* is a starting point for discussion – that the ideas might be abandoned in time – what he describes as the 'detritus of poetics'. He refers to his theories not so much as a limiting grid, but more a 'procedure of discovery, and a way of describing' (*ND*: 265). Genette uses Proust as his major source to discuss his theory; *A la Recherche* comprises seven volumes – an exceptionally long fictional text. Genette's analysis makes specific reference to Proust's text (which deals with memory and time) and as such his discourse is complex and detailed. Genette also references other classical texts in order to discuss his concepts.

Genette separates the events (*histoire*) and the narrative (*récit*) – the ways and means through which those events are communicated. *Narrative Discourse* deals solely with the *récit*. The *récit* may be the physical means through which the story comes to the 'reader', the style and manner or may reference a narrator.

Genette devised the five codes of order, duration, frequency, mood and voice through which to initiate his discourse on narrative. Order, duration and frequency relate to time; and the relationship between time and how the story is told in varying ways. Mood and voice refer to the position, perspective and subjectivity of a narrator and the narrative. Genette's division of these two codes extends Todorov's classification of 'point of view', such that mood reflects the character whose point of view drives the

<sup>1</sup> All citations and references relate to Genette, Gérard, *Narrative Discourse: an Essay in Method*, unless indicated otherwise

narrative perspective; and voice refers to who the narrator is, and in what tense the narrative is told. Further, Genette shows that focalisation can be both internal and external – whether the narrative is described *through* a character, or *on* a character.

Genette discusses the metadiegetic, second degree narratives, relating to different layers of story which may be evident in fictional literature, which may be directly connected to the main story or be explanatory or subordinate to the first narrative. In relation to mood and voice these may be sub-divided into the extradiegetic, where the narrator is a character within the story, taking an internal perspective, where a main character may tell their own story, or a minor character may tell the main character's story. The intradiegetic refers to narration external to the story.

### Order

Order addresses the presentation of story and its relation to time, both story time and narrative time, 'a double temporal sequence' (ND: 33). Genette examines the different representations of time found within narrative (using Proust as his primary example) and also outlines the different relationships that exist between story, narrative, narrating and reading, and their connectedness with both time and sequence. Genette discusses narrative in relation to linear order through devices such as retrospection and anticipation, repetitive narration in respect of events, temporal sequence and chronological transgressions. He demonstrates how these discursive aspects of narrative can move the reader forwards and backwards in both time and story.

Genette notes that folk tales tend to run in chronological order. He uses Homer's *Iliad* as an example of a narrative which starts *in media res*, not at the beginning of the story – in this case midway, where the narrator immediately takes the reader back ten days in the story. Genette outlines the relationship between events (A, B, C and so on) and their relative position and order in relation to the story and time, and their location within the narrative. For example in Proust the beginning opens with '...for a long time I used to go to bed early' playing with tense and chronology in the narrative (ND: 46).

There is a discrepancy and discordance between reading order and real time, the sequence and chronology of events within the story and the narrating instance of those events. Narrative can only be consumed within 'real' (reading) time and even if a text's sequence is undermined by a 'capricious, repetitive or selective reading, that undermining nonetheless stops short of perfect analepsis' (ND: 34) – that is the text's potential to run backwards, which it cannot do. As Genette notes, 'books are a little more constrained than people sometimes say they are by the celebrated linearity of the linguistic signifier which is easier to deny in theory than eliminate in fact' (ND: 34). So although the story and narrative may be diachronous, reading cannot purposefully share this utility. Consumption (reading), according to Genette, is the empirical clock time needed to traverse the text; therefore the text has a temporality 'borrowed from its own reading' (ND: 34). A game is played between author and reader, as reader must acquiesce to a 'pseudo-time' within fiction, a suspension of 'reality' in relation to time passing in both story and the act of reading – the disrupted ordering and time of their own reading and therefore engagement with the narrative.

Disorder between the story time and narrative time is described as anachrony. Genette uses the example of the phrase 'three months earlier' to demonstrate that this comes after or later in the narrative, but refers to an event that happened earlier in time, *before* in the story. Anachronies are described as having a 'reach' and 'extent' – reach meaning that the anachrony may move from the present moment, either back to the past or into the future. Extent refers to how far that anachrony extends in relation to the duration of the story to which it relates, which can be 'more or less long' (ND: 48).

Analepses (from the Greek, to take on something after the event) is a reflection, recall or flashback, 'migrations or... narrative scatterings' (ND: 56), that can be used to fill in details, perhaps not covered by the first narrative. They may be used to contextualise events occurring within the first narrative through a second, possibly subordinate one. Heterodiegetic layering – analepses dealing with a story line different from the contents of the first narrative (sub plot) – may occur once or multiple times within the same story. The narrative layers may work harmoniously together or be in conflict, as the temporal shifts may vary in their reach and extent. They may be internal or external and therefore may start to undermine each other, fighting for dominance. Completing analepses return the retrospective digression back to the first narrative, which, having accomplished communication between two narrative levels, reunifies the text seamlessly 'whether trick, oversight, or offhandedness, the narrative avoids acknowledging its own footprints... paying no attention to the point where it rejoins the first narrative' (ND: 66). These metadiegetic layers are also discussed later in respect of mood and voice.

Earlier gaps in a narrative are described as ellipsis – something left out, passed by or omitted and only later referred to. A paralepsis is a lateral ellipsis, a side stepping of moments in time, skipping over details or events perhaps for reasons of enigma or interest. This may be two parallel threads in the story that don't necessarily have a temporal relationship with each other but do not conflict, like alternate moments that are related to the same events.

Prolepses (to take on something in advance) refer to anticipation or a flash forwards, and can be internal or external to the first narrative. This may be an advanced perhaps oblique mention of something or someone to follow, like the referencing of a character not yet encountered but who will subsequently be introduced into the story. A 'plot of predestination' (ND: 67) uses prolepses as a means of hinting or suggesting something, arousing curiosity that draws a reader deeper into the story world. The role these adumbrations play in the weaving of the narrative relates to the degree and explicitness with which they are expressed. This may be an 'advance notice', a clear or stated reference or take the form of an 'advance mention' – which is more subtle or allusive, only an 'insignificant seed... or even an imperceptible one, whose significance will not be recognised until later, and retrospectively' (ND: 76). This literary device may be utilised by an author to snare a reader through insinuation, trace or whisper. Genette uses the example of a first person narrative which 'lends itself better than any other to anticipation' (ND: 67), citing Robinson Crusoe who tells us almost at the beginning of the novel that his father warned him away from nautical adventures, as being 'truly prophetic' (ND: 67), an advanced notice of the content of the story.

## Duration

This theme relates to the duration of a narrative and varying degrees of emphasis, rhythm and pace found between story and narrative duration or a pseudo-duration. The story element may be short but be covered by a long stretch of narrative, for example one hundred years may be narrated in one sentence or a single moment may be narrated over many pages. Such alterations in emphasis and pacing relate to time and progression, a temporal texture, where the variation between narrative time and story time become 'a mist of rhythm and harmony' (*ND*: 112). Genette assesses the oscillation between the weight of an event and the hierarchical narration of that event. He demonstrates this using lengthy examples from Proust to show how much exposure and narrative time is devoted to a particular moment in the story and the variability possible therein.

The syntagmatic ordering of the narrative text, so that episode A can be shown to occur after episode B, provides structural order and the amount of textual emphasis to a particular episode varies the weight and importance that episode is ascribed. A relationship is established between an event, the amount of textual space allocated to the narrating of that episode, which will obviously affect the reading time necessary to absorb the details. There is no 'normal' speed of narrative, what Genette labels 'degree zero'. Degree zero in order is seen as the concurrence between diegetic sequence and narrative sequence. A story will be at a neutral starting point if the narrative is presented in dialogue form, the story and narration share the same point of reference in relation to time and space within the text. However, it is possible for the two elements to be out of sync, producing temporal fluctuations. These variable durational aspects provide 'increasing discontinuity of the narrative' (*ND*: 93), a discrepancy between the progression of the story, in relation to the duration allocated to that event within the text, measured in lines and pages. This anomaly between the temporal and spatial dimensions informs the speed of the narrative which will alter according to the ebb and flow of the story events and pacing of the narration. These variations are what control the rhythm and pace within narrative. Fluctuations in duration can alter the pace of reading by acceleration or deceleration of the narration.

## Frequency

Genette explores narrative frequency through the heterogeneity of the singulative and iterative within narration, showing how layering and peppering of repetition can affect the relational and emphatic balance in the narrative. A single event may be told once or be retold many times, multiple events may be recounted once, or articulated many times. Such relational vocalisations between the repetitive expression of story and those of the narrating instance can provide shifts in emphasis, as the story dictates. This repetition utilised as a relational device to shift the balance of hierarchy between, and of events can therefore lend varying degrees of authority to the narrative, as required.

Genette notes that in classical narrative iterative sections are almost always subordinate to singulative scenes. The normative – regular, ritual, everyday or similar events – utilise repetition to construct credibility. Genette uses the example of the '8.25 Geneva to Paris

train' (ND: 113) which he shows is a mental construct, that it is not always necessarily made up of the same carriages, engine and driver, but will still be defined as being the same train as far as the timetable is concerned. Frequency in this respect is explored as an abstract idea.

Repetitive shifts in and beyond a particular 'scene' might be used to build atmosphere, quietly painting a picture, reinforcing an idea, contributing to the overall narrative. Equally such multivalence can also be used to undermine or diminish the importance of a particular event or events as being commonplace.

In contrast, repeated narration of a single event can be used to heighten an incident's prominence, role or function within a particular section of narrative. Repetition can provide the opportunity to subtly or explicitly add enigma, interest or richness to the narrative. This form of syllepsis, a linking together of similar occurrences of nevertheless slightly differing incidents, uses recurrence and similarity to reinforce an idea. A singular narration of one event may similarly lend weight to an incident by the provision of one clear and positive statement.

This abstraction of repetition can be viewed in relation to a recurring yet variable event – a first occurrence which becomes a paradigm for others that follow. Genette addresses this concept as 'prolepsis' in the order chapter, but the idea is equally relevant to the concept of repetition in narrative, and so has relevance to frequency as well. He notes that through the memory of an anticipation, an irretrievable moment, an abstract experience 'envision[s] in advance, the whole series of occurrences that the first one inaugurates... so true is it that... the event – any event – is only the transition, evanescent and irretrievable, from one habit to another' (ND: 73).

An event can be reinforced or diffused by both order and/or repetition. Using Proust as his example, Genette shows how the first kiss ever and the first kiss with a new partner will, necessarily, be different hierarchically. He demonstrates the concept by stating,

*'the primultimateness of the first time: that is, the fact that the first time, to the very extent to which one experiences its inaugural value intensely, is at the same time always (already) a last time – if only because it is forever the last to have been the first, and after it, inevitably, the sway of repetition and habit begins' (ND: 72).*

The iterative may be internal or external to the scene within which it occurs and may have an internal or external diachrony, which may not necessarily be sequential or chronological and can therefore create temporal transference or relocation in narrative. This play and movement between scenes and throughout a text's sequentiality creates a connectedness of structure between the narrating instances. These repetitions demonstrate the entangled hierarchical structure embedded throughout narrative, shifting between the syntagmatic and the paradigmatic, providing narrative with richness and variation obtained through the diversity, luxuriousness and luminosity of language. Additionally, it demonstrates a degree of what Barthes refers to as 'reversibility' within a text, discussed earlier.

## Mood

Mood relates to the indicative position of a narrator within a narrative, which position they hold, whose perspective the story is told through, who orients the narrative and whose point of view is presented – the focalisation. The narrative may provide varying degrees of detail and keep a greater or lesser distance from the story it tells, and express different points of view from which the events or action is perceived.

Genette divides this function into sub-categories, as summarised below:

**Distance** – represents the different modes of showing versus telling, and may be metaphysical or spatial. It relates to how far the narrator is from the telling – they may be speaking as if s/he were someone else, mimicking a character that is internal to the diegesis, or alternatively may be speaking as themselves. Genette notes, ‘no narrative can ‘show’ or ‘imitate the story it tells. All it can do is tell it in a manner that is detailed, precise, “alive” ’ (ND: 164).

**Perspective** – Genette’s approach to perspective highlights the difference between mood and voice: who is the character whose point of view orients the narrative – who sees? And the very different perspective of – who speaks? Genette outlines the axial syntagmatic/paradigmatic relationship of perspective: between the horizontal plane of voice and the vertical plane of point of view (ND: 186).

	Internal analysis of events	Outside observation of events
narrator is a character within the story	a main character tells their own story	a minor character tells a main character’s story
narrator is not a character within the story	analytic or omniscient author tells the story	author tells a story as an observer

Genette demonstrates how varying degrees of perspective may be relayed in the text, so that a narrator/character may have an internal and/or external existence with, or within, a diegesis – the universe in which the story takes place – and whose knowledge of events may be viewed from both a pre- and post-experience narrating perspective. The author or character does not immediately tell us everything that s/he knows, this is *paralepsis* or a sidestepping of the initial ‘ignorance’ a character/author may project. An example of this is Watson narrates Sherlock Holmes from the perspective of looking back at the mystery, but where he describes events as if he does not already know what will happen.

**Focalisation** – this may be (a) non-focalised; (b) it may have an internal focalisation which Genette subdivides: i) fixed where everything passes through one character/narrator, and may involve the narrator having a ‘restriction of field’; ii) variable where the focalisation shifts between characters; and iii) multiple, where the same event may be evoked several times according to the point of view of different



characters, such as in epistolary novels; (c) it may have an external focalisation where a character 'performs' in front of us without our ever being allowed to know his/her thoughts or feelings. Further, focalisation may change during the course of a narrative.

**Polymodality** – relates to different focalisations that may be represented specific to one character and how shifts in their point of view may be possible. This narrating pluralism can act as a utility to allow a character's engagement and empathetic capacities to oscillate between clarity and opaqueness in relation to a particular section of the narrative through transgressive dialogue. Such multiplicity of perspectives may be used to allow the hitherto expressed feelings of one character to be abandoned to those of another, leaving the first in shadow. A mystery whose varying perspective and degrees of knowledge particular to a moment of action are transgressions used as narrative devices to allow alternate opinion, information or enigma to be presented or revealed. By allowing these discrete fissures in the narrative an author may be able to express the psychology of characters other than the 'hero'; be it explicit or implicit, internal or external. These ambiguous shifts in point of view may also be used to authenticate events or actions so that 'a certain amount of information... attributed to the ['hero'] who can walk through walls can be ascribed without prejudice to later knowledge' (ND: 207).

### Voice

This section relates to the identity, position and subjectivity of a narrator within the story world – that is the person, their position within the narrative – how they experience events and how they relate those events through either the past, present or future tense, or a mixture of these. The perspective of the narrator is also expressed through the relationship of any internal levels within the diegesis – which may be extra- intra- or metadiegetic.

**The narrating instance** – refers to how the narrative is located in the story. It may be enumerated through the narrator in first or second person, reflecting a (self) consciousness of narration, addressing the subjectivities or sensibilities of such a 'character', or it may be done by more objective observations. Narrating can only be subsequent to what it tells.

Genette notes that 'telling takes time' (ND: 222), indicating the relationship between time and narrative order; that the narrative should not (necessarily) overtake the story. He uses Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* by way of an example of the relationship between time and narrating, using a comic aporia recounted by Shandy:

*'in one year of writing having succeeded in telling only the first day of his life, he observes that he has gotten 364 days behind, that he has therefore moved backward rather than forward, and that, living 364 times faster than he writes, it follows that, in short, his undertaking is hopeless' (ND: 222).*

**Narrative levels** – are spatial and temporal layers embedded within a diegesis representing the varying distance the reader and/or narrator may have from the narrative and/or narrating. This can be put more simply as a story within a story. These levels may be wholly contained within the first level – to the degree that the first level frames and

concludes it – or that a character within the second level is already a character in the first and the act of narrating (which produces the second level) is done from the first one. Any event a narrative expresses is defined as being higher than the level through which its narrating act is articulated: this is defined as extradiegetic. Second level narrating acts recounted within the first narrative are intradiegetic, ‘the temporal action from the narrating act becomes gradually smaller until it is finally reduced to zero: the narrative has reached here and now, the story has overtaken the narrative’ (ND: 227). Metadiegetic narratives are second level narratives which may have an explanatory function, filling in detail not provided by the first narrative in which it is inserted, ‘most often, the curiosity of the intradiegetic listener is only a pretext for replying to the curiosity of the reader’ (ND: 232).

## Narrative Discourse, the Semple letters and practice

I have questioned whether Genette’s codes are a productive way of dealing with narrative, whether implicit or explicit, in my story telling. I have investigated concepts from *Narrative Discourse*, examining what they may bring to the reading and analysis of the Semple letters. I have assessed the ways in which Genette’s literary codes may produce different visual and conceptual responses to the development of that source; I have examined what the edge of memory may entail; and investigated what differences literary concepts may bring to visual forms of communication.



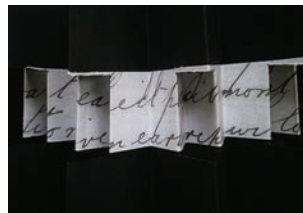
My early research with *Narrative Discourse* involved ‘reading’ the work of others in order to put literary codes to the test, assessing the relevance and credibility of making such a transferral from the literary to the visual. By looking at other practitioners work, rather than my own, it allowed me to make a more objective evaluation of the codes in respect of visual material. This study included looking at *Dada Poem Wedding Dress* by Lesley Dill (figure 30), a textile artist with an interest in narrative, texts and the visual/verbal, and

at *Reserve-Détective* by Christian Boltanski, who explores memory through his fine art practice. By periodically referencing the work of contextually relevant practitioners it enabled me to notice and document the ways in which literary codes were impacting on my thinking and process.

In these analyses, I found ambiguity between what constitutes ‘the story’ and what ‘the narrative’ in the sample pieces, particularly where no, or minimal text was evident. However, reading and analysing this visual material through the perspective of *how* the story comes to the reader and the comprehension of a ‘story world’ provided a different (non-visual) focus through which to read/view this material. My responses to Genette’s codes were influenced by my prior work with *S/Z*, and also by the on-going examination I made of some of my practice materials and processes, including clothing, stitching and folding, discussed in the following chapter.

Figure 30 *Dada Poem Wedding Dress*,  
Lesley Dill, 1994.  
(<https://www.pinterest.com/kelly3814/leslie-dill/20.7.15>)

There were aspects of *Narrative Discourse* that did not have recognisable relevance to visual practice. This largely relates to the extent and fine detail through which Genette unpacks all seven volumes and over 4,000 pages of Proust's text. Culler notes that 'in taking Proust's work as the basis for his study, Genette has had to take account of the complexities of the Proustian narrative, a 'severe test' of the codes (Culler, 'Foreword', in *ND*: 9). Many of Genette's concepts do not apply to either the Semple letters or to visual communication because of the hugely varying degrees of extent and/or complexity of story.



Genette's codes of order, duration and frequency have similarities with visual forms of communication; which also considers sequence, emphasis and hierarchy. I became aware, through documentation and critical appraisal, that my early practical responses to *Narrative Discourse* were more illustrative (figure 31), rather than specifically exploring what *differences* the codes may bring to visual forms of communication. However, as I shall discuss, by continuing to explore Genette's codes through my practice, I started to notice changes in the way I was working. My challenge has been to critically appraise Genette's codes specifically in respect of visual practice. As such, having examined them, I have eliminated some of the finer points and details of Genette's concepts from my enquiry; both from my discussion of his codes in respect of the letters and with regard to my practice. I have found ways to evaluate and translate other concepts in order to arrive at equivalence in visual practice.

An example of the detail Genette applies to his codes can be seen in his chapter on 'order'. He discusses anachronisms, both retrospective and anticipatory. Anachrony has relevance to my story telling, for instance I will go on to discuss the potential anachronistic reading order of the Semple letters in relation to the museum item description (page 77-78). Genette discusses diegetic layering, or stories and stories off to the side. This metadiegetic layering also corresponds with anachrony and retrospection in terms of memory, remembering and forgetting. Each recall or retelling of a story overwrites the previous, a continual process of erasure; the event and the memory of it are altered by time passing. What remains of a 'story' perpetually fades from the original, leaving a residue, and 'traces [which] remain, even after acts of erasure' (Leslie, 2003: 183).

However, Genette continues and expands his discussion of 'temporal dispersion' (*ND*: 65) by referencing external and internal anachronisms. He logs what may be an advance 'mention' as opposed to an advance 'notice' of something, pertinent to Proust's text. The subtle differences between a 'notice' and a 'mention' do not apply to the Semple letters. To observe that a correspondence is evident or immanent between two different sections of the letter, one referencing or preceding the other, provides a different (non-visual) way to analyse the letter, without the need to distinguish between these two very subtle terms. The letters are not works of fiction; Jock and Meg did not (consciously) plan or compose their correspondence in the way an author might, and certainly not in the way Proust did.

Genette further outlines how these anachronistic anomalies might not necessarily be relative to the *narrative* sequence but may be linked to the ordering of something else

Figure 31: early research with order, duration and frequency

within the story. In *Narrative Discourse Revisited* Genette uses an example from Proust relating to a train journey – through which he demonstrates that anachrony is evident relative to the *geographical* sequence of the journey, rather than in respect of a narrative sequence (Genette, 2005: 124). Although, as documented, anachrony has significance at an initial level, the extent that Genette pushes this theme relative to *A la Recherche*, although interesting in respect of that text, does not have specific relevance in visual material. Seymour Chatman comments on anachronies in *Narrative Discourse* that they are ‘not only simple but elaborately complex forms’ (Chatman: 221).

As well as the extent of detail each theme is subject to by Genette – such as the nuances and variations of anachrony – his discussion of them is also at times overly long which sometimes clouds his points in theory. Critics of *Narrative Discourse* have also questioned some of Genette’s terminology, and Culler notes in respect of Genette’s text of its ‘terminological exuberance’ (Culler, ‘Foreword’, in *ND*: 8). *Narrative Discourse* is a well-regarded text, but it also has its critics. For instance, Mieke Bal criticises Genette for ‘bringing the problem of duration into the chapter on mood [which] blurs the clarity of the latter chapter as a whole – which is all the more unfortunate, since in the area of mood, confusion reigns’ (Bal, 2006: 9).

Genette sometimes makes reference to other works of fiction in order to explain how the various codes are evident in fiction. However, he assumes the reader will have read all of the texts to which he refers; because of this he leaves out details or does not fully explain his point. Some ten years after its publication, Genette himself acknowledges that his original text is protracted in places. He comments on order and anachrony that ‘...on re-reading that (too long) chapter...’ (Genette, 1988: 27), also critiquing other sections of his original chapters as ‘certainly laborious ones’ (Genette, 1988: 24).

My research focus has been to examine and test literary theory in respect of visual practice – to respond to theory *through* practice – not to critique such theory relative to fiction. As such it has been necessary to stay focused on the research questions. Much protracted discussion could be devoted to discussing different levels of narration, and subtle diegetic configurations, and how these may or may not relate to the Sempé letters, but in relation to the research questions this would be a unnecessary diversion and would also exclude my practice. Genette notes ‘without “nonchalance” towards details that are not relevant to the question at hand, plainly no research is possible, for research is nothing but a series of questions, and the point is not to ask the wrong questions’ (Genette, 1988: 75).

Despite the extent of Genette’s detail, having an awareness of such minutiae has informed my thinking, such as noticing subtle differences in how a narrative is organised, which gave me more acute sensitivity to narrative elements in my materials, the letter and story telling. This encouraged me to regard my materials more closely, discussed later and in the following chapter. Over 80 different responses to the Sempé letters have so far been produced (in response to both Barthes and Genette), through a variety of formats, perspectives and approaches, some of which are included in this book and the accompanying practice and development book. Those covered so far include: the whole letter; several sentences; a few words; single words; and also responses have been made to corresponding themes noticed in the

text observed through my narratological analysis (such as 'departure' discussed in the previous chapter). The characters have been explored collectively and individually; including looking at perspective, emotions, psychology, hierarchy and narrative space made in response to Genette's codes of mood and voice. I have also looked at the story of the letters in the museum and my own engagement with them.

Despite his exhaustive analysis and discussion Genette nevertheless reveals alternate ways of seeing things in fiction. I have found this also has relevance in visual story telling. Genette offers a fresh perspective, providing a new pathway through narrative. Culler states, 'compelled by his special perspective to ask questions about what is usually taken for granted, he continually tells us things we [do] not know... he leads us to experience the strangeness of the text' (Culler, 'Foreword', in *ND*: 10).

### 'But there's something I want to tell you...'

Genette's literary theory provides a non-visual perspective on reading and analysing a story/text. Visual communication methods treat stories more holistically, by reading and looking at the totality of a story, and/or by then addressing the organisation of that totality (this happened, then that). It also considers similar themes to Genette's, such as sequence (a series of pages/what order they will follow), emphasis (position, size etc) and hierarchy (image/text), and how the story is organised visually on the page. Genette's analysis deals solely with the narrative rather than specific events, thereby unravelling the complex relationship 'between narrative, and the story it tells' (Culler, 72: 8). This division is not a method used in visual forms of communication. I divided and analysed the Semple letters through the dual perspectives of *histoire* and *récit*; between what I regarded as the 'events' and what the 'narrative'.

Highlighting the *histoire* in the letter exposes a sequence of events, categorised into episodes, where A is followed by B, and so on. These events represent the totality of the story as far as the content or 'facts' of the letter are concerned: (A) man writes to his sweetheart, (B) gives news, (C) references a friend in the trenches, (D) a preamble about himself, (E) then presents bad news, (F) the nurse, (G) her weak heart, (H) Jock's heartbreak, (I) his meeting Meg, (J) his ending his relationship with Meg, (K) continuing to write to the nurse, (L) asking for forgiveness, (M) signing off. In respect of this letter, the episode where Jock meets the nurse in fact comes earlier chronologically, thus in real life F, G and H occur before episode A, being events that occurred prior to Jock meeting Meg.

I examined the letters through the *récit*, how the story is organised, and the five codes of order, duration, frequency, mood and voice in order to investigate whether these literary perspectives enabled a different 'reading' of the letters, and if this subsequently produced different ways to respond to them. I examined the physical aspects of the letter's text, looking at words, and the letterform in detail. Jock's letter has a very distinct sensory materiality and many of my early practical responses to the story reflect those aspects. The beauty and distinct visual appeal of the original letter and handwriting is hard to ignore. I wanted to create some distance from this and concentrate on examining aspects that lay beyond the materiality or content, to investigate the cadences and edges of the story. Accordingly, I set Jock's letter in metal

and digital formats, with the selection of Garamond font being made to transpose the handwriting as unobtrusively and sympathetically as possible. This allowed for my visual responses to concentrate on elements not connected with the visuality of the letter, instead focusing on alternative details, such as those relating to individual characters, their emotions or other subtle nuances detected through my analysis.

Jock's letter contains not just one but multiple stories. Those events are recounted in epistolary form, and the medium provides the narrative. The lives of Meg and Jock interconnect via the written word and the materiality of the media. In addition to the stories embedded within the letters themselves (the collection), their containment in the archive and museum adds another layer. The history of the life of the letters is another story within a story. The archive has been visited approximately 25 times in the last ten years, the visitor's name or purpose is unrecorded. Each visit to the archive is a re-telling of the story, 'another voice returns from the past, doubled, reiterated' (Wolfreys: 122), in what Genette describes as the 'narrating instance', adding additional layers of story, expanding the provenance and history of the collection.

There are multiple narrative layers found in the letter; a web spanning time, place and people. The world that Jock inhabits, the alternate world in which Meg resides, the joint world were they unite in the letters. Additional metadiegetic layers (additional levels of story) are referenced: a mutual friend Will 'in the trenches', the distant war, Meg's 'chum' and finally the unnamed nurse. Although the letters are addressed to Meg – the archive is 'hers' – her voice is seldom heard apart from in her draft reply. Jock is a narrator of sorts; the story comes to us through his words. The one-sidedness of the letters reflects only what he has to say, we do not have access to Meg's thoughts or comments, apart from when Jock occasionally responds to something she has obviously said, for example 'sorry to hear they make you work such long hours'. The sequence follows a linear chronology apart from the paralepses of her missing replies. It is a one-way dialogue, a romance punctuated by time and space. There is a constant fluctuation of pace and rhythm in the narrative as the story is subject to the pragmatic restrictions of the postal service in a country at war.

The letters in the archive start in April 1917. As reader we join them 'in *media res*', plunged into their story. The couple are already in a relationship; it is three years into the war. I am dealing solely with Jock's last letter and Meg's reply, but referring to the entire collection, Jock's words in his first letter might be regarded as being somewhat ambiguous, and not necessarily consistent with courting. He asks of Meg 'What's the trouble now? Been ill, had an accident, or merely fallen in love? Let me know which, by return, so that I may, at least proffer my sympathy, or congrats, at the earliest possible moment!'. This might be regarded as an odd thing for him to write to his sweetheart, by referencing the potential for Meg to find romance with another. Meg may well have wondered what was going on. These words are a clue, a hint of the heartbreak that was to come. Prolepsis refers to actions that are to follow, an advance notice of something later expressed through the narrative, or in this case through Jock's words (but which would not be composed in the same way an author composes a work of fiction). Jock's comment may be attributable to feelings of guilt, a psychological 'slip' through which he (possibly) unconsciously reveals aspects of himself, connected – as we later find out – to his having feelings for another. Genette notes 'the letter is at the same time both a medium of the narrative, and an element in the plot' (ND: 217).

Jock signs off his letter with the tender words, 'Trusting to receive an early reply, with love as ever', a notable contrast, given his earlier comment about Meg falling in love. Jock's subsequent letter does not acknowledge any questioning that may have followed in Meg's reply. It would appear that she did not mention or question this ambiguity in his sentiments in her correspondence to him. It is possible of course, that even if she did mention it, that he chose not to respond. Her thoughts and words are silenced by the distance that separates them and the incompleteness of the letterform as a means of communication which allows for unlimited ellipses, at the will of the sender.

The sequence of letter writing can be considered to be chronological and linear. A letter is first written, posted, read and a response (possibly) returned. In the context of Jock and Meg, it is a repeating process, extending throughout the course of their postal relationship. Time will pass between the writing and receiving of a letter; these long pauses in the conversation give time for reflection and an extended narrative duration. I examined these ideas through my practical investigations, accounting for order, duration and frequency; also with reference to time and trace, and letters and absence.

Genette discusses how a story can be variously altered by chronological order or disorder, where anachrony provides variation in the logical ordering of the narrative. Figure 32 shows an example of a practical response to this, translating the idea of time and variation into a visible exploration. Looking at the letters, and the exchange of letters in this way enabled me to examine them in a more abstract way, to move beyond their content, seeing them as symbols of absence/presence. The letters represent a trace of something, both story and memory. This encouraged me to consider Jock's letter in a wider context, looking beyond the story itself by referencing multiple letters representing their relationship. My treatment of the letters in this work references all three codes of order, duration and frequency in the context of the story and memory and how they could be made 'visible' in respect of the story and time passing. The image references the distance between the original sending and receiving; and also between and the past and the present. The collection of letters is a trace of the relationship. In examining order, duration and frequency through a visual perspective produced new ways to consider the similar visual communication approaches to sequence, emphasis and hierarchy, looking beyond the content or how the story is organised on the page, instead looking at how the story might extend beyond the page; to consider a wider story world, of which it is a part.

A collection of letters may be read non-sequentially, disrupting the logical (chronological) order and potentially increasing the duration and frequency of the narrative, according to how many times a letter may be read. These pauses would also create emphasis within the narrative, as a letter may be read and re-read until a new one replaced it. Letters may be regarded as having the potential to be both linear and non-linear in respect of order, duration and frequency. The emotions and feelings of the sender/receiver may impact on the duration of these conversational gaps and spaces – a couple might write everyday or in contrast be slow to respond to each other, or variations of frequency may exist between them.

Moving away from the internal world of the letters, to their embeddedness within the archive, if a reader encountered the description of the contents of this museum 'item'



*Figure 32: reading, duration and the reach and extent of narrative; wider context of letter and time passing*

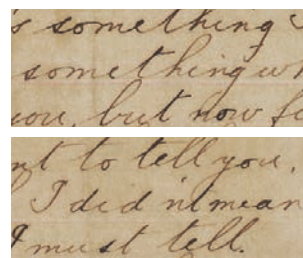
prior to viewing the letters they would have prior knowledge of the break up, they would know 'the end' before even reading the letters. The narrative is therefore expressed in a different sequence to that of the letters if read chronologically and without the description. Reading the letters in the archive without sight of the description would yield a similar sequence to that experienced by Meg. This chronological and temporal transgression (anachrony) has the potential to alter the reading of the story as a whole. Reading the letters in the present, we are outside observers of events but do not have a narrating role, the story is unfolded by Jock through his letter writing. He is a character within the story and to some extent tells his own story.

Jock refers in his letter to an event that had taken place in the past, the meeting of the nurse – 'I met a nurse there and we became very friendly'. This analepsis perhaps explains his unpredictable words and irregular behaviour referenced in earlier letters.



Its reach and extent is long, as it takes the story back to the war, his wounding, subsequent hospitalisation and meeting with the nurse, the simmering romance between Jock and this nurse, their declarations of love for each other and the nurse's refusal to marry Jock due to her poor health. Then finally to the moment of confession as Jock tells Meg in his letter, 'I realized how much I was in love with her'. The sad fate of the nurse is yet another layer to the story. Her life is by-passed in the narrative. She takes up only a short narrative duration yet she is pivotal to the plot.

The words, unlike in conversation, are recorded permanently in ink. In the letters they represent a summary of events, they do not provide full detail. There is a difference between story and narrating duration. In an earlier letter Jock refers to his posting to the Western Front, we do not know how long he spent there but he narrates his experience in a few short paragraphs. The physical space this information occupies and its narrating instance seemingly in conflict with the event – life at the front and the specifics of his encounters with the enemy and his eventual wounding are expressed in a short narrating instance. He spent a year in hospital being moved between three sites, an event that is expressed in a matter of a few words.

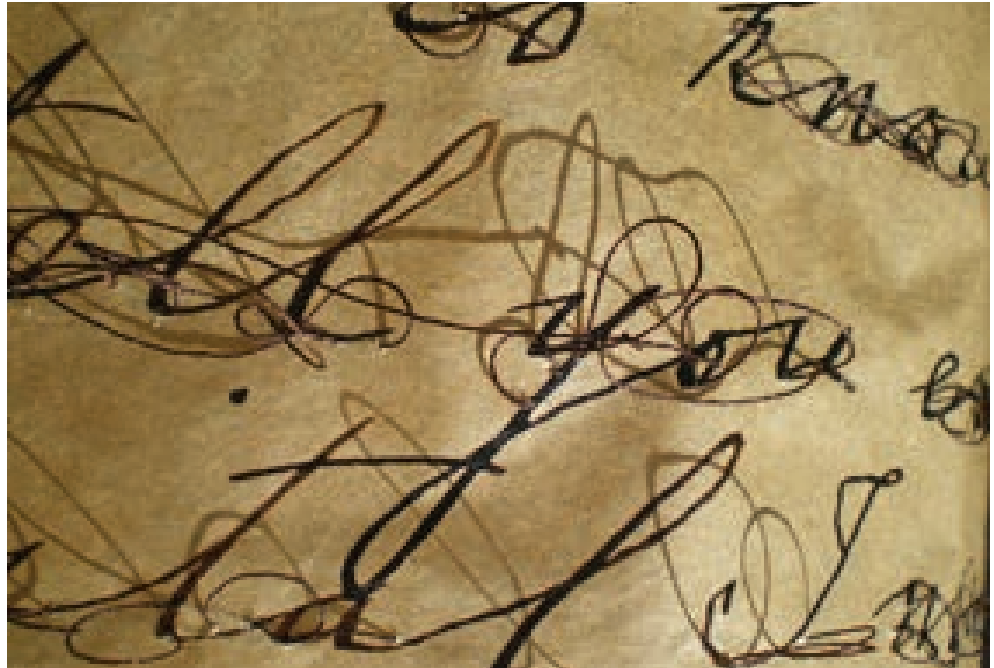


In the letter the durational variation of the 'extent' and 'reach' of some of the words are evident through Genette's theme of duration, not just in the sense of how far in time they extend but how much narrative, physical, emotional and psychological space they may occupy. In the Jock's letter, the word 'something' (figure 33), for instance, stretches and spans across an expanse that is almost too wide for a hand to trace. An extended reach that flows potentially further in spatial and narrational dimensions through the cursive elegance of the script. The words 'did n't mean' (figure 34) are first generously spaced and then become compressed, with a change in rhythm, as the edge of the page restricts the flow of writing. These different temporal and physical spaces that the text occupies, as well as the fluctuations in the reach and extent of individual words or events being relayed, were made evident through the literary perspective and analysis.

The receiver of a letter would be able to go over and over the words contained within, during the course of waiting for another and beyond, if so desired. This may be done in pleasure, a response to kind words, declarations of love or in pain, to go over unkind words, to clarify. The words would echo and extend their narrating time. In the case of Jock's last letter to Meg, duration and frequency may be found in his words, for instance, 'But there's something I want to *tell* you, about, Meg, something which I didn't mean to ever *tell* you, but now feel I must *tell*. The repetition of the word 'tell' three times, (the last instance preceded by the insistent 'must'), expresses the weight of what is to follow.

I examined the codes of duration and frequency through a number of practical responses to the letter. Figure 35 shows one example, looking at 'tell' linguistically, narratively and visually; examining the relationship between the visual and verbal and how to vary the duration of a word and create emphasis by extending language, such as through knots, stitching and shadows, used to create a lingering effect, 'endowing the text with a plural quality (the text is polyphonic)' (Barthes, 1970: 30). In reference

Figure 33 and 34:  
extracts from Jock's  
letter

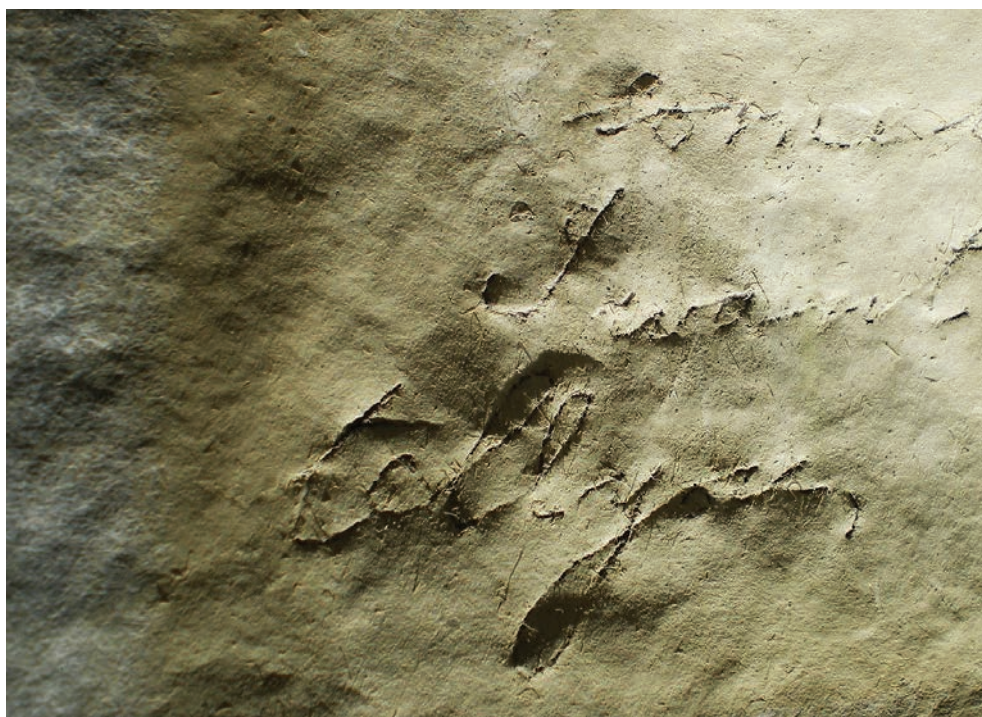


to mood and voice and 'tell', I tested how the linguistic word could be developed to correspond with the narrative implications and also to incorporate aspects of perspective, such as Meg's imagined emotional and physical responses whilst reading Jock's letter. I also looked at different ways to visualise how Meg may have been feeling and responding as she read this particular section of the letter. I considered her likely anxiety as she read Jock's words, particularly 'But', 'tell' and 'must tell you' – imagining that her heart may have been pounding (another form of repetition and frequency). This repetition was examined through its correspondences with the physical extent of Jock's words.

Figure 36 also has 'tell' as its starting point and addresses the word through the same perspective of Meg's imagined responses to Jock's sentence, but this tale contemplates the word and its physical, sensory and visual relationship with the page, and with the archive and the present. The codes of order, duration and frequency, although sharing similarities to visual forms of communication (sequence, emphasis and hierarchy) enabled me to consider how to extend and develop those concepts differently, to re-appraise what sequence, emphasis and hierarchy might entail, such as by taking this word and linking emphasis not directly through the events of the story, but to account for Meg's imagined feelings, and how this could be linked with remembering, time and distance.

This tale attempts to examine the significance of the word – its impact on Meg's life – imagining how specific words from Jock's letter might be remembered by Meg. Through memory this might be considered to make that word, or words surrounding, echo through time. This provides a link between Meg's past (the original time of the letter) with the instances where Meg may have recalled this moment; and also through my own responses to the word extending the impact of the word beyond Meg's lifetime. Repetition and duration of this word and its implications act as 'fragments and traces... [which] reverberate in the present' (Evans, 2003: 12). The materials and composition in this piece were developed to accent this word, and its wake – of narrative, memory, time and emphasis. The space to the left of the text references the

*Figure 35: 2011,  
'there's something I  
want to tell you'*



lead up to the word 'tell'. This accounts for Jock's preamble and delay in actually revealing his news, imagining how Meg may have been affected by this delay. Through texture, space, light and shadow I have attempted to draw attention to what is 'intrinsic and extrinsic to the work' (Marriner: 352). Genette's codes encouraged me to think about the story world, in a similar way as Barthes' *lexia*, extending my comprehension further. I started to see the page or pages as a narrative horizon, a story world in which the physical page can contribute to bringing the story to life.

The iterative provides emphasis to a sentence, heightening the narrative tension through the movement between 'the physical plane of the story, [and] the spatial plane of the text' (ND: 86). Jock's possible guilt may be expressed through this repetition; his secret may have been weighing on his conscience for some time. In contrast Meg must have sped over those words wanting to know what followed, what was to be told. Jock does not immediately say however, protracting the paragraph, and possibly her pain, yet further with more talk of what Meg will think of him, another delay in articulating his message, 'accelerating the beat of the pendulum' (ND: 158). She might have gone over the letter time and time again, this sentence representing the trigger for what must have been her undoubted distress, both at the time of receiving the letter and also after in repeated readings. This act of re-reading adds repetition or frequency to the narrative (of the letter) and also extends the narrative duration.

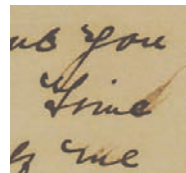
Jock states that Will is in the trenches, 'facing Fritz' indicating that he is in danger, 'dodging all sorts of things'. This provides a correspondence beyond the logical flow of the text, one that follows a few paragraphs later, where Jock evades telling Meg his bad news, 'dodging' being a forward correlation of what follows.

In Meg's 'draft' reply to Jock's letter her (sad) words trail off both literally and symbolically. The word 'bitterness' does not have enough room to be articulated properly, as Meg ran out of space on the postcard. The word is compressed physically

Figure 36: 'But there's something I want to tell you'

at the edge of the page. This affects the duration of the word, although it is compacted by the physical edge of the page, its expression is potentially altered by this restriction, as particular emphasis becomes attached to it specifically because of its position, both physical and linguistic. This correspondence adds poignancy to the last word. Because it is the last word on the page and in the story the linguistic signifier and narrative, connotative and spatial relations of the word are given duration, emphasis which reverberates across time; the distance between the original and the present, its frequency/meaning echoing through time, an 'implied silence of a vast duration' (ND: 98). We will never know if Meg eventually sent a copy of this or any reply to Jock.

Similarly, the word 'time' (figure 37) on Meg's reply is smudged at the furthest edge of the page extending its narrative duration. The linguistic signifier is augmented by the



smudging, linking the smudge and word and their connotative potency in respect of language and the story. The extension to the word 'time' can also be connected with the passing of time, such as through the continuation of the story and life of the letters by its inclusion in archive at the museum.

The letters have frequency. The to- and fro-ing between the couple, a letter and a response reinforces the idea of acquaintance. Such repetition represents their relationship. The very idea of this frequency of communication between the couple can be questioned. Jock apologises in one of his earlier letters for his slowness in responding to Meg, and also references his inability to visit her despite his having leave. If repetition and frequency (of letter writing) represented their relationship, these perceived missed opportunities could be seen as both *paralepsis*, a side-stepping of events and *prolepsis*, an anticipation of the future. Jock's reluctance to see Meg was no doubt influenced by his uncertainty about his feelings towards her, the reasons for which only become evident in the last 'chapter' of their relationship, but are referenced in advance.

My own engagement with the archive was beset with sequential and chronological transgressions. Having read the archive description my visit to the archive was approached with the prior knowledge of the story's end. On arrival at the museum, I was presented with a large folder containing Jock's, and other letters. I turned instinctively to the back of the volume, finding Jock's last letter. The letter consists of three small pages, wafer thin layers, crisp with age, whose fragility belies the weight of the words embedded on their surface. The act of turning the pages fast-forwarded over the entire epistolary relationship, to arrive at the final chapter and the last word. Having read the last letter, I made a chronological reading of the letters, tracing the path to the break up; a flashback took the story to its beginnings – as far as the archive is concerned.

The materiality of the letter and Jock's words carry the past (hauntingly) into the present. The narrating instance (of his original letters) and reading time (a visit to the archive) are separated by many decades. Jock's letters provide a very vivid account of life at the front. Jock talks of his, and fellow soldiers' attitudes towards the Germans, rumours about torture, particularly to men in kilts (such as Jock). He recalls atrocities, of having killed German prisoners in revenge, his narrow escape from mortar explosions

Figure 37: extract from Meg's reply

and then of frustration at being wounded and hospitalised. He wrote that he was keen to get back to the front – it is difficult to comprehend that any soldier would wish to return to the trenches.

The letters tell a story. They create a paradox; they are elusive and enigmatic because the people connected to the story are long departed – traces only remain of Meg and Jock (through the archive). The ‘events’ are in the past, yet in handling the letters they make history seem tangible and very real. Just as clothing without a body speaks of absence, so too do these letters.

It was not until a few days later, once I had received a photocopy of Jock’s last letter, that I realised I had missed a vital piece of the story. I had made a chronological error. Jock says, referring to his rejected marriage proposal, ‘so I gave it up in despair, and then you came along and I forgot’. I had not noticed this line when reading the letters in the research room, perhaps because I had been so moved by the story. Jock’s last letter is dated 27 May 1917. Because of my earlier practical investigations with the theme of love and loss, I had imagined that Meg had experienced the pain of separation through the earlier years of the war and must have dared to hope, as time moved on, that Jock would survive the war and return to marry her. How unexpected to have her hopes dashed towards the end of the war, not as one might have predicted through his death in the trenches but by his devastating declaration of love for someone else.

The actual sequence of events demonstrated that Meg had not known Jock when he was fighting, so had not experienced the anguish of waiting for news. She did not meet Jock until *after* he had been shot, declared unfit for active duty and posted to war work in the North of England. I had assumed much and like a capricious memory had unconsciously constructed my own version of their story before even arriving at the archive. These assumptions were no doubt based on the description of the collection and my prior investigations with love and loss in the First World War (discussed in chapter one). The entwined lives of Meg, Jock and the nurse began to play on my mind. The duration of the narrative here extends beyond the reading time. We do not know very much about the nurse, in some respects her story is the most enigmatic and sad, although deeply embedded in the first narrative of Meg and Jock, her story is perhaps more poignant, arousing more curiosity, as she refused to marry Jock due to a ‘weak heart’.

I have gained an awareness in respect of narrative, of who is looking, who telling and about whom, providing a different perspective on the story world as ‘a shifting... frontier between two worlds, the world *in which* one tells, and the world *of which* one tells’ (ND: 236, my emphasis). In respect of mood and voice, Genette demonstrates the multiple different ways in which a narrator may be evident in narrative and further that the narration of the story has other variables, marking the differences between who sees, who tells and from where. For example in his chapter on voice Genette discusses the different ways in which the ‘telling’ is enacted: it is heterodiegetic if told from outside the story and homodiegetic if told from inside. He then expands on this by stating that the role of the narrator has four further possible permutations: this may be extradiegetic and heterodiegetic – meaning s/he is a narrator in the first level of story that s/he is absent from; there is the extradiegetic and homodiegetic being a

narrator in the first level of story who tells his/her own story; there is the intradiegetic and hetero-diegetic where a narrator speaks from a second level of narrative where they are not part of the main story; and finally, the intradiegetic and homodiegetic where a narrator is in the second level of the story and tells their own story.

In respect of the Semple letters, these distinctions have less relevance than they do in Proust's text or other works of fiction. Letters are not composed as narratives. Genette comments himself that the distinctions between mood and voice in his original text are not necessarily that clear (Genette, 1988: 66). In order to examine these codes in the letters it was necessary to move away from the very specific distinctions and varying levels and positions of narration. In so doing it allowed me to consider how mood and voice could be considered in my story telling and as a consequence I discuss mood and voice together.

I investigated the people in Semple letters individually in response to examining Genette's codes of mood and voice. I analysed them by looking beyond the story's content, to focus on the nuances of who was 'speaking' or being referenced, and from what position in the narrative that occurred. I explored the imagined emotions, feelings, physical responses and psychologies of Meg, Jock and the nurse. I looked at the correspondences between the physical text, the narrative and internal character perspectives. I appraised their position within both story and narrative, investigating links between the physical space and dimensions of the letter with perceived power relations between characters; and their individual roles in the story in relation to the physical space they took up in the text.

In Jock's letter I noticed there was variation in not so much who was 'speaking' but who was the subject of discussion, which altered across the text, and so focalisation is not necessarily fixed on one character. Further these fluctuations can be examined in relation to how much narrative space is dedicated to these different levels of focus and emphasis.

The narrative is recounted by Jock. He is a character within the story world, the story is expressed through him, and his letter. Meg is both present and absent. They are her letters. She both reads the story, the news and conversation in the letters and then becomes a part of that world by writing a reply and experiencing the effects of the content of the letters. She is therefore both internal and external to the narrative, moving between these two states of polymodality. The voices of Meg and Jock oscillate in prominence moving in and out of focus, though Jock's voice is dominant, he being a narrator of sorts. Meg fades in and out as Jock 'narrates'. Meg's voice, or rather her presence, is more strongly felt at varying moments in the letter's narrative, such as where Jock comments 'I expect you'll think all sorts of things about me'. She is made more real by Jock's responses and reflections to what has obviously been said by her and also by her draft reply. The letters themselves are polymodal, expressing the characters on both sides of the relationship through the statements and responses contained within. Additionally, the letters can be perceived as being both an integral part of the narrating instance, but also can be viewed as object through their materiality and language.



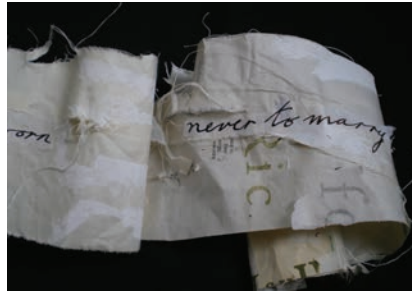
The mood and voice through which an earlier letter's contents are expressed fluctuate between tenses, moving between past, present and future: 'I'm sending this to your home address... although I wrote you from Farnboro'... but perhaps I may have put the wrong address... (a missing letter, analepsis/analepsis)... so I'm making sure this time... as your people will forward this on to you'. Jock indicates how he feels through his narration, such as his description of himself as in 'despair' and 'waiting and hoping'.

To examine mood and voice in my story telling I made three concertina books (figure 38) to examine these aspects of perspective along with the physical space each character was perceived to occupy – their place in the story, text and the hierarchies and power relations between them. I looked at the movement of voices and presence/absence within both the physical dimension of the letter and the conceptual and imagined space of the story. These visualisations of character were cross-referenced, so that gaps in the form of blank pages mirrored the ebb and flow of which voice was evident at any given moment in the text/narrative. I appraised the impact this had on not just the story and narration, but also how this impacted on the physical expanse and dimension of each book – its width when fully opened, and height when closed. This data was also converted into numeric form in respect of each of the characters, in order to highlight the different hierarchies in the story and narrative (see Appendix seven for this data).

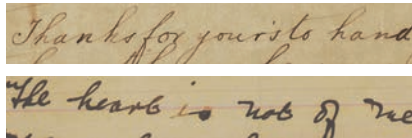
Accordingly, multiple perspectives and reference points were explored in my story telling, achieved both holistically, through the tangle of relationships, and additionally reflecting the different, individual perspectives of each of the characters. I looked at how they may have been feeling at particular moments in the narrative; aspects of identity were explored, such as their own perceived sense of self awareness within the narrative. For example Jock says, 'you'll probably think all sorts of things about me' turning the narrative back on himself.

In contemplating the characters away from the totality of the story I examined Meg's imagined responses and feelings to Jock's news. In my early research I looked at her (possible) bodily reactions and emotions associated with the flow (whether fast or

*Figure 38: 2011, prototype – character perspectives, presence and representation in the story; narration; narrative emphasis; emotions and psychology*



slow) of Jock's words, the physical text and their linguistic significance and impact on Meg. I responded to these imagined feelings by exploring the story from Meg's perspective through a scroll format. I looked at order and duration of the narrative in relation to the connections between the different sections of the scroll (figure 39) and how the surface might reflect this particular moment of the story (Jock's news). I researched the scroll format by looking at narrative variation, the ordering, chronology, emphasis and reading order. The scroll format gave the possibility for variation on the narrative, for instance how the story could be variously read or experienced by a viewer, relative to the state and narrative 'position' of the scroll at any given time. Reading order involved the unfurling of the scroll; I tested the reading order and found that each viewing invariably left the scroll, and so the story, at the 'end' (it not being 'rewound' after reading).



I looked at the physical text through different layers, for example comparing the handwriting of Meg and Jock (figures 40 and 41). As well as regarding the handwriting from a visual perspective, I also looked at it through additional lenses, including narratological and psychological. Jock's writing is cursive and beautifully scripted, it is refined and elegant, his fluid style matches the conversational tone of his letter and way he expresses himself, which impacts on the unfolding of the story. Jock asks questions of Meg, such as 'won't you tell me what & how I should do now'. Meg's writing, in contrast, is more solid, with thicker lines, this is matched by her writing style which is more direct than Jock's, such as where she states 'the heart is not of me to "tell you what and how you must do" '. This closes the conversation (and the story) down by her refusal to provide forgiveness, comfort or advice to Jock. These aspects of their writing may reflect different educational backgrounds or could be indicators of personality types and differences.

Other parts of text were read and analysed by 'reading' visual elements through a literary perspective. This includes the example of 'didn't mean' which is observed not just visually because of its position on the edge of the page – the word is scrunched up at the physical limits of the paper – but because of its significance in the story and narrative; such as the perspective of Jock having held on to his secret, but is now about to reveal it.

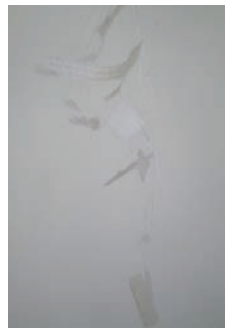
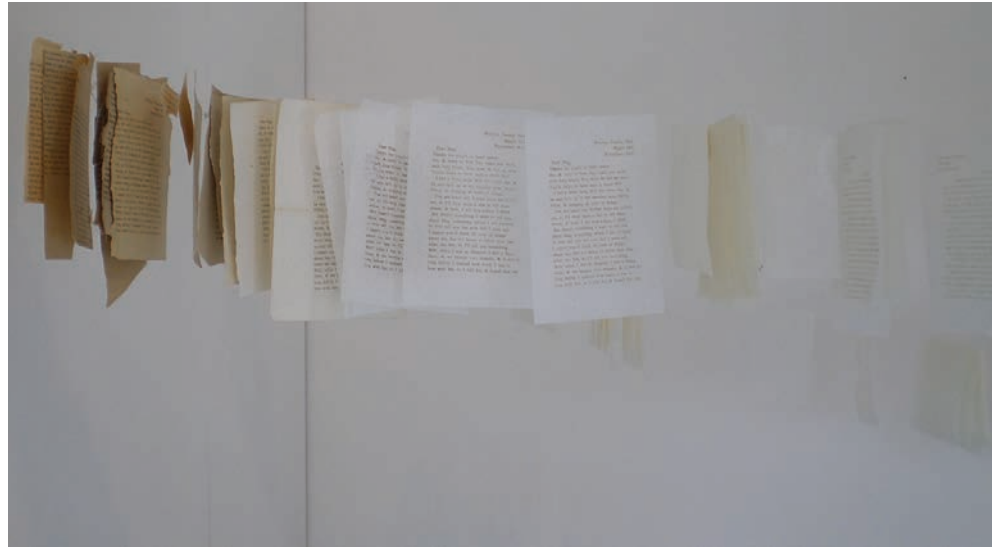
Genette demonstrates how 'characters... remain, or rather become, down through the pages more and more indefinable, ungraspable, "creatures in flight,"' (ND: 185). I looked at this concept through the nurse and how she was evident and narrated in the letter. I developed the story with a focus of looking at her individually; specifically her elusiveness and distance in and from the story, and between the past and present. I did this by pulling her narratively and physically away from the page, as a story within a story. The nurse is the most enigmatic of the characters; she is nameless and is thus referenced obliquely. She has the least 'presence' and yet she is pivotal in the story. Her absence is powerful.

Figure 39: 2011, Meg's perspective; imagined emotions and physical responses to the text

Figure 40: extract from Jock's letter

Figure 41: extract from Meg's reply





Her decision-making was driven by a perceived medical condition (but this is possibly questionable, as it is not clear why a 'weak heart' should preclude marriage, unless the danger of childbirth was the rationale). I considered whether she (and other nurses) might have been given this 'excuse' to use as protection from unwanted advances from soldiers. However, she continued to write to Jock discounting this idea.

To examine the nurse and her position and impact on the story I created an installation comprising typeset letter pages suspended on thread (figures 42 and 43). This work had mechanical beginnings but was developed in such a way to reflect the enigma and elusiveness of the nurse. I set Jock's letter in lead type, as the original, with the same line breaks, capitalisation and page divisions. The text was printed onto various paper types, sizes and thicknesses using traditional printing presses. The installation was designed so that there was a slow softening and fading of the narrative. Genette discusses metadiegetic layers, referencing multiple layers of narrative; I used this concept to inform how I composed this work by pulling the nurse away from the main story. In order to distance her from the letter, as a story within a story, I used multiple pages, some blank some printed, and colour and page difference to achieve this. The pages ran from sepia to white and also from opaque to transparent. In addition to this they also became increasingly fragmented, moving from a whole page to torn fragments, moving further away from the original, what Genette describes as the 'reach' and 'extent'. I also altered the ink colour ranging from (again) sepia to white.

As well as separating the nurse from the totality of the story, these processes were used to reflect the passing of time and increasing distance and fading of the story. The tale culminated in white text printed onto fragments of white tissue paper, suspended from a tangle of thread and knots. In doing this I was attempting to develop the nurse's story as increasingly distanced from the first narrative; in respect of the page, and from the original time of the letter.

The perspective on this tale was through the nurse and narrative space; examining distance and looking back and how this may be made evident in visual development;

*Figure 42: 2014, research installation, pulling the nurse away from the main story, shadows of the page; varying colour, shape, distance and size of the page fragmenting and falling away from a fixed page, white text on white tissue paper*

*Figure 43: 2014, installation view; fragment*

looking at the story and its relationship with time. Accordingly, I looked at different ways to angle the flow of the story observing what impact this may have on reading. The absence/presence of the nurse was also developed by extending the spatial arrangement, looking at shadows of the pages cast on the gallery walls, adding repetition and emphasis, and an additional narrating instance. These shadows provide further metadiegetic narrative spaces, with the silence and traces of narrative 'accumulating potency' (Passerini, 2003: 248). As time passed and sunlight moved across the gallery space it altered the shape of these pages so altering the narrative. Additionally a gentle breeze provided movement, a 'temporal dispersion' (ND: 65) of narrative, this had the effect of altering the position of the pages, impacting on where its shadow fell, also changing the shape of the shadow.

The codes of mood and voice also led to me contemplate who the original texts were intended for, how they came to me; whether my voice as narrator is evident; and my relationship with the source material. The means through which the letter comes to a reader has altered over time. It was originally a private communication between two people, written by Jock for Meg, a personal relationship or conversation. It subsequently became public through inheritance and its donation to the archives in the Imperial War Museum.

## Reflections

I have examined *Narrative Discourse* directly through the letters and my practice by looking at the dual perspectives of *histoire/récit*, dividing the letter into separate layers of content (events) and narrative (means/method); I have examined the codes of order, duration, frequency, mood and voice in the letters and my practical work. I have observed different ways to think about the characters in the story, collectively and individually; with shifts in focus, proximity and power relations between the characters, and their relationships to and with the narrative and narrating also being examined. I investigated the materiality of the letter, text, and letterform and also looked at the letter more objectively by typesetting the text in digital and letterpressed formats. I considered the letter through layers of history and its presentation, including the life of the letter in the archive/museum (further multiple metadiegetic layers of the letter/story). I also considered my own role and relationship with the letter. In response to Genette's codes of mood and voice, I looked at imagined sensory, emotional, psychological and physical aspects of the characters; and in respect of those perspectives and the narrative space.

### Perspective and narrative space

I have questioned what *Narrative Discourse* may bring to the reading and analysis of the Semple letters. My examination of the letters through Genette's concepts enabled me to read and analyse the Semple letters through his specific literary considerations. Genette's codes provide a multi-layered perspective on a story; each of these layers provides a slightly different way of 'reading' that story, what might be considered metadiegetic layers. Genette shows us how story events are expressed through specifics and variations in the narrative. This led me to see things in the letter not

previously comprehended, looking beyond the content or totality of the story; to focus on subtle details, and how the story can be variously regarded through the different narrative codes. As a result my analysis produced new information or 'data' for me to respond to and provided me with new ways to tell tales. Further, as stated, this new information differs to that gained from my analysis using Barthes' codes.

Genette's codes of mood and voice encouraged me to think more about narrative perspective and the people in my stories, and how this relates to their relationships with each other, with regard to narration and the page, and in respect of the physical space of the story world. I investigated perspective, mood and voice by examining the internal, emotional, psychological and physical aspects of the people in relation to the text, the story, and the physical narrative space.

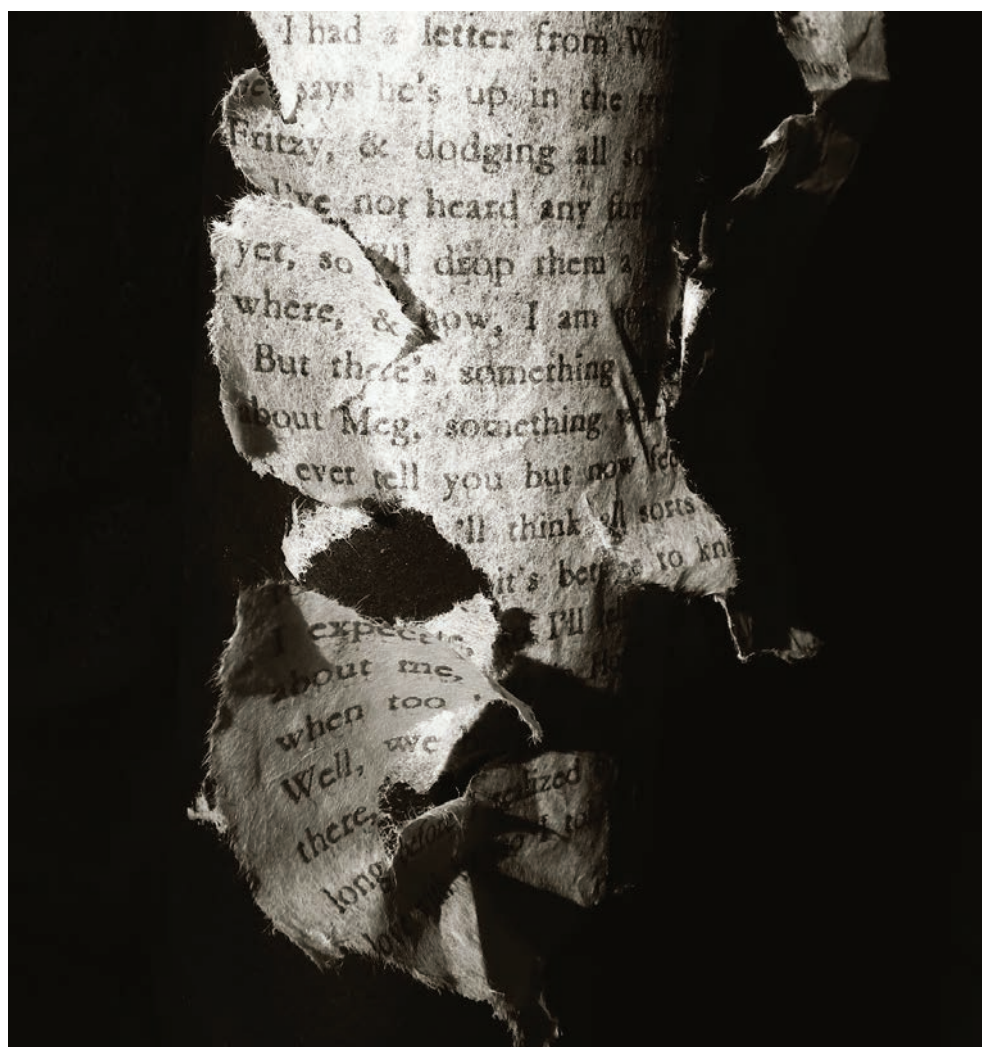
Herman and Vervaeck surmise that 'it is not at the level of character analysis that structuralist narratology has made its most significant contribution' (Herman, Vervaeck, 2001: 70). For the purposes of my analysis of the Semple letters and its subsequent visualisation, aspects of perspective in narrative are significant. It allowed me to explore the imagined emotional, physical, psychological responses of Meg, Jock and the nurse. I have addressed these imagined aspects of characters in my analysis and visual responses, not to give them a sense of identity, but to delve into the dark region of the edge of memory, to look beyond the content of the letter, and to capture the traces left in its wake.

In this respect, and building on Genette's layers of narrative (*récit*) and story (*histoire*), I have considered another tier that could be added to his framework, which exemplifies the ways in which story telling can focus on the cadences of a story. I term this *émotif* – borrowed and redefined from French – accounting for perspective and narrative space, looking at the emotional, psychological, sensory, empathic and metaphysical layers that have informed my understanding of the letters and how the information gained can be developed through composition.

## Composition

Order and indeed disorder, produced different ways to consider how narrative could be explored and mapped visually, moving me away from traditional visual means of regarding the page. This was achieved through the perceived potential for transgressions in the narrative, and movement, both physical and metaphysical outside the main story; this can be imagined as seeing the pages of a book laid out as an expanse of narrative space. These elements may be regarded as radiating outwards, beyond the first story world, beyond the page. The codes collectively encouraged me to consider the multiple, linear, non-linear and metaphysical layers and perspectives to be found within narrative, and the complex means through which literature may coerce and guide its readers.

Examining Genette's codes through my practical research changed the thinking that informs how I consider and compose my tales. I examined 'pages' as metadiegetic, additional, layers, making them less linear, fixed or static (figure 44). This encouraged me to investigate the relationship of, and space between, different surfaces and pages,



and what and where the page may be. Comprehending these discursive aspects of narrative encouraged me to re-imagine how visual and verbal elements and the story need not necessarily be anchored to, or driven by the physical structure or limits of the page. This was examined through various formats, including creating textured surfaces, with implicated edges (of pages) so that words and language could symbolically transcend multiple 'pages' making an ethereal use of linguistic space.

## Landscape of narrative

In his 'Foreword' to *Narrative Discourse*, Culler notes that 'students... will find in it terms to describe what they have perceived in novels but will also be alerted to the existence of fictional devices which they had previously failed to notice and whose implications they had never been able to consider. Every reader of Genette will find that he becomes a more acute and perceptive analyst of fiction than before' (Culler, ND: 7). Equally, as I have discovered, these devices and implications can move successfully beyond literary works, making a credible and relevant translation from the literary to the visual.

Some of Genette's codes have a direct relevance to visual practice. My discussion of the Semple letters, as read and analysed through Genette's theory, provides evidence

Figure 44: 2013, variation and relationship of and between pages; expansion of the story world; the story, time passing and forgetting

of the insights and new perspectives on the letter gained by my narratological analysis. In this instance, the five codes and division between the events and the narrative were taken directly from literary theory into visual practice, in so doing it provided new ways to gather and process information.

As stated at the outset, Genette refers to his theories not as 'a limiting grid, but a 'procedure of discovery' (*ND*: 265). There were tensions in the process of transferring and translating literary codes through visual practice. It has been necessary to omit some of Genette's ideas; but the codes are 'worth examining, if only to justify rejecting them' (Genette, 1988: 9). Some of the concepts have been adapted and translated into credible and meaningful methods and approaches in visual practice. As discussed, the level of detail relative to Genette's codes has specific reference to Proust's text. In terms of my practical work it was not so much the individual codes themselves that were of significance, rather they exposed me to the underlying mechanisms at work in fiction, layers that enable a text to come to the reader, so bringing a text to life.

Having a narratological awareness of how stories are variously constructed and organised, and the ways in which narrative is evident through different codes which run across the expanse of the entire story gave me a new understanding of the story world; and different ways to consider what constitutes a page, whether explicit or implicit. This led me to consider the story world as an expansive and enlivened narrative landscape. Genette enables us 'to cast a glance over [the entirety of the] diegetic space' (Genette, 1988: 37); this view has altered how I consider the composition of my tales. Genette's 'special perspective' on narrative has extended and changed how I communicate visually, helping me to establish a dialectic between the visual, verbal and literary.

I have examined Genette's literary codes from the perspective of a visual/verbal practice, making a non-literary examination of Genette's theory. The significance and impact that *Narrative Discourse* has had on my practice has been immense. This chapter provides evidence of the new thinking and methods that literary concepts have brought to visual forms of communication. These impacts are not specific to my practice, but also have relevance to other practitioners, including those analysing visual story telling; visual practice where the use of specific materials, such as stitch or clothing, are deployed for story telling; visual practice that incorporates both the visual and verbal; and memory and narrative in visual practice.

The *Tissue Texts* chapter that follows discusses the examination I made of some of my materials and processes inspired and informed by narratological concepts. This chapter accounts for the new working approaches and methods relative to both Barthes' *S/Z* and *Narrative Discourse*, and so are discussed together.

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Chapter Four

Tissue Texts

*'How great  
a lustre  
they mutually  
reflect upon  
one another'*

*Figure 45: 2014,  
'endure and survive  
this bitterness'*

*Warburton, William,  
1740 (cited in  
Mitchell, W, 1994): 111*



## A network of meaning

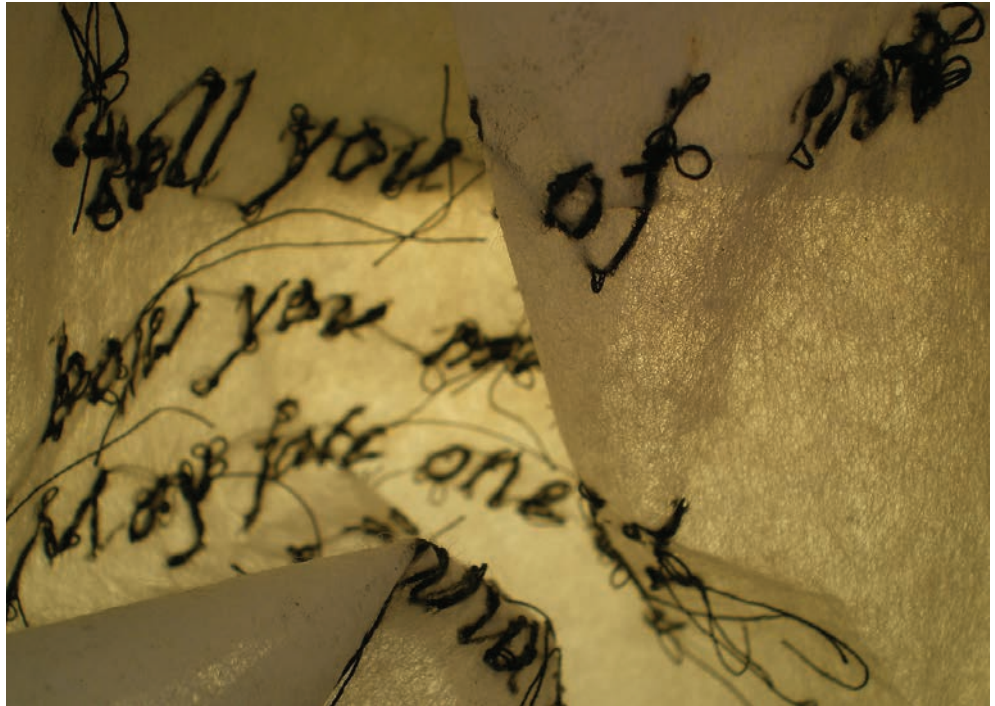
Taking Barthes' migratory perspective on language and meaning as a starting point, I examined my materials and processes through the concept of migration. The previous chapters discuss the impacts that Barthes' and Genette's specific literary approaches have had on my thinking, process and practice, and in particular with reference to the Simple letters. My examinations of *Narrative Discourse* and *S/Z* led me to re-consider story telling and the story world. This materials' examination has been on-going; there has been a reciprocal exchange of ideas between this investigation and my explorations with the two literary theories, each informing and augmenting the other. This chapter demonstrates the different ways that I have considered my materials and processes in response to literary codes. In so doing it has given me non-visual methods and approaches to my materials, building on my pre-existing knowledge.

Barthes uses five codes to show how texts can be expanded, to be made more writerly, by regarding them through connotative thematic layers and intertextuality. This relies on making reference to other sources; what we bring to reading from our pre-existing knowledge and experience as part of a particular culture. Intertextuality can be used to extend the possibility for meaning, or to validate or strengthen an idea.

My examination took the form of both practical research, and this written response, which borrows a little from Barthes' poetics as an adventure in thought. My first exploration was made by looking at folds and folding, for which I referenced Gilles Deleuze and his writings on 'the fold'. His conceptual approach and discussion of the fold further informed this examination, encouraging me to also consider philosophical perspectives in addition to other themes being explored, such as memory, the emotions or mapping. These different layers have informed how I consider my materials and might be considered as overlaying voices which are woven through my narratives, unified in what Barthes describes as a stereographic (plural) space.

As discussed earlier, visual language uses symbolism, connotation and cultural references to produce meaning. The additional non-visual perspectives I have become aware of through this investigation altered not only how I consider my materials, but also led to changes in the way I compose my work. There are two categories directing my investigation, together making up the story world: that of 'landscape' – representing the page and surface, (which may be paper, textiles, clothing or ice, for example); and 'woven voices' – what happens on, in, or around that landscape, and the interaction between visual and verbal elements, such as text, stitching or knots. I have looked at how these are linked with the narrative and integrated with the page. This also refers to any additional processes materials may be put through, including text being augmented by stitches, shadows or layers of 'dust'. My initial investigation with 'the fold' produced new ways of thinking that also had relevance to other materials, for instance folds in clothing, or text and folds, creating a cross-pollination of ideas.

I include images of my work in each section to show how the ideas being discussed are evident in my tales, demonstrating the impact the investigation had on my story telling. Some of the discoveries, and work shown, has already been discussed in earlier chapters, and are also included in the book of my practice that forms a part of my submission. The investigation changed my comprehension of the possibility of my



materials, adding significations, correlations and connotations not previously considered. It has given me more acute sensitivities to my materials, so advancing my pre-existing visual methods and approaches.

## The narrative landscape

Literary codes have altered my comprehension of what and where the page may be, exposing me to a story world previously not considered. This landscape of narrative (figure 46) may be visual, physical and tangible, or metaphysical, sensory or implicated. I have come to understand that narrative has the potential to be non-linear, to flow outside of any logical, grammatical or sequential order. Both Barthes and Genette show us how narrative runs *across* a story; it can be embedded on or woven into the page or may be implicated. Barthes' and Genette's literary concepts prompted me to re-imagine the page and composition. As such, the story world can be considered to be multifaceted, where both physical and meta-layers of narrative co-exist.

## The undulating plane of immanence: Deleuze and the fold

Every time a fold is made a new landscape is created, changing the existing surface. In *Le Pli: Leibniz et le Baroque*, Deleuze explores the fold or *pli*<sup>1</sup>, using the trope of the fold as a figure through which he explores, amongst other things, the existential binaries of the internal/external, self and being, body and soul. The fold may be contemplated as a mental landscape, an infinite movement of folds and folding, an 'on-going process of living in the world' (Conley: 171).

Figure 46: 2014, 'may fate one day grant you your heart's desire'; the fold, memory, immanence and landscape

<sup>1</sup>'pli' – refers to a twist of fabric and the origins of life

To fold has the potential to create layers, as the smooth surface becomes overlaid, doubled, reiterated. This movement produces undulations that are at one and the

same time internal and external. Folding creates enigmatic spaces in which the hidden are inextricably married with the exposed, as folds and folding make cloth fall into and out of view. The recesses of the fold are an imaginary field of consciousness, an internal world. The surface view shifts between an inside and an outside, between sight and insight, contrasting self and other through the uncertainty of ambiguous vision, and what might be considered as the dreamy contours of being.

In a cartography of time and being the surface and its movement is continuous, 'thinking is figured as a moving line' (Conley: 174). The mobility of thought maps a journey of subjectivity, of being in the world, and time passing. Folds inflect and reflect, shifting between matter and illusion, the tangible and intangible, clarity and obscurity. Enigma is caught between spaces; the inside and outside; in the formation of folds and the motion of 'the ever mobile plane' (Frichot: 250). In chemistry folding is a physical process where a molecule assumes its shape or conformation as it comes into being.

The fold may be considered as a way of symbolising feelings. The rise and fall echoes binary states of mood and emotions – dark and light, high and low. Folds express different shades of feeling. A fold may be regarded as joyful, exuberant and animated. The multiplicity of folds provides a 'promise of plenitude' (Barnett, 1999: 30), bringing with it an optimism in the inauguration of each fold, as it rises upwards it represents a new beginning; a symbol of hope. The depths of the fold, the recess, may represent security as being shrouded by drapery, protected by cloth in a safe haven.

Conversely, the fold expresses dark emotions. The internal recess created by folds produces a space of gloom and despair, descent into this space is a downward path to discontent, foreboding and melancholia. The recesses and repetition of folds may symbolise recurring anxieties, 'melancholy is ephemeral and contingent, a recurring trait of the human condition' (Dimakopoulou, web). Uncertainty is located in the flux of movement on the unstable surface.

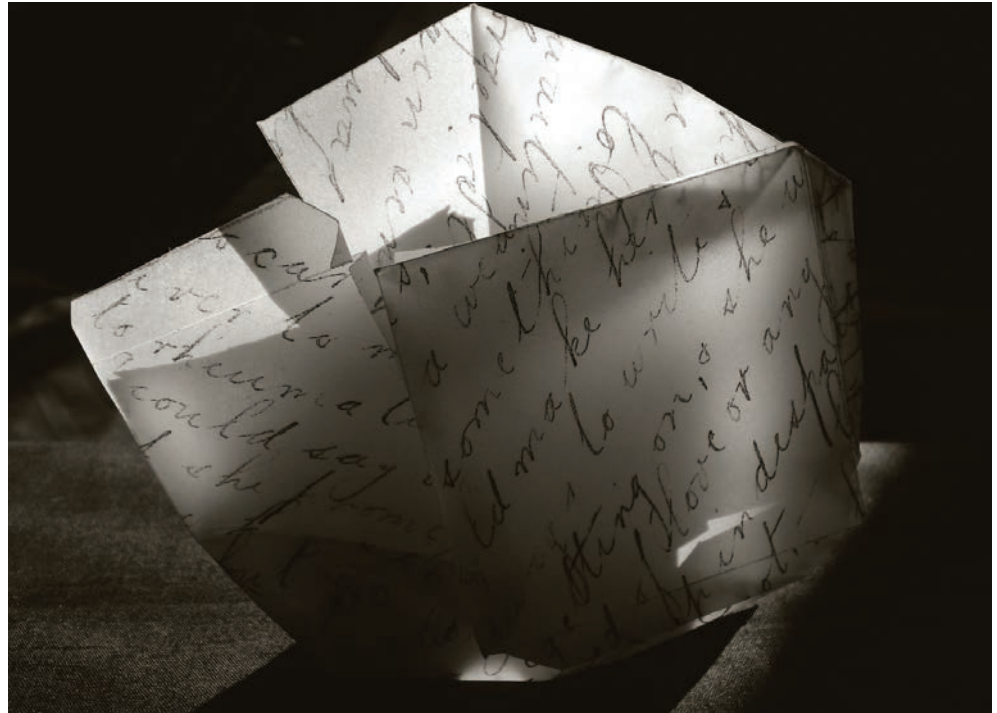


The moment of transition, the immanence, between the rise and proceeding fall of a fold is a liminal space caught between worlds, one that may be volatile, unsafe, or on the edge (figure 47). The edge may be fleeting, fugitive, smooth, rough, loose, tight, degraded. Human expression is found in the oscillating paradox of recess and rise; captured in the mercurial pattern of folds, the shifting polarities articulating the opposing forces of feeling and thought, in the beating heart and dark times of being.

The fold is a territory through which time passing, remembering and forgetting may be expressed through the trope of the fold.

Folding and the undulations provide different points of view and shifting perspectives, 'the past (memory) and a present (subjectivity) are two sides of a single surface' (Conley: 172). The rhythms of life are etched onto the folded plane, as being slides into the past, and history is plied by repetition. Looking back and distance blur the boundaries of past and present (figure 48). The undulating plane of immanence is without beginning or end, as the past is continually overwritten, a shimmering infinity, with 'shadows that play across the surface' (Frichot: 254). Time

Figure 47: 2012, immanence and the edge



passing shapes and reshapes the landscape, it holds traces of the past; memories are held in the movement. The surface is weathered by time, 'the shape of the hills of sand and rock tells the history of the earth' (Leslie, 2003: 180); the legacy and marks of time. Folds may turn over or back on themselves, the overlaying of cloth resembles events, experience, thoughts or memories, being remembered, forgotten, embellished.

The fading light of experience and the illumination of recollection are reflected in the seen and unseen of the outer and inner spaces of the fold. Memory is not a recalling of an event or image, but a fluid process of perception, knowledge and evolving understandings. The depths and darkness of the fold may be compared to an archive, a veiled chamber housing the remnants of experience. Folds have relevance to memory and its storage and retrieval, which may be wilful, objective, deliberate, subjective, intimate, spontaneous or unbidden. The recesses, like memories, may hold on to the past, be both accessible and inaccessible. Memories are lost and found in the contours of the folded landscape, as traces of thoughts are woven and lost in the mobile surface. The surface furls and unfurls as with moments of forgetting and recollection, as dark and distant memories may be resistant, unyielding or capricious. The folds of memory offer a shifting vision between clarity and opaqueness, remembering and forgetting. The fold can be linked with timelessness, a frequency and movement, between being, memory and what is left to history.

The fold encompasses 'surfaces and planes which are known to exist but which are not accessible to view' (Pajczkowska, 2005: 224). These ideas connect with the meta-layers of narrative discussed by Genette, and also with Barthes' concept of *lexia*, where the page or narrative is conceptually not necessarily present, but implicated, overlaid, in a tissue-like network, extending and connecting between the seen and unseen, the tangible and intangible.

A story unfolds in acts of narration. In narrative terms folds in the surface create an enlivened panorama, the rise and fall produces darkness and light, pace and rhythm, an

Figure 48: 2011, folds and memory/ narrative; story within a story; relationship of pages

infinite movement may be found in the 'compositional forces' (Fricot: 249). The ever mobile plane and undulations create a varied narrative landscape, a physical terrain which may be shallow, provisional, fluid; or conversely, dark, furrowed or unyielding. The fold may be considered as 'a virtual, even cinematic, image of points, referrals, spaces; an infinity of folds always in motion, composing and recomposing' (Fricot: 250). The undulating surface is enigmatic; folds in narrative produce mobility and contrast creating an expressive surface. Meaning is brought into play through the momentum of the binary oppositions, through rise and fall, tension and release, the veiled and revealed.

The fold provides a landscape of convergence; the movement of the surface into folds creates an enigmatic, restricted field of vision. Language, narrative and the unspoken find rest in the seclusion and fragile shelter of the recess. Writing across and into folds adds richness and contrast to meaning, making language 'pregnant with possibilities' (Barthes, 1970: 82). The rising of cloth produces anticipation, of immanence and emphasis, as text rises out of the texture of the landscape. The intensifying motion of the repetition and undulations guides the flow of narration that both rises and descends creating a dialogue between the visible and the barely perceptible. The movement of the fold traces a path of fleeting glimpses, narrative hovers at the brink of visibility on the rise of a fold, then the surface becomes 'a space where small gestures slide into dreams' (Barnett, 1999: 25). The unfurling surface and fold unravel towards the last fold, 'a movement that moves further and further away from the centre' (Dimakopoulou, 2006: 24). The motion of the undulations ushers the narrative towards the dénouement, as meaning is lost at the horizon.

In language the verb to unfold means 'to increase, to grow', to blossom; 'whereas to fold is to diminish, to reduce', to cease (Barnett, 1999: 32). The old, discarded, hidden or unwanted may be folded away, preserved for posterity or forgotten. The folds of something new are exciting as anticipation and expectation are unpacked. The space between the inside and out, or on the edge may be a case of going over the top (the trenches, to be outrageous).

Whilst the fold may be fluid, cursive, a harmony of accord and undulation, a 'symphonic vision' of multiplicity (Müller, 2000, 6), the crease, in contrast, has more severe implications; whilst the fold may suggest, the crease may be considered to define – a hard edge and fixed line of ridges, an inescapable repetition across a harsh terrain. The immanence of creases are more hurried and abrupt, a sharp concertina movement, where the oscillations of the line are the peak and decline. Creasing bears the marks of wear and tear, as a used surface bears the marks and lines of use and age.

I have looked at different ways to utilise folds and immanence in my story telling. Folds can be used to unite verbal and visual elements with the page, adding movement and expression to the surface. The immanence, edges, and undulations in the mobile surface heightens the possibility of words and meaning; lending language a visibility and physicality. The juxtaposition and interaction between words, language, surface and folds and folding creates a transient, powerful and evocative narrative surface, one enlivened by 'peristaltic movement' (Fricot: 250).

## Intensifying the page and story world (surface)



My explorations of the fold impacted on the ways in which I came to regard surfaces and pages used in my work. To consider them not as static pages (whatever form they may take – paper, cloth or garment for instance) but as being an integral part of the narrative expression. Folds provide a means of producing layers of surfaces, making new connections between distant marks and textures on the surface through the fold and immanence, linking with narrative. Surfaces can be regarded a landscapes (figure 49) through which to examine narrative and its potential.



Surfaces can hold the patterns of time. The stains and shadows of use, or the 'patina of antique filth' (Orwell, 1969: 115). The marks of disintegration and decay are inscribed into the surface, a relationship between time and its effects. If memory can be seen to be a series of traces with each recollection reinventing a previous past, then the used surface may also be considered to be constructed of residues and imprints (figure 50). What is held in memory on the surface can be used to contribute to narration, as sepia whispers are given voice through marks and punctures which punctuate the surface like footnotes from history.



The degraded surface of cloth or paper represents the 'wear and tear of everyday life and the duration of time'

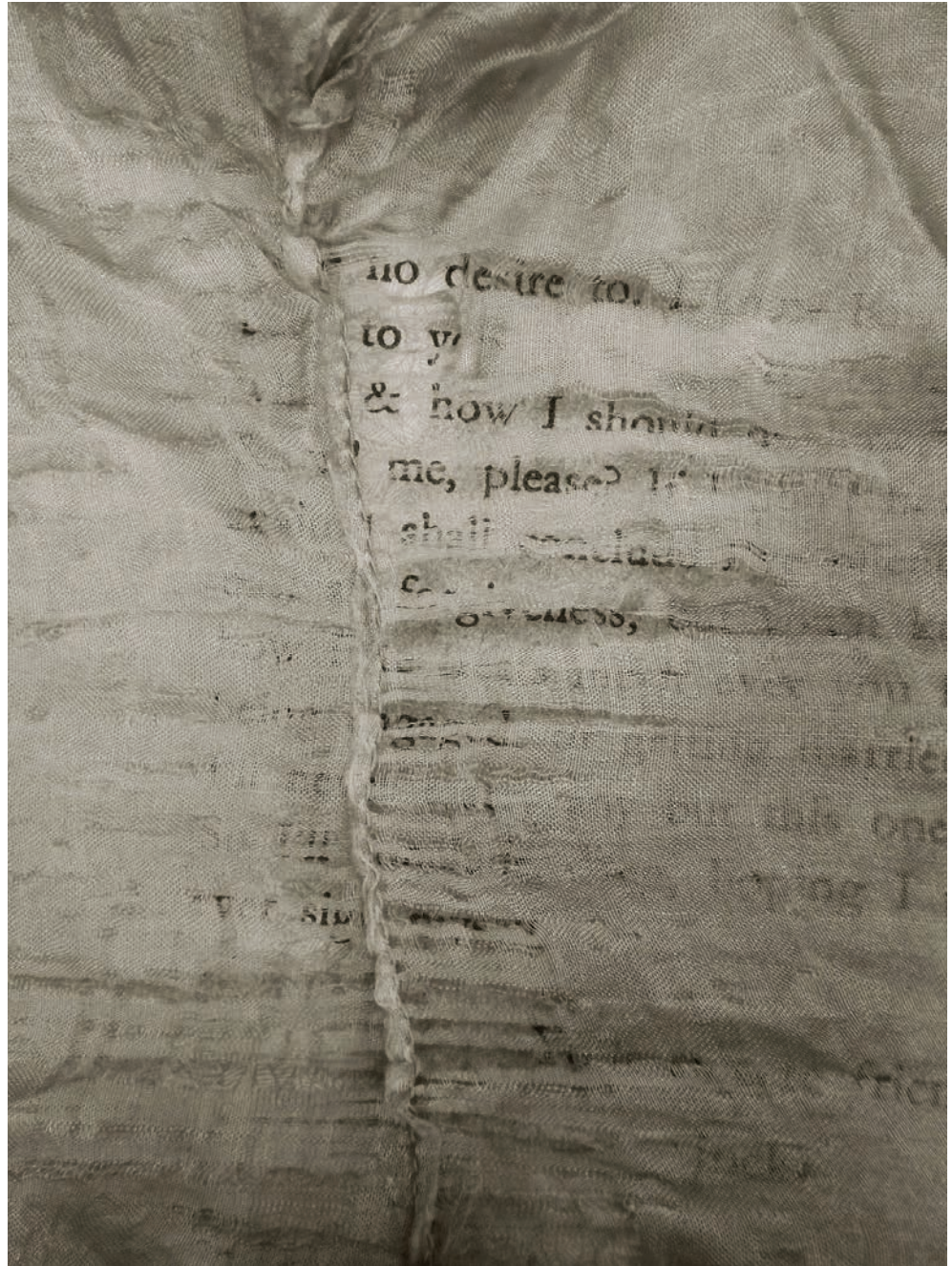
*Figure 49: book spine and landscape of narrative, and the fold*

*Figure 50: 2013, narrative and surface; stitch marks, seam and unpicked hemline, traces of use*

*Figure 51: 2014, cloth fragment (170x140mm), stretched and stitched to card*

*Figure 52: degraded surface, texture; seam and narrative space*





(Kelly, 2009: 221). The marks of the past are like scars on the surface, have a mysterious provenance – souvenirs from a journey – where the traces and patterns of use are etched into the surface. These engrained textures, indentations and scratches mark the passing of time and distance from the event of their making, as tears in the landscape of remembering and forgetting. The past leaves indelible traces on the present and such tattered fragments provide clues to the past, imperfect.

Surfaces have a range of potential states of being. They may be pristine, degraded, taut or loose. In figure 51, this small fragment of cloth (measuring approximately 160mm x 140mm) was once part of a garment, which I examined through visual, verbal and literary considerations. Increasingly heightened sensitivities to my materials enabled me to see 'narrative' in what was a crumpled fragment. The threadbare marks resemble lines of text, sentences constructed of disconnecting fibre. I stretched the

*Figure 53: narrative potential of the threadbare surface, seams and tension*

fragment of cloth by stitching it to card to create tension on the surface. This had the effect of revealing and accentuating the threadbare spaces around the seam (figure 52), which resemble both human and book spines.

The degraded surface can be compared with time and distance, producing gaps and absences, such as with remembering and forgetting. These patterns of presence/absence are held in the surface of the cloth. As a fragment, it references the whole garment of which it was once a part. It draws attention to the external and internal spaces which converge at the seam. I looked at the impacts that sunlight and shadow had on the surface and how it might be read differently as a result. Different types of light sources accentuate the contrasts between light and dark; the tangible and intangible. I have explored this fragment in a variety of ways, including through photography, and by placing text behind the cloth (figure 53).



Genette discusses metadiegetic layers of narrative, these reference stories off to the side; those not part of the first narrative. As discussed earlier, this concept altered how I consider composition. As part of my on-going research, I looked at different ways to create such meta-layers in my work; not through just physical means but through implicated layers of narrative, rather than actual

pages. One way in which I did this was using 'dust' to create edges and false edges; to reference time passing and narrative by suggesting the remains of page, as in figure 54.



*Figure 54: 2014, departure, thematic migration; visual/verbal and the page*

*Figure 55: 2014, 'help me endure and survive this bitterness'; ice, impermanence and the story world; examining the page; what and where it may be; time; trace and narrative; visual/verbal*



Another way I explored meta-layers was in my use of ice as a frozen page (figure 55). Ice is ephemeral; a transient and unstable surface. The icy landscape offers a series of views; of looking back in time, and of clarity and obscurity. Ice provides the potential to create depth and distance on the page, between what is on the surface, and what beneath. Language and narrative in ice can be explicit and implicit; made enigmatic and elusive through a fluctuating visibility achieved by freezing and thawing. Language, narrative and the traces of meaning are captured in frozen suspension. Melting ice gradually releases text from its grip and so the story is given voice. Freezing and thawing make language mobile and visible, creating meta-layers of narrative as a frozen and thawing surface is unlocked by time passing. The iced story world is layered, enigmatic and textured, both hiding and revealing, utilising the ethereal impermanence of ice for story telling.

### Transcendent treasures

Folds, surface and cloth in clothing takes on additional significance. The power of clothing to evoke what lies hidden beneath creates a compelling nexus of implicated new perspectives embodied 'in its twin functions of hiding and revealing, protecting and shrouding' (Pajaczkowska, 2005: 221), creating a rich surface lustre of enchantments and disenchantments.

Clothing without a body represents absence, the used garment 'holds traces of a lost moment, a body that once was' (Mavor: 173). These shadows of the wearer highlight a ghostly lack (figure 56) – the missing bodies of wearers past, which bear the traces of ownership and the long forgotten. Residues of the past echo in the present as the everyday lives and imagined hopes and fears of the original wearers are suffused in the surface, absorbed by the construction, acquiring a power of past use. Garments are infused with wishes, desires and anxieties, being 'adorned in dreams' (Wilson, 2007: title)

The provenance of garments becomes obscured as time passes, where unknown ownership, the traces of belonging are lost, and identity is abstracted. Over time the significance and connotation of clothing is altered; acquiring additional new layers of meaning which make 'dresses feel like history' (Mavor: 169). Photographs have the capacity to capture a moment in time. Cloth and clothing can equally hold traces of experience and the past. Rips, missing buttons, falling hemlines, the degrading surface are all expressions of ownership, these visible traces of use connect the present day with the past.

The marks of wear create sculpted imprints of use in places of tension. Elbows and seams hold the patterns and traces of everyday use and the passing of time. Hidden histories are articulated through the threadbare surface. The body shape may be taken up by cloth; different lives of garments are etching into the fabric, as residues of past repairs remain visible, as the punctuation marks of lived experience. Unpicked lines of stitching reveal needle marks, pricking the surface like rows of letters waiting to be expressed (figure 50).

Annette Weiner discusses inalienable (cloth) possessions as 'transcendent treasures', garments imbued with a spiritual sense, disconnected from identity or ownership,



'historical documents that authenticate and confirm for the living the legacies and powers' associated with the past (Weiner, 1992: 3). Such inalienable possessions are passed on or down in a community moving beyond 'commodity' as they are said to inherit intrinsic qualities of their owners, and 'mark [such] clothing as other, as borrowed' (Mavor: 164), these elusive traces lend additional potency and power to the handed down or cast off.

*Figure 56 (also referenced earlier: 2014, 'she remains with me just the same, and won't be forgotten'; the elusiveness of the nurse, trace and memory, narrative*

Garments can be considered as a sensuous second skin, the intimacy of an implicated proximity is sited in both a public and private space. Clare Pajaczkowska comments 'cloth in clothing is the most tactile of surfaces, it carries the contradictory meanings of being an external surface turned outward towards the gaze of the viewer, while remaining forever proximate' (Pajaczkowska, 2005: 240). Dress lies at the margins of the body and marks the boundary between self and other; a liminal, visible shroud

where layers of meaning are expressed in the enveloping, draping and covering, as the political, social and personal are caught in the syntax of drapery.

Clothing can be said to support 'not just one, but a multiplicity of folds' which unfurl 'like a moment of capture' (Frichot: 250). These folds create a line of indistinct shadows curving back on themselves in a play between shadow and light, surface and depth, where meaning may disappear into the fold, which both 'greet and absorbs' (Frichot: 252). Clothing exists in layers, both seen and unseen and has multiple tasks to perform. It is functional, providing warmth, support or protection; it may be social or decorative; used in ritual, such as a wedding clothes; or as marks of authority or association, such as with uniforms.

Because clothing moves with the body the soft undulations of folds can be regarded as embodiments of comfort. The flow of the surface follows the shifting contours of the body's movements, as the mechanics of tension, immanence, echo, crease and seam take up the patterns of use leaving scars on the surface. Folds and pleats act in a performance of gesture, the rise and fall mirrors the patterns of breathing. The exuberance found in the fullness and folds of clothing exposes an enlivened territory, the gorgeous folds in the cloth remind us of the irresistible lure of... finding and losing, hide and seek' (Pajaczkowska, 2007: 147). Surviving garments, like history discarded, provide the possibility for an expressive exchange between shape, folds and the poetics of space. The dark spaces and pockets of enigma encrypted into seams, folds and enclosures of clothing symbolise the 'architecture of refuge' (Frichot: 260).

Clothing may be viewed as a signifier of class and status highlighting the polar extremities of rich and poor, between power or its lack. Garments may be worn only once by their wealthy owners, or in contrast be inherited, repaired or altered for the less financially secure – 'dress can become the expression of an ideology, a social critique, or a combination of both' (Müller, 2000, 4). Responses to damage – the social indicators of use and dereliction – are polarised by cleanliness and maintenance, creating a language of aesthetic significance as the 'non-pristine surface can represent echoes of mortality, morbidity, and nostalgia... imbuing garments with layers of meaning and a sense of complex historical quotation' (Kelly, 2009: 221). Repairing and altering were considered 'women's work', connecting gender, status, and social position in the social and cultural specificities of the past. Repaired, altered or ill-fitting clothes were a sign of poverty and low social status. Victoria Kelly states that a 'material possession is subject to process... in terms of the effects of decay... but also its deliberate reversal in the form of repair... although the long term tendency will always be towards disintegration' (Kelly, 2009: 220).

Dress codes and rules of dress reflect cultures and time periods. The buying and wearing of clothing is not just a matter of economics, society also plays a part in directing and constraining the type of garments which may be worn between classes, ranks and genders, for example men not wearing skirts (kilts being an exception). Unwritten laws in respect of clothing may be used to regulate social order, as a means of maintaining and controlling privilege, be used to create social discrimination, or to uphold moral values predominant in a given community.

The power of clothing as symbol, and its location in time can be expressed by the designed silhouette, where a changing outline documents temporal movement and shifting social attitudes towards the body and clothing. The tight restrictions of corsets 'spectacularly stiffened'<sup>2</sup>, symbolise repression, containment, restriction, virtue; but with an ambiguous moral intonation, as the holding in embraces and gathers the [female] form in exotic tension of both hiding and revealing. The 1920s 'flapper' look reflected an ambiguous freedom; corsets were abandoned but replaced by fashion's need to look androgenous. For women who were not slim this meant resorting to various means of hiding the fullness of their shape, such as binding the chest. The Symington side lacer was a popular method for achieving the boyish look for the fuller figured. More extreme responses for the need to 'get the look' were sometimes adopted, such as mastectomy, which was discreetly advertised in lingerie departments (Walters, 1976: 6).



2 'Getting Dressed'  
workshop text,  
**Threads of Feeling**  
Exhibition, The  
Foundling Museum,  
2010

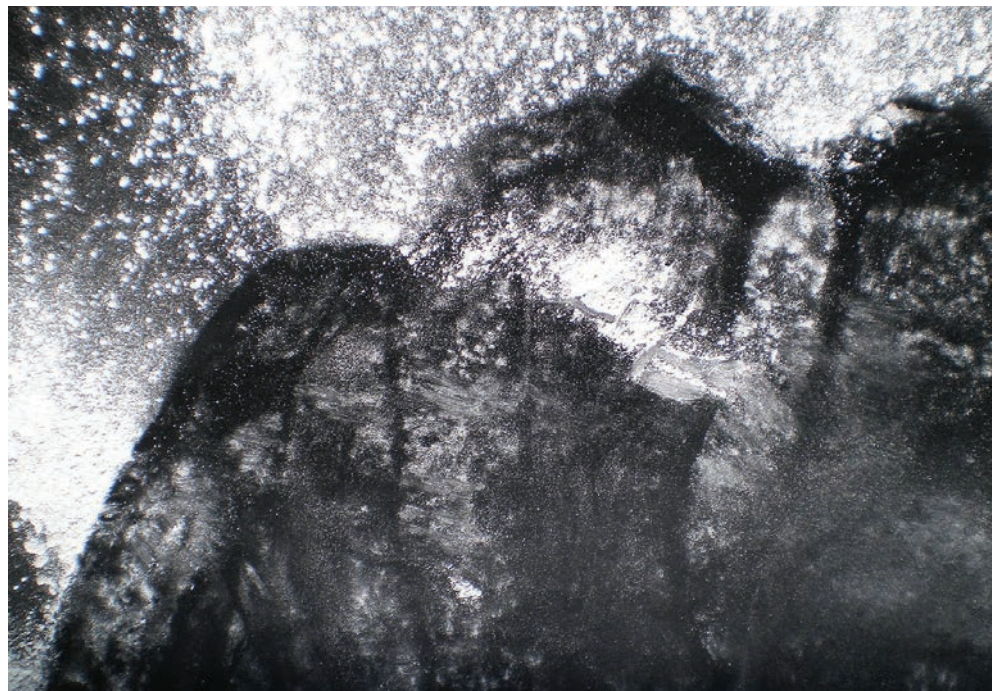
Figure 57: 2009,  
clothing, surface,  
internal space,  
narrative and  
memory

The internal spaces of clothing (figure 57), especially feminine, reveals the dark secrets of the decades. Metal, bone, cloth, ties, seams, pleats, darts and folds may support, conceal, flatten or enhance, be used to create false shapes, smoothing over the time bound contours of the body, as the fluctuations of the requirements of fashion dictated an ever changing silhouette. These whims of fashion created changes to ways in which restrictions to movement were experienced, where corsets and shifting hem lines led to differing constrictions. The effects of these changing outlines meant that different spaces of tension and the potential for degradation evolved; hems which once swept the ground gathering dirt became elevated through the dictates of fashion, and so were henceforth preserved and kept clean. A pattern of history and the capriciousness of haute couture thus is subtly documented through clothing.

In narrative, a story line might follow the outer and inner limits of a garment. Clothing is constructed in sections, bodice, sleeves, collars and cuffs. This creates the potential for different zones of 'reading', like chapters through which narrative unfolds. A bodice creates a centre, from which annexed, liminal spaces extend, leading to the extremes. Collars, cuffs and hems are end points, or conversely can implicate continuation. Collars act as a physical, liminal point between the body and the head, or the heart and the mind.

Surface textures and density can alter narrative expression. Chiffon, lace and threadbare surfaces offer different narrative potential. Lace is a filigree surface, providing a tactile and enigmatic page. The surface plays a game of binaries, an enticing vista, being both absent and present. The pattern of lace offers fleeting glimpses; between tangibility and gaps in the surface, as with remembering and forgetting as 'holes in the fabric of memory' (Hodgkin, Radstone, *C Pasts*: 237). The patterns found in lace, trace outlines of surface like a map or pattern of the world.

Clothing from the past carries traces. It has a story to tell, as the past becomes etched into the surface of cloth. Barthes and Genette demonstrate how a story comes to the



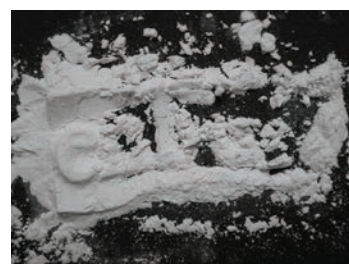
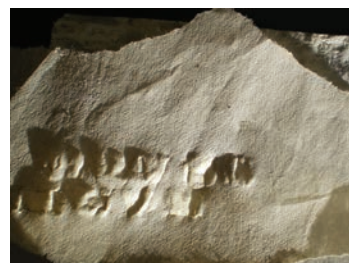
*Figure 58: 'she remains with me just the same, and won't be forgotten'; edge of memory, trace and surface; impression*

reader; looking at the underlying systems enabling that to happen. Clothing, and what lies beneath the constructed cloth, bears similarities to the mechanism of literature. It is how the garment comes to the wearer. In my story telling, clothing has increasingly been developed through fragmentation and abstraction, lending garments an ethereality that corresponds with enigma and memory (figure 58). Previously clothing in my work was designed through figuration; a representation of body or a suggestion of identity. I have composed clothing in such a way as to still reference a distant trace of person, but to maintain an elusiveness. I have explored narrative in clothing through surface textures, decorative details, the internal spaces, and points of tension. These threadbare remnants of past lives are used to augment the narrative; to add power and expressive potential to the tale.

## Woven voices

### Text and visible Language

Ekphrasis references different creative representations of the same thing. I have attempted to make verbal elements in my work become more than just readable, to develop them so that text is momentarily distanced from language, made visible, in a 'sensory and textual synthesis' (Mitchell, 1994: 142). In the *Migration of Meaning* chapter I discuss the changing relationship between the visual and verbal in my work. This is as a result of my investigating verbal elements through Barthes' concept of migration of meaning, or a network of relations. Equally considering type through an intertextual exploration has also informed that thinking and evolution of approach.



Figures 59, 60, and 61: 2011, 2013, 2014, visual/verbal relationship; visibility of language

I have attempted to make my tales as much felt, as seen or read. In fictional texts, verbal elements are the first language, which is used to create a visual impression. In visual material, visual codes are the first language, which then resort to the verbal, to linguistics, to interpret what is seen and to look for meaning. I have established a visual, verbal and literary dialectic, with ideas from each informing the other. What is written or seen on the page is augmented by additional implicated others, as narrative and meaning are 'waiting to be expressed at the horizon' (Culler, 1975: 106).

In a similar concept to migration, Derrida discusses the play of meaning, drawing attention to the limits, oppositions and structures within which meaning and understanding takes place. He argues that language is woven from multiple strands; that words and meanings are mobile, continually replacing and displacing each other, achieved, he suggests, through a series of traces and differences. This idea of the supplement, or what he also describes as 'the *parergon*', addresses what is intrinsic and extrinsic to



something, where a play of association reaches outwards, to the invisible limits of meaning.

The supplement describes those elements that are additional to something, but also a part of it. As a supplement, therefore, it is not just an addition to the work, but contiguous to/with it. In describing the *parergon* as a supplement to the main, Derrida uses the frame of a painting as an example of the liminal state between interiority and exteriority, and the circle of meanings that abound. He states, 'the parergon is a form which has as its traditional determination not that it stands out but that it disappears, buries itself, effaces itself, melts away at the moment it deploys its greatest energy' (Derrida, 1987: 61).

Words and language create patterns and textures on the page, texts are read through these patterns of recognition. Meaning is unraveled by traversing a familiar landscape, a map of understanding and meaning. Text in my work may be developed both on or off the page – it may rest on, rise up, trail off, or descend into the surface, such as with folds. Words and language can be made to merge with the material page, and may be emphasised, extended and enlivened by a 'cohabitation of languages' (Culler, 1975: 261). The expansion of the possibility for meaning of words may be achieved through an 'imaginary trail' of text (Barthes, 1977: 157), where sunlight, shadow, knots, stitching or dust augment the linguistic signifier, producing 'ripples of interference on the surface of the verbal representation' (Mitchell, 1994: 159).

I have attempted to work with the visibility of text and gesture of typography, creating a fragment of a tale through a jumble of linguistic and visual traces, 'so as to attain at every moment the drama of language' (Heath, 1972: 71). Text and language have been developed to over reach their symbolic capacity as linguistic signifiers, such that the physical, sensory and visual properties extend the potential and physicality of language, to act as triggers to memory and meaning.

Figure 62: 2014, stitch, dust, absence and memory, knots and the visual/verbal

The language of typography is built up through the structure of type, a scaffold for meaning. Type carries the potential to emphasise, to embolden, to inflect and to express. It carries weight and magnitude; it may be articulated as standard, or in whispers off to the side, in superior-, sub- or superscripts. Text makes a mark, it leaves an impression on the surface, comprising an effect of traces. It carries itself well, attending to deportment – it may be upright (as with standard), leaning (italics), on the line, above or below it. Type represents character and traces of thought, expressed through font, rows, alphabet, ascenders, descenders, shape, voice, size or style.

Type may be considered to represent absence and presence, through contrast and difference between internal and external spaces of characters, and transitions in the line. It speaks for the lost and lonely, for widows and orphans<sup>3</sup>, for family and character, the connected or disconnected. It concerns itself with status, the case of the upper and lower orders of inscription. Type is arranged to articulate absence and expression through ellipses, spaces, gaps, pauses, stops and punctuation. It has personality and gender, serif and sans, being soft and fluid, or bold and strong. It has its stars and exclamations. It can be made to inform, elaborate, decorate, or create.

Type can be required to be silent, to be read between the lines, an expression of what is left unsaid; the 'blanks and looseness of the text will be like footprints marking the escape of the text' (Barthes, 1970: 20). Type is life, a flowing hand of cursive writing extends outwards in a spatial expanse; letterforms end in terminals, a drift away from the main body. Descenders and ascenders rise and fall like the drawing of breath, to inhale and exhale, an oscillation of language and narrative, as the patterns of pace and rhythm, tension and release are united in a tangled alphabet of meaning.

Text observes and breaks the rules, of grammar and syntax, of convention, the imperative, the passive and conditional, and the past, tense. In narrative and memory sentences are like threads of feeling, a matrix of remembering, forgetting and re-telling, as experiences are caught in the lost spaces of intonation and time passing. The ordinate and subordinate clauses of remembering and recollection embellish, underline or erase. Language and meaning is written in the linearity of the syntagmatic and the expansive flow of the paradigmatic.

### Stitch – patterns of absence and presence

Deleuze's conceptual space of the fold has relevance to the stitch. Stitches appear and disappear to our view, piercing and pushing against the tension of the surface, pulsating above and below the plane, as it 'transforms thread into patterns of absence and presence' (Pajaczkowska, 2007: 151). This discontinuous flow of fibre punctuates cloth, a broken line of discourse in a material conversation. What lies beneath the upper layer are the gaps and spaces in language, the writing between the lines.

Following a linear path, thread may act as a marker for destiny, continuity and being/not being, and between body and soul, thereby linking thread with time and history. In physics open and closed strings are contenders for a theory of everything. Twisting thread, like DNA, spirals and revolves in a sequence moving between generations, carrying information and genetic codes transmitted through organic language.

*3: a widow in typography is a line of text that is separated from the paragraph to which it belongs; an orphan is a single word similarly separated*





A tangled line of thread or threads produces a spidery web of different meanings (figure 63): it may connote discord, multiplicity and disarray. The connected thread binds and attaches, but also unravels, an umbilical attachment and severing. In psychology, looking back, remembering and forgetting provides a protective screen on experience. Back stitch retraces its step, covers a path already trodden, reiterating as it passes across the surface, as with remembering.

Thread and its traces draws a line of ambiguity, above and beneath the surface. A line of irregular stitches, long, short, tight, loose, creates a pattern, as with a secret language, encrypted through the mysterious coding of dots and dashes. This writing between the lines creates enigmatic marks; in intelligence these might hide acts of distant writing, or in emergencies be a call for help. Stitches are made and can be unpicked; in computing what is locked or unlocked represents the binary code of the available and unavailable.

*Figure 63: 2014, 'I didn't mean to ever tell you'; narrative and memory; stitching, text and knots; visual/verbal*

Narrative threads run through a story, a manipulation of plot which is unravelled, concluded or left unfinished. Lines of stitching follow a path and pattern, like the pace and rhythm of narrative; what holds it all together. Stitching may stand in for writing, the cursive flow of thread replacing ink stain on paper. A line of stitching resembles experience, memory and recollection. That which is held in place, and also disappears to view. Memory is stored, misremembered, forgotten as both truths and fiction are fused in the creativity of recollection. Couching is the act of attaching precious materials to cloth by connecting it with thread on the surface of the cloth to enable the thread to be fully visible, unlike stitching which appears and disappears above and below the surface. These moments of visibility and invisibility resemble memory, being subject to edits, embellishment and loss.

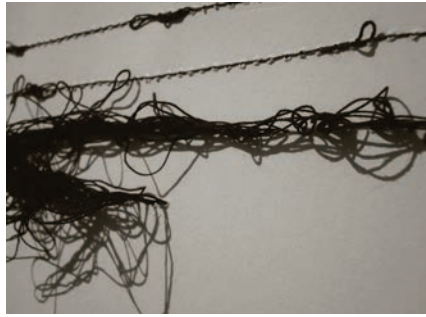
The binary relations of the stitch are expressed through care and neglect: to repair, mend, cherish, alter, the suturing of wounds, the joining together; conversely stitch names may be read as a catalogue of horror – chain, cross, lock, whip, blind, overcast, running – echoes and symbols of tension, indifference, and dereliction. Stitching underpins the very foundations of clothing, where seams represent a union and tension at the limits of the cloth. Coming apart at the seams is history unravelling, losing coherence or control, falling away into fragments.

Stitching is used to hold things in place, such as clothing, shoes, books or wounded skin. It may also be used as a marker for where things belong, to tack is to make an impermanent fixture, a loose and temporary connection. In construction pins also suggest such impermanence, and immanence, as if something is still in the process of being made complete, a temporary fixing, 'creating a fine scaffolding of apparent and material structure' (Mitchell, V, 2006: 341).

### The bitter end: knot

A knot fastens, creating unity by tying or interweaving. Knots have relevance in memory, narrative, absence and enigma. The knot is a paradox – it can be loose, tight, constructive or baffling. It strengthens, bonds, unifies, neatens loose ends and repairs. It is romantic – tying the knot is a symbolic demonstration of love. Threads may become knotted, the tangled confusion of a linear chaos. Knots and stitching may be simple, complex, decorative, or be used as embellishment. The Lacanian Borromean knot represents a chain of interconnecting threads as a way of representing the interdependence between the symbolic, the imaginary and the real. Breaking the link releases the connection and so hierarchies are destabilised.

There is tension in the interweaving of knots; an enigma of the seen and unseen, as thread is lost in a sinuous tangle. A knot symbolises unity, anxiety, continuity, order and disorder. The knot has significance in the emotions as 'the twists and turns of emotional turmoil... find graphic expression in the ligatures that haunt the imagination' (Pajaczkowska, 2007: 149). The ampersand 'a figure of infinity' (Pajaczkowska, 2007: 151) and the number eight are graphic expressions of a line of thought, the cycle of the iterative. Distance is measured in knots. Knots are tied for remembrance. Knots return, repeat, resist, converge and correlate.



In narrative the knot can function as a limiter, delimiter, the end of something, punctuating the flow of discourse, to hold fast, to represent a break in a linear path, acting as marks of ellipsis, pause or stop. The knot resembles the twists and turns found in a plot line, the tensions and relations of movement and rest, as the pace of narrative rises to a compelling crescendo, a gripping story. The

knot is enigmatic, revealing and concealing. It can disrupt order, control the flow and rhythm. A knot is dénouement, as a narrative thread reaches closure at the bitter end<sup>4</sup>.

Knots are an entanglement, a gnarled assemblage, like memories gathered over time. Past regrets or deep secrets become locked in memory, they may be resistant, like barbed wire, which represents security and fixity; but is also a repellant. Knots may be used as an underlying mechanism; to hold things in place – what goes on behind the scenes, to hold things tight – an anchor. Memories are held together by patterns of being, 'the traces of the past constitute the background foundation of the construction of one's identity: they carry the notion of duration, stability, permanence, and a sense of rootedness' (Appelbaum, 2010: 91). A story of being is caught up in a smooth line, where a tangle on the line makes a mark on an otherwise smooth plane; the rise in the landscape leaving a trace of existence.

Knots cast long shadows; meaning may be secured deep in a tangle of threads, impossible to unravel. The knot is a symbol of the escapable and inescapable, the knotted enclosure, woven and twisting, as a nexus of dark dreams tied up in the past (figure 65). The pliant knot is like a memory which is hard to hang on to. The undone knot signifies freedom, the undone or unravelling, as with seams or memories falling away, fading over time, moving ever further away from the original. The contrast of the knot/undone is enigmatic, a 'paradox of movement and stillness... held in the metaphor of the knot untied' (Pajaczkowska, 2007: 152).

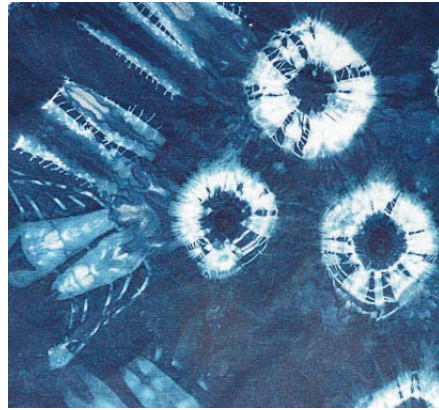
*Figure 64: narrative correspondences, knotted machine stitching, rows, tangles and knots. Thread and shadows extend the physical boundary of language and connotation*

*4 the 'bitter end' refers to the end of a rope that has been tied off, hence the expression 'hanging on to the bitter end'*

*Figure 65: 2014, 'endure'; knots, memory, narrative; visual/verbal*



Loops are threads entwined, they are overwritten by the movement of thread, caught up in tension, escaping in moments of release. Loops turn back on themselves in a repeating cycle – a repetition akin to looking back, memory and time passing being inescapably connected.



The Japanese shibori dyeing technique (figure 66) uses a series of knots and twists which are used to decorate cloth. Isolated areas of fabric are bound by thread, using the resulting tension and enclosure to resist dye, leaving a pattern of process, the punctuation marks of craft. Untying the knot leaves traces of the past, the original cloth is both present and absent, fleeting glimpses of the untainted original are contrasted with a surface consumed by the saturation of colour.

## Tissue texts – impacts on story telling

I asked what impact literary codes might have on my creative materials. In response to my research with narratology my story telling has become less and less concerned with providing ‘information’. I have been examining ways to produce narrative, and the possibility for meaning more enigmatically in my story telling. As part of this investigation, I have looked at what effect, if any, giving titles to my work may have on ‘reading’ of the work. When displaying my practical responses to the Semple letters I have included the text from the letters, but obliquely, at the ‘end’ of the display. This allows an open space for the viewer, but their inclusion helps to provide a context for the story telling, so adding to the narrative and evocative potential.

I have established a visual, verbal and literary dialectic. This exchange has informed editorial decisions (for instance in respect of the Semple letters – reading of, and how much to reveal); it has impacted on my materials, specifically the considered selection of, and thinking informing them, and has led to new compositional choices and decision making; it has altered my treatment of the visual/verbal in my work; and has produced new thinking in respect of a range of processes my materials may be put through. I have reappraised the relationship between the explicit and implicit narrative and meanings in my tales.

My intertextual examination, as discussed in this chapter, has impacted collectively on all of the materials I use, and/or processes through which I might put them. This cross-pollination of ideas has informed my thinking, giving me a broader understanding of multiple new perspectives and potential significations in each of those materials, some of which are discussed here. Examples of this reciprocal exchange are looking at folds and text, folds in clothing, the degraded surface and text, stitching, knots and text, or any variation or combination of these. The possibility for meaning that these non-visual approaches bring has been investigated through practical experimentation, and conceptual examination; and new thinking resulting from this activity has subsequently become part of a new working practice. This network of relations potentially immanent in my materials means that they are embellished by the ‘conditions of

Figure 66: Shibori dye technique; Photo: lovefibre.com

possibility' (Conley: 176) of which I have become increasingly aware as a direct result of my examination of, and responses to *S/Z* and *Narrative Discourse*. The tales I have produced have drawn on such implications and possibilities.

Additional layers of thinking inform the processes through which my stories may be filtered. What would once have been a finished piece, such as embroidering or printing onto a garment, is now put through additional processes. Examples of this include merging text and folds; by flooding the surface with sunlight or shadow, so impacting on the mood and possibility for narrative and meaning. I have added texture to text and texture to surface. I have merged the visual and verbal in a newly perceived landscape; a textured and tactile surface that embraces type, 'like motes of dust' (Barthes, 1970: 19), as meaning and narrative are flecked on an unfurling landscape. I have utilised folds to overwrite meaning, creating layers of narrative. An example of this is that I have augmented text and surfaces with 'dust'. 'To dust is to clean, but also to layer something lightly' (Steedman: 160); to scatter and to cover. Dust is ephemeral, an unstable layer, it marks the effects of time. Disturbing the dust scratches away at the surface. Dust is both seen/unseen, it can alter the appearance or surface view. Memory is a dream-like dust, as remembering and forgetting overwrite the past. Time hinders memory, veiling its specificities, blurring its details, 'accentuating too selectively' (Richter, 2010: 150).

Talcum powder, chalk, icing sugar, flour, mould, grated pastels and charcoals replicate dust and the effects of dust, a narrative recipe for exploring the elusive, ephemeral and intangible. In my story telling, dust represents what is left of the past, 'memory cannot happen without the obscuring layers of time and dusty markers of mortality' (Richter, 2010: 151). Dust is a fragment of something that once was, the faint traces of a story. Dust is ethereal, fleeting, it offers glimpses of what lies beneath, yet also conceals; a tissue like layer. Dust provides a veneer over the story world; it can be used to merge the visual and verbal with the page, concealing and revealing language and fragments of narrative; acting as a cloak between the story, the past and the viewer.

Dust may also give an ethereal substance to memory, creating a tangible page from an intangible origin. Examples of this can be seen in the talcum powder monoprints included in this thesis, and in figure 59. This trace of a garment creates an impression through a 'fleeting gesture [which] settles onto paper' (Strauss, 1998: 19).

The narrative in my tales may be visible, implicated, overlaid or inferred. These layers are what Genette describes as metadiegetic; stories within stories. Meaning might be considered to radiate away from the first level of narrative, and from first sight as 'a possibility not yet produced' (Genette, 1988: 156). The word 'text' in the original Latin (*textus*) means tissue. I have come to describe my tales as tissue texts. By this I mean that they are enigmatic and of uncertain meaning; narrative is both explicit and implicit. The tales contrast between the oblique and transparent: meaning may be obscure, but the stories are also ethereal, being expressed through an aesthetic of ephemerality.

Tissue texts also reference the past and time passing, as the events of the past are obscured by the passing of time and what is lost from memory. Time creates layers; from the original story and the present; between remembering and forgetting; and between the story, the surface and the traces of language and meaning.

My tales are without beginning, middle or end, they are impressions or traces of the past; where meaning might be considered to hover in an ethereal narrative landscape. Visual and verbal elements unite in my story worlds to act as triggers to narrative, and triggers to memory. Tissue texts reference the already read, seen or heard, as discussed by Barthes in *S/Z*. A play of traces and recognition brings into view associations and implications, filling in the gaps and spaces; those left by my edits, and those created by the passing of time. Meaning in my tales may be 'dimly felt, not fully confronted, [but it] grips the person more tightly because it is only partially known (Leslie, 2003: 173). Different layers of thinking now inform my story worlds; this relates to my materials and in respect of the nature of my tales, regarded as tissue texts in a landscape of narrative.

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C o n c l u s i o n

*'The end  
must be made  
a transformation  
of the beginning  
so that meaning  
can be drawn  
from the perception  
of resemblance  
and difference'*

*Figure 67: 'and time  
be kind enough to  
help me endure and  
survive this  
bitterness'*

*Culler, 1975: 222*

This conclusion will provide a concise summary of the chapters in this thesis, indicating the contribution each chapter makes to the research as a whole. It will serve as a reminder of the aims and objectives of the research, including the research questions and how these have been synthesized with the methodology, process and findings. It will highlight the contribution this research makes and will indicate the implications of the research to the wider context; and finally identify scope for further research and development.

Literary concepts and methods produce new thinking and different perspectives on visual forms of communication, and what it might mean to communicate visually. I have taken literary theory and examined it directly through my practice in order to evaluate its relevance in visual story telling and to visual methodologies. Specifically, I have investigated what narratology can bring to the reading, analysis and understanding of the Semple letters (and other non-fiction); assessed the ways in which literary perspectives may produce different creative responses to the development of that resource, including looking at materials and composition; I have examined what the edge of memory may entail; and investigated my materials through literary, and other physical and metaphysical thematic layers. In so doing, I have enhanced the narrative potential of my sources and story telling, establishing a dialectical relationship between the visual, verbal and literary.

Chapter one establishes my methodology, methods and sources. In line with this practice-based research, and to account for the research questions, my methodology is one of praxis. My sources are the Semple letters, my practice, *S/Z* and *Narrative Discourse*. My discovery of the Semple Collection made a significant impact on my research. A crucial research decision was to concentrate exclusively on Jock's last letter and Meg's draft reply. The consequences of doing this were that it enabled me to refine my research focus. In working with these short texts – the same starting point for all practical investigations – I have been able to demonstrate how literary codes have produced new (non-visual) thinking, methods and approaches, as evidenced in my chapters and practical work. The new perspectives and understandings resulting have led to me be able to respond to this source material through many and varied approaches and outcomes.

I have examined the literary theories directly through my practice. My methods include accounting for the research questions through the production of work, framed against literary codes; and the documentation, analysis, evaluation and categorisation of this work. I have also developed strategies for problem solving; for example it was sometimes necessary to adapt some of the literary codes, noticing where difference was evident, and/or translating them into meaningful and relevant visual methods.

This research activity has been supplemented by 'reading' the work of contextually relevant practitioners through literary codes. This provided the opportunity to familiarise myself with the codes, and to be able to analyse the process of transferral of literary concepts objectively. Additionally, by referring to the work of other practitioners I was able to see how visual methods might differ from the new perspectives and approaches that I have increasingly gained as a consequence of this research.

I have documented all practical investigations in research sketchbooks/reflective journals; and evaluated and categorised this work into three tiers. These are: a record of all practical work undertaken; logging the differences literary codes produced, documenting what was working and what was less successful, and why; and finally, producing a showcase category of the best examples of work. This showcase material was kept under constant critical appraisal in order to account for on-going work and evolving methods, approaches and new knowledge, as acquired.

Dissemination of my research has been through display and exhibition, presented academically to peers through research poster displays, paper presentations, attendance at conferences, and through published journal articles (see Appendix eight for full list). An additional, and unexpected, outcome was that when presenting my research at conferences I discovered that academics from outside the field of visual communication found my research of relevance. Because of my work with the *Semple letters*, both the literary analysis and practical responses, this research may also be of significance to epistolary scholars, and academics interested in narrative enquiry.

The subject of this research is visual story telling through a visual/verbal practice. More specifically I have investigated the correspondences between narrative and memory – what I describe as the edge of memory, and accounting for the fragmentary nature of my tales. My interest in the links between memory and narrative were informed by my own family history. My Masters degree work was founded on haunting events from my grandmother's and, unexpectedly, my great grandmother's life stories which were the basis for my study. I examined the story through the parallel perspectives of biography and social history. Having completed this work, and having researched memory as part of that study, I realised that I had only just touched on the surface of the potential of how this story might be investigated. Not by looking at the specifics of the story, but by looking at the different ways in which the story *could* be told.

As such, rather than approaching the subject exclusively from a visual communication perspective, I used two literary theories to address the narrative component of my story telling, whether explicit or implicit. This research does not seek to challenge *S/Z* and *Narrative Discourse* from a literary perspective; it does so from the position of visual communication. It examines literary theory directly through visual practice; questioning what it can mean to communicate visually.

Visual communication is a broad field; to account for this I have established a specific contextual framework within which to locate this research. This includes: those analysing visual story telling; visual practice where the use of specific materials, such as stitch or clothing, are deployed for story telling; visual practice that incorporates both the visual and verbal; and memory and narrative in visual practice. My chapters have demonstrated the ways in which I incorporated non-visual methods in my story telling.

## Narratology

Roland Barthes and Gérard Genette were both leading figures in structuralist and post-structuralist narratology. *S/Z* and *Narrative Discourse* are complementary texts, each

bringing a different and specific perspective on narrative analysis. Barthes has a particular interest in language and examining the plurality or migration of meaning, of both language and narrative. Genette has a different focus, being interested in examining underlying structures and mechanisms in fiction, showing how narratives are variously constructed. Both theories are not connected with the meaning of a story; Genette shows how stories are organised and come into being; Barthes helps us to see how meaning in fiction is not fixed or stable by making reference to connotation and symbolism which brings the potential for difference.

Barthes and Genette have provided a theoretical framework underpinning this practice-based research. As far as I have been able to ascertain, these two theories have not been studied together *directly through* visual practice before. Visual communicators sometimes refer to, and reference, Barthes' works (but rarely, if ever, Genette's), but they do this in the context of discussing visual practice; whereas I have examined the literary concepts *as practice*.

As such, as well as being the major influence on the theoretical element, they have also been crucial in informing and influencing my practical work as well. Rather than looking at other practitioners to inform my thinking in this respect, I have used literary theory to achieve this. I have taken concepts from outside my discipline in order to challenge that discipline and what it may entail. This has provided different perspectives and considerations through which to research my subject. Had I used a visual theoretical framework it may have provided a more detailed understanding of visual methods and approaches, but would have been less likely to supply new approaches and methods.

## Synthesis

### Migration of meaning

*The Migration of Meaning* chapter documents my examination of Barthes' *S/Z*. The investigation of the key themes of *lexia*, codes and migration was made through a variety of critical and practical responses.

In the chapter, I use the example of the 'Gertrude' blouse to demonstrate how 'reading' this early work through Barthes *lexia* and codes enabled me to re-imagine and re-invent this piece. Literary methods provided me with different ways to consider and



arrange this story, working outside the linear or logical flow of the narrative, instead using a thematic reading to produce new correspondences between words and the garment itself (figure 68). This includes the physical text and its relationship with the surface, and also in respect of the narrative and surface, and surface textures, such as decorative details that could be correlated with narrative elements. This work was also informed by my materials examination, specifically folds and folding. In response to *S/Z* I made an intertextual examination of my materials, discussed later.

Figure 68: 'Gertrude';  
*lexia* and folds

*S/Z* made a significant change in how I consider composition, specifically in response to my work with lexia and codes. *S/Z* provided me with a new awareness of a matrix of potential meanings evident in language and narrative. These meanings are dispersed across the entire story, not dependent on any logical or linear order. These literary insights expanded my comprehension of narrative space, and how it might be developed.

I have examined and challenged what narratology might offer in respect of producing different conceptual approaches to the visual/verbal relationship. Barthes' concept of migration encouraged me to re-think the implications of any text used in my work. I considered not only its linguistic meaning, but also looked at its migratory potential through physical, sensory and visual means; and in respect of the text, the narrative and relationships of both with the page. I also examined the 'visibility' of language. This research altered how I treat visual and verbal elements in my work; and how they may be more integrated with the narrative and page, not as previously, as separate units to arrange on the page.

### The landscape of narrative

As with *S/Z*, *Narrative Discourse* was examined through a variety of critical and practical responses. One of the major impacts *Narrative Discourse* had on my practice was that it exposed me to an expansive conceptual narrative space, building on those ideas gained from my work with *S/Z*. This is not connected with the meaning of the story, but how the story is organised; the underlying mechanisms that enable the work to come to life. These are not necessarily linked with any linear or logical flow, as with Barthes' concept of lexia and codes. This new thinking was enabled by examining order, duration, frequency, mood and voice through my practice, which brought new understanding of how these different aspects could be contemplated as being overlaid in the story. Genette's division of fiction into narrative and events also provided a non-visual method to analyse the *Semple* story. This may be through the suggestion of stories within stories, or meta-layers of narrative, whether implicit or explicit; physical or metaphysical.

This led to new ways to 'see' the page as an expansive space; a multi-layered metadiegetic story world. My investigations with stitched text and ice were a response to meta-layers in visual narrative, using freezing and thawing to produce a multi-layered, transient and ethereal page. Folds created by the freezing process produce undulations and therefore multiple surfaces, these can be linked with text, and also corresponds with the passing of time, memory, and narrative. Folds create the potential for enigma, as text becomes engulfed by freezing and folds, the opaqueness of frozen ice makes narrative disappear from view. The freezing and thawing adds density and layers to the page. The relationship of text with the page is integrated by the freezing water, words are frozen in this landscape; language is captured and made visible, and threads trail both away from the surface, and between different states of thawing.

Genette's codes of mood and voice deal with narrator and perspective. Examining these codes through my practical investigations also made a major impact. Mood and voice were instrumental in helping me to read, analyse and respond to the letters using

literary methods to do so. I analysed the letters with an awareness of the individual characters in that story and how they could be variously expressed through their imagined emotional, psychological, sensory and physical connections with the story, its events and their imagined responses. These character 'insights' were investigated in connection with the narrative space, the text, and the individual's place and role in the story. As a result of this work I came to describe these emotional, psychological, physical or sensory aspects in narrative through an additional layer, what I term *émotif*, augmenting Genette's framework of *histoire* and *récit*.

I produced a number of practical responses to perspective and narrative space, including the three books I initially made (figure 71), the work with scrolls investigating Meg's responses to Jock's words, and installation work examining the nurse and her place in the narrative and her relationship with the story and time passing.

### ***S/Z and Narrative Discourse***

I have questioned what narratology might bring to the reading, analysis and understanding of the Semple letters (and other non-fiction). The two analyses and discussions of the letters in the narrative chapters highlight the varied ways in which the Semple letters have been analysed and explored using literary codes, producing different ways to subsequently respond through my practical work.

My first analysis of the letters was made through Genette's codes of order, duration, frequency, mood and voice; and the division between narrative and events. I returned to *S/Z* in order to analyse the Semple letters through Barthes' codes of enigma, action, connotation/denotation, symbolism and culture. This work enabled me to read the letters through a second literary perspective, producing new information not noticed by my reading through Genette's codes. The theories have complemented each other in this respect.

### **Tissue texts**

I investigated what impacts literary codes might have on my creative materials. In response to *S/Z* I made an examination of some of my materials and processes through the concept of migration, as discussed in the *Tissue Texts* chapter. This involved exploring folds and folding, surfaces, clothing, text, stitching and knots through varying thematic layers. These include memory, the emotions, or the collocational range and contexts of such materials or processes – for instance by looking at different uses or significations of knots. Since this examination relates to my practice and materials this enquiry took the form of a creative 'adventure in thought'.

Undertaking this examination changed my comprehension of the possibility of my materials, seeing things in them not previously noticed, such as the correspondences between visual, verbal and literary (for example as in figures 69, 70). The study added significations, correlations and connotations not previously considered, heightening my sensitivities to my materials, so advancing my pre-existing visual methods and approaches. Different layers of meaning inform my story worlds; these may be visible, implicated, overlaid or inferred.

Examining Barthes' and Genette's literary codes directly through my practice, whatever form this investigation has taken, has produced new thinking and responses in visual practice. The migratory investigation I made of my materials extended that work. A reciprocal relationship was established between the different literary theories, and my responses to them, such as the materials examination that accounts for ideas from both Barthes and Genette. The collective impact of these investigations is therefore attributable to these three lines of enquiry.

### Research reflections

One of the early challenges I faced was having to produce, and 'question' my practical work and responses in the context of *S/Z* and *Narrative Discourse*. Being conscious of the need to address certain questions was, at times, challenging. Additionally, the similarities I noticed between some literary concepts and visual communication methods, such as Barthes' codes and how visual material is read, or the level of detail in *Narrative Discourse* caused tension in early research. By logging and documenting what was working, and what was less successful, and seeing the positive results of doing this, I was able to build confidence as a researcher to recognise what, and when, such elimination might be necessary. Part of the learning experience has been knowing how to respond to such tensions. Also being able to identify what had potential in visual practice was key; this sometimes involved finding equivalence or difference where appropriate, in order to translate concepts from the literary to the visual.

The consequences of omitting some specific aspects of literary theory meant that only those ideas that had meaningful relevance were incorporated into my practice. Those concepts provided difference and new working methods, with the effect of extending and thus changing my practice. As Genette comments 'what would theory be worth if it were not also good for inventing practice?' (Genette, 1988: 157).

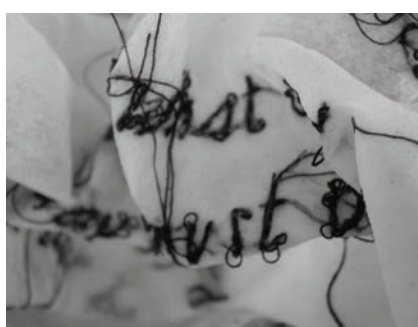
I questioned whether I might have arrived at the same or similar outcomes through 'normal' visual practice. However, as I have documented in this thesis and accompanying book, by continual documentation and on-going critical appraisal I have been able to look at what I have produced and been able to trace it back directly to specific aspects of theory.

I have asked what the differences are between 'normal' visual research and practice-based research in the context of doctoral study. The critical difference is that practice-based research aims to challenge visual practice in order to generate responses and knowledge that are not just new or relevant to the individual, but that those responses and knowledge also have demonstrable and tangible relevance to and for others.

### Key findings

My contribution is made by joint submission; a body of practical work in response to the research questions, supported by this written account of the investigation and enquiry. Both provide evidence of the process, findings and significance. I have included selected images of my work in this thesis and accompanying book; each





Figures 69, 70, 71, 72 and 73: visual representations of key findings

image has been selected for a specific reason, either to drive a discussion in relation to how concepts from literary theory informed that piece of work or concept, or are evident in that work. Some have been included to demonstrate the different thinking that informs my work framed against earlier work.

*S/Z* and *Narrative Discourse* have been examined together directly through visual practice, as practice. I have used them to investigate and challenge what visual communication may entail. By examining narratology from a non-literary position, in addition to the new thinking it has produced in respect of visual practice, it also adds to the matrix of responses to these two narratological theories; and to the field of narrative enquiry.

Literary theory helped me to understand my subject more comprehensively, offering alternative perspectives on how to consider and develop the edge of memory. It has also provided new ways for me to examine fugitivity and fragmentation of narrative, and how this may be variously achieved. I have developed my tales to be as much felt, as seen or read, increasingly providing an open space for the reader/viewer; literary concepts have helped me to do this with better understanding.

I have questioned what narratology might bring to the reading, analysis and understanding of the *Simple letters* (and other non-fiction); what changes literary codes might bring to how I compose my work; what impact they may have on my creative materials; and have challenged how I consider and develop the visual/verbal relationship in my work. Examples of my practical responses to these research questions and my discussion of this work through the chapters, demonstrates the ways in which literary concepts have been examined and the impacts they have made on my thinking and working methods.

Literary codes have provided a framework for extracting, processing and interpreting information differently. Narratology has

contributed to my being able to make an original response to the letters; they have been examined through over 80 different creative responses so far, informed by both literary theories.

### Relevance, further research and development

I have identified a context for this research; what I have defined throughout this thesis as 'visual communication': this includes those analysing visual story telling; visual practice where the use of specific materials, such as stitch or clothing, are deployed for story telling; visual practice that incorporates both the visual and verbal; and memory and narrative in visual practice. I have examined what literary theory can bring to visual forms of communication.

This research adds to the existing sum of knowledge in the field of visual communication by providing evidence of the different responses produced through a visual, verbal and literary dialectic. It has challenged what it can mean to communicate visually and offers evidence of a new, non-visual perspective through which to consider visual communication, and thus contributes towards advancing the discipline.

### Future

The outcomes of this research have the potential to be incorporated into a teaching programme. I plan to develop and teach my findings through a series of workshops. I have been given permission to trial this on students on the MA Sequential design/ illustration course at the University of Brighton.

I researched the base where Meg was stationed during the war – 'Rippon Camp'– and found documentation and photographs of the camp and people working there. It is tempting to pursue this line of research, but in examining the edge of memory I prefer to leave the story with the last letter. I have already identified different ways to explore 'the Semple letters' in my practical work, extending some previous work and new work not yet started. I intend to pursue some of the discussions made in the *Tissue Texts* chapter, for example researching 'Transcendent Treasures' further, through both practical and written work.

My research has questioned what literary theory can bring to the practice of visual story telling. I have examined ways to produce narrative, and the possibility for meaning enigmatically in my story telling. This I have attempted to achieve through a visual, verbal and literary dialectic. This exchange has informed editorial decisions (for instance in respect of the Semple letters; reading of, and how much to reveal); it has impacted on my materials, specifically the considered selection of, and thinking informing them, and has led to new compositional choices and decision making; it has altered my treatment of the visual/verbal in my work; and has produced new thinking in respect of a range of processes my materials may be put through. I have reappraised how to develop explicit and implicit narrative and meaning in my tales. I have investigated correspondence, trace and the landscape of narrative through a visual, verbal and literary dialectic.

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Figure 74:  
 intertextuality and  
 the page

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### **Theatre**

Punchdrunk, *Masque of the Red Death*, Battersea Arts Centre, London, 2007/8

### **Specific exhibitions**

*Anthony McCall*, (lighting), Serpentine Gallery, London, February, 2008

*The Concise Dictionary of Dress*, Exhibition/Installation, Blythe House, V&A, London, June 2010

*On the Move*, (depicting movement in visual media), Estorick, London, April 2010

*Threads of Feeling Exhibition*, Foundling Museum, London, September, 2011

*Evolution of Language Exhibition*, The British Library, London, 2011

### **Archival sources**

Imperial War Museum archive, Item 5821, Catalogue date 1996-11-08

Nyman's House and Garden, archive visit, and follow up interview with former maid, 2007

### **Practice submission book**

'Meaning is not "at the end" of the narrative, it runs across it'

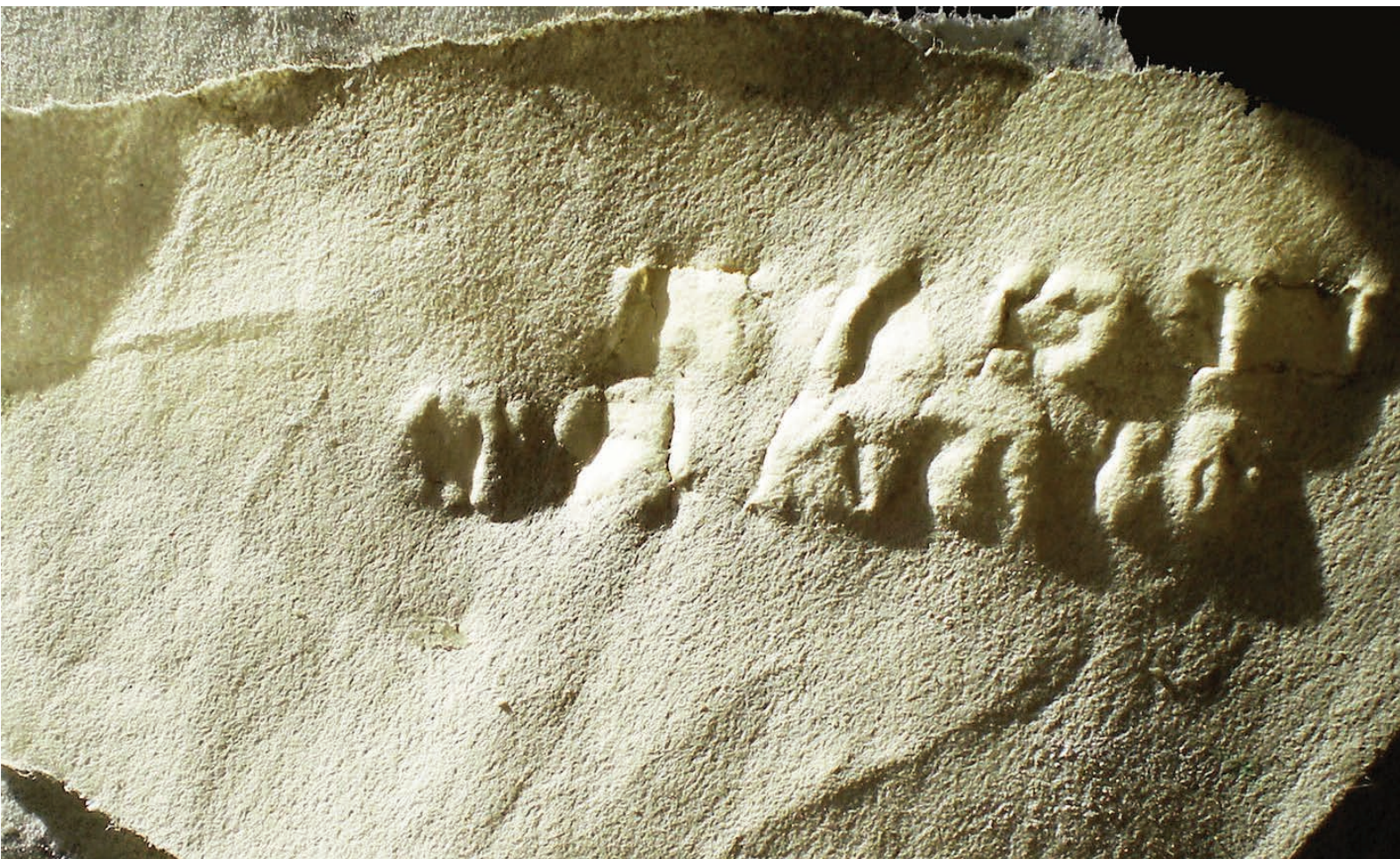
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'Narrative always says less than it knows, but it often makes known more than it says'

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'How great a lustre they mutually reflect upon one another'

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A p p e n d i c e s

## Appendix one: Jock's letter

Wireless Testing Park.  
Biggin Hill,  
Westerham, Kent

Dear Meg

Thanks for yours to hand yesterday, & sorry to hear they make you work such long hours. You must be fed up now. You're lucky to have such a chum tho! I had a letter from Will the other day, & he says he 's up in the trenches now, facing Fritz, & dodging all sorts of things.

I've not heard any further from the G.P.O yet, so I 'll drop them a line to tell them where, & how, I am now-a-days, I think. But there's something I want to tell you, about, Meg, something which I didn't mean to ever tell you, but now feel I must tell. I expect you 'll think all sorts of things about me, but it's better to know now than when too late, so I'll tell you everything. Well, when I was in Hospital I met a Nurse there, & we became very friendly, & it was n't long before I realized how much I was in love with her, so I told her & found that she

also cared for me, but, alas, she'd sworn never to marry, owing to a weak heart, due to rheumatic fever or something; & nothing I could say or do would make her relent, but she promised always to write & let me know how she was getting on, & she writes yet, but never a word of love or anything of course. So I gave it up in despair, & then you came along, & I forgot, – but not for long, however. Try as I might she remains with me just the same, & won't be forgotten. So, althou' you know how much I like & respect you, you can see how hopeless it is for me to really care for you as I ought to. I 'm sorry Meg, Heaven alone knows how sorry, but I won't stand in your light any longer & spoil your other chances. I can only hope you 'll meet some boy who 'll love you as you deserve to be loved, while I must just go on hoping & waiting that someday she 'll want me & forget all the rest. I 've not asked her again since, of course, for I not only knew it was no use but as I said before, I hoped I should

Figure 75: 2013, 'owing to a weak heart'

Text and line breaks as original

have no desire to. I know how cruel I've  
been to you, Meg, but try to forgive, & tell me  
what & how I should do now. Won't you write  
and tell me, please? If I don't hear from you  
again I shall conclude I've offended  
past all forgiveness; but you'll know  
how Fate treats me if ever you hear of me  
being engaged, or getting married, for  
I'll never marry any but this one girl.  
So I'll conclude, Meg, hoping I may  
ever sign myself

Your sincere friend,

Jock

---

## Appendix two: Meg's Draft Reply

No.1 Officers Co.  
Command Dépôt,  
North Camp,  
Rippon.  
13.6.17

The heart of me is not to "tell  
you what and how you must do"  
May fate one day grant you  
your heart's desire, and time  
be good enough to help me  
endure and survive this bitterness.

## Appendix three: Contextual analysis



My influences in this research have been literary. I have critically appraised my visual responses periodically, in order to test and document the ways in which my research was impacting on my thinking and production. In addition to this, I also reflected on how this new thinking was evident by examining the work of contextually relevant practitioners. This provided the opportunity to test and observe how those practitioners use materials, and what visual methods and approaches they use. This analysis enabled me to notice the differences that literary codes were having on my pre-existing visual methods, approaches and knowledge.

### Examples of questions I have posed in this assessment include:

- What is the source material?
- How has it been 'read' or analysed?
- How has the source been treated in visual composition?
- How has text been transposed from the original source to the new 'page'?
- Is it an exact replica of the original or has it been altered in some way?
- Has the entire text been used?
- How have verbal elements been incorporated with the page?
- How has the text been replicated? (including font, size, colour)
- How does the subject of the source relate to the materials, composition and use of any text?
- What purpose does the text serve?
- Can it be read?
- Is it used as pattern or for linguistic significance, or other?
- How has the page been composed?
- What is the relationship between visual and verbal elements in the composition?
- How have materials and text been integrated with the surface or page?
- If clothing, how has this been arranged?
- Does this arrangement add to or alter potential meaning?
- Are there any characters evident in the work?
- How have these aspects been developed through the composition?

Figure 76: Rosalind Wyatt, 'I wish I were with you'; Letter from Winston Churchill to his mother Lady Randolph Churchill; Fortnum and Mason commission, 2013 ([http://www.rosalindwyatt.com/?page\\_id=647](http://www.rosalindwyatt.com/?page_id=647) 20.7.15)

## Appendix four: Gertrude story and text

'Gertrude'

Compiled from fragments 'extracted' from my grandmother in relation to her mother, Gertrude, my great grandmother. Differences in the story occurred each time she discussed her mother's life. Then they stopped.

My father passed away, and my grandmother spoke of her past again, sharing what she could remember, and more openly too. Who she would speak in front of changed, but never in front of her 'gentleman friend', she was so ashamed of her past, and her illegitimacy had impacted on an early relationship she had with a boy, who had ended their relationship on discovery of her illegitimacy. Her recollections were hazy, and altered each time.

I pieced together what I had, a jumble of sentences, embellishments, and fragments, rearranged and reassembled them into an impression, the start of a new tale, which was written using poetic language, also attempting to reflect the time in which the story was based (1910).

Two lovers unite,  
bound by the bonds of love and desire,  
a passion unwilling to be constrained by convention.  
But met in innocence, their union, naïve and without precaution,  
becomes clouded by the shadow of new life,  
and beauty dies away, as cold reality dawns,  
causing them to part.

Her love departed,  
abandoned and disgraced,  
she trembles for pity of her strife and pain,  
and turns upon her thoughts,  
that lead her to the water's edge...



## Appendix five: Lexia

In order to seek to overcome the perceived tensions, in early investigations, I compared different lexia with each other, for example, in the first sentence of the English translation of Balzac, 'I was deep in one of those daydreams which overtake even the shallowest of men, in the midst of the most tumultuous parties', Balzac offers us a rich account of the narrator's personal reflections, from within the narrative. Barthes' lexia (the second in *S/Z*, the first being the title) gives us 'I was deep in one of those daydreams', through which he demonstrates the symbolic and proairetic codes in action. The theme of antithesis is present through Barthes' lexia, contrasting 'day' and 'dream', but he describes the lexia from the vantage point of the complete sentence, and indeed, goes on to cross-reference the entire story, 'a great final ensemble' (*S/Z*: 12).

Lexia Two – 8 words

'I was deep in one of those daydreams'

### Symbolic

'There will be nothing wayward about the daydream introduced here: it will be solidly constructed along the most familiar rhetorical lines, in a series of antitheses: garden and salon, life and death, cold and heat, outside and interior. The lexia thus lays the groundwork, in introductory form, for a vast symbolic structure, since it can lend itself to many substitutions, variations, which will lead us from the garden to the castrato, from the salon to the girl with whom the narrator is in love, by way of the mysterious old man, the full-bosomed Mme de Lanty, or Vieri's moonlit Adonis. Thus, on the symbolic level, an immense province appears, the province of the antithesis, of which this forms the first unit, linking at the start its two adversative terms (A/B) in the word daydream.'

### Proairetic

The state of absorption formulated here (I was deep in...) already implies (at least in 'readerly discourse) some event which will bring it to an end (...when I was roused by a conversation...).'

### Lexia 11 – 173 words (*S/Z*: 25)

'a splendid salon decorated in silver and gold, with glittering chandeliers, sparkling with candles. There, milling about, whirling around, flitting here and there, were the most beautiful women of Paris, the richest, the noblest, dazzling, stately, resplendent with diamonds, flowers in their hair, on their bosoms, on their heads, strewn over dresses or in garlands at their feet. Light, rustling movements, voluptuous steps, made the laces, the silk brocades, the gauzes, float around their delicate forms. Here and there, some overly animated glances darted forth, eclipsing the lights, the fire of the diamonds, and stimulated anew some too-ardent hearts. One might also catch movements of the head meaningful to lovers, and negative gestures for husbands. The sudden outbursts of the gamblers' voices at each unexpected turn of the dice, the clink of gold, mingled with the music and the murmur of conversation, and to complete the giddiness of this mass of people intoxicated by everything seductive the world can hold, a haze of perfume and general inebriation played upon the fevered mind.'

**Symbolic**

Antithesis – indoors/the women are transformed into flowers (they are wearing them everywhere)

**Semic**

The seme of *flora* will later be attached to the woman the narrator is in love with (whose outlines are 'verdant'); further, flora connotes a certain conception of life and its pure state (because organic) which forms an antithesis with the dead 'thing' the old man will represent. The rustling of laces, the gauzy floatings, the haze of perfumes, evoke the seme *vaporous*, antithetical to *angular*, to the geometrical, the wrinkled, all of which are forms which will be semes for the old man. In the old man, by way of contrast, what is intended is the *machine*; can we conceive (at least in readerly discourse) of a *vaporous machine*?

**Referential**

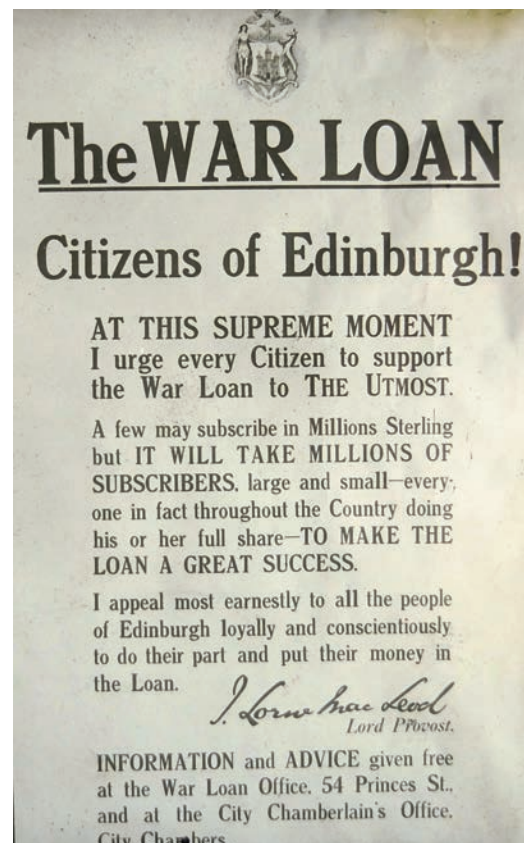
Allusively, an adulterous ambiance is designated; it connotes Paris as an immoral city (Parisian fortunes, the Lantys' included, are immoral)'

## Appendix six: Word capitalisation, 1917



Save the Bread poster – ‘Four-fifths of our Wheat comes from Over-Seas’)

17-1917-18-Bread-will-save, (<http://lothianlives.org.uk/?p=3687> 20.7.15)



War Loans poster – ‘Citizen’, ‘Millions’, and ‘Sterling’

1917 February – The War Loan – Edinburgh, <http://lothianlives.org.uk> (<http://lothianlives.org.uk/?p=3687> 20.7.15)

Figure 77 and 78: capitalisation

## Appendix seven: Data from the letter

### Numeric data

Pages: three

Coverage: two and a half pages

Total words: 479

Paragraphs: 12 (words per para: 7 address, 2 opening, 31, 26, 28, 51, 131, 53, 136, 10, closing, signature)

Person	Page	Total
Jock:	116	
	111	
	74	301
Meg	45	
	39	
	15	99
Nurse	3	
	60	
	-	16
Will	16	16

### Denotation in the letter or events

Meg has written to Jock

Jock is writing to Meg

Will is in the trenches

Meg is working hard

Jock needs to tell Meg something

He is in love with someone else

She is a nurse

She will not marry him

She has a weak heart

Jock was injured

She nursed him

Jock loves the nurse

She loves him

He writes to her

She still writes to him

Jock still loves the nurse

Jock does not want to hurt Meg

Jock ends this relationship with Meg

## Plot outline

Set the scene (in media res)

Wireless Testing Park  
at Biggin Hill (possible air base)

Character One: Meg

Character Two: the sender of the letter, not yet aware of who, or a name

Working hard, in an unknown place of work (possible rehabilitation centre for wounded soldiers) (reference the envelope: 'Officer's Boy' title)

She has a friend, who is supportive and helpful

Character Three: Will. A letter has been sent to him, he is in the trenches, suggests 1914-18 First World War, battling Germans, in danger 'dodging all sorts of things' (forward mention of something to follow later) (peak)

Letters from the trenches were censored, how much information could Will have provided?

References made to the G.P.O (of its time – the Post Office). Did Character Two previously work there? He says he will tell them 'where and how I am nowadays'. This also suggests that he has been moving around.

But [peak]

Something to tell...

something bad, was going to keep it a secret (it gets worse)

but will now tell. Must tell.

...but the writer doesn't yet do this, she is kept waiting, as the writer makes excuses about what she will think of [him]

She is told

He met a nurse – Character Four

He fell in love, when in hospital (wounded?)

He told the nurse, she also loves him

The nurse has sworn never to marry

owing to a weak heart (is this a reason not to marry? – 1914-18 compared to present day)

Rheumatic fever (or something) – enigma

Self sacrifice?

The nurse is portrayed as a fragile being, she remains unnamed.

Despite this frailty, she is working as a nurse, which is well documented as being very hard work during the First World War. Where was the hospital?

(ref Brittain and other texts)

Man begs the nurse to marry him  
She declines  
but says she will write to him  
Man gives up. In despair.

Meets Meg  
Forgets the nurse

...but not for long, she won't be forgotten

Ending relationship with Meg. Likes and respects her.  
Talks about himself again, his broken heart, what will happen to him  
asked her again, relent

Back to Meg. he knows how cruel he's been (back to him) 'forgive me, tell me what to do, asks for advice and forgiveness, asks her to write to him.

Back to himself again, engaged or married, his own fate.

Signs off, as your sincere friend

Jock

## Appendix eight: Dissemination

### Conference papers, journal articles, exhibitions of work

Researcher Poster Competition. Nominated in all categories. Winner – People's Prize, £2,000, February 2009

*Public Lives, Private Lives*, Post-graduate Research Conference, Centre for Research in Memory, Narrative and Histories, University of Brighton, and the Centre for Life History and Life Writing, University of Sussex, June 2010

'The Pursuit of Eloquent Story Telling: a collision between practice and theory', Exhibition, Regency Town House, Hove, *Heritage Open Day*, June 2010

'Seeking the Shadow of a Dream Grown Vain: Love and Loss in the First World War', Paper presentation, *Memories of War Conference*, University of Greenwich, 9 October 2010

Display of research and artist's talk, *Good Fences Make Bad Neighbours*, Post-graduate Conference, Sallis Benney Theatre, University of Brighton, February 2011

Display of research, *Emotions in History*, Post-graduate Conference, Centre for Research in Memory, Narrative and Histories, University of Brighton, and the Centre for Life History and Life Writing, University of Sussex, June 2011

'Seeking the Shadow of a Dream Grown Vain: Love and Loss in the First World War', Journal article, *United Academics Journal of Social Sciences*, June 2011

Display of work, Festival of Research, University of Brighton, July 2013