Gathering the Limbs of the Text in Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*

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Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* is not simply a new recreation of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in hypertext format; it also tries to develop some of the implications in the original text from the paradigms of contemporary science and criticism. This study is an attempt to bring to light the ways in which these paradigms, characterized by their emphasis on fragmentariness, are made to interact dialogically with Shelley's novel in order to produce a postmodern version of the old Promethean myth. Apart from exploring the filial connections that one might expect in any rewriting exercise, this essay focuses on the way Jackson questions the concept of authorship, origin(ality) and literary property, and related issues such as intertextuality and assemblage, all of which are indices of the theoretical concerns underlying Jackson's text and of the ways in which it follows, re-writes or invites us to re-read Shelley's "hideous progeny."

Key words: hypertext, re-writing, intertextuality, postmodern literature, Mary Shelley, Shelley Jackson, *Frankenstein*

I

After the Egyptian god Osiris had been torn to pieces by Seth, Isis, the wife of Osiris, searched for the parts of his body and, by gathering his scattered limbs, eventually restored him to life as a fertility god. This myth was later used by Ezra Pound (1973) in his series of essays "I Gather the Limbs of Osiris" for its symbolic potential to illustrate the Modernists' specific perception of tradition and their use of it as an act of resurrecting, ordering, and remembering. Thus, what is literal in the original myth becomes metaphorical in Pound's version.[1] In many ways Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* is an instance of how two

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[1] The Osiris myth seems to have had a special appeal to Modernist writers. It is also visibly present in James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, bringing together the leitmotifs of resurrection (of Osiris and the Tim Finnegan alluded to in the title) and re-membering (at the level of language, by means of the portmanteau words and multilingual puns which make up the best-known stylistic feature of this

possibilities offered by the same myth can be assembled into one and the same narrative. She combines the literal and the metaphorical in her re-enactment of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, both as an act of bringing back to life and as an act of remembering.

On a first reading, *Patchwork Girl* can be defined as a work that is essentially a re-writing of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, a novel in which two of the dominant themes are fragmentation and resurrection. However, *Patchwork Girl*'s most outstanding quality lies in the fact that it is organized as a special kind of text, which, just like Victor's creature, is the end result of certain technological developments. The appropriate term for such a text is hypertext.[2]

George P. Landow's definition of hypertext is regarded as canonical: "[T]ext composed of blocks of words (or images) linked electronically by multiple paths, chains, or trails in an open-ended, perpetually unfinished textuality described by the terms *link*, *node*, *network*, *web*, and *path*" (1997: 3). Another definition, to be found in *The Electronic Labyrinth*, focuses on a more practical aspect but also alludes to some of its essential qualities: "Where should the story begin? How will it end? These are two of the primary questions an author must answer when creating any fiction. Hypertext foregrounds such questions of boundaries; in this non-linear environment, the author has the freedom to discard old structural conventions and traditional ideas of closure" (http://www.iath.virginia.edu/elab/hfl0130.html). Not only does hypertext, by its very nature, resist closure and allow play, it also partakes of a condition of mutability, as the product leaves room for changes in the format, colour, fonts, cascade, etc. In this sense also, *Patchwork Girl* is not simply one more text that reflects the aesthetics of fragmentation and hybridity; it is a hypertext that allows for material and technological possibilities that would be unthinkable in a printed version. As a consequence, the relationship between reader and text also becomes provisional and mutable inasmuch as different possible readings arise: one ordered, as in the chart view, and another chaotic or random-like, simply by clicking on any word in a given lexia.

To put it a different way, hypertext requires a "cyborg reader," not only because of his/her prosthetic relationship with the text but also because the text forces us to adopt a gaze which is equally modular and fragmentary.[3] In the case of *Patchwork Girl*, reading appeals to our demiurgic power and turns readers into a sort of Dr. Frankenstein putting together the different pieces of the textual corpus, and thus creating our own monstrous, aberrant reading. As we can read in one of the sections, *graveyard*: "I am buried here. You can resurrect me, but only piecemeal. If you want to see the whole, you will have to sew me together yourself."[4]

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text). An extensive study of the use of the figure of Osiris by Joyce can be found in Mark L. Troy (1976).

[2] An interesting account of some of the cognitive processes involved in reading this specific hypertext can be found in an essay by Hayles (2000) in which she calls for a "medium-specific analysis". In this, Hayles is simply describing with a particular example what others, such as David Bolter (1991) and Espen J. Aarseth (1997), have discussed at a more theoretical level.

[3] Here we are expanding Donna Haraway's (1991a) iconography of the cyborg as a metaphor for the fragmented subject to a process of reading which in the case of the hypertext also takes place in a modular, fragmented way.

[4] The present notion of hypertext has been anticipated by postmodern criticism in directing attention towards concepts such as dispersal, dismemberment, net, web, palimpsest, rhizome, hybridity, carnival and heteroglossia found in the works of such diverse critics as Roland Barthes,

Before going any further, a general description of *Patchwork Girl* might be helpful. Shelley Jackson's hypertext consists of five main sections:

1. *body of text.*[5] where we find the monster's narration and certain theoretical speculations about hypertextual and human bodies.
2. *graveyard*: this section contains the stories of different donors told by the monster. By clicking on the different organs, access is obtained to the catalogue of donors and their biographies, showing in the process the matrilineal genealogy of the protagonist, and generating a realistic portrait with a strong literary flavour. The inscription on the *headstone* reveals the nature of the contents:

> Here lies a Head,
> Trunk, Arms (Right
> and Left), and Legs
> (Right and Left)
> as well as divers
> Organs Appropriately
> Disposed
> May They Rest in Piece.

3. *journal*: this is Mary Shelley's journal recording her relationship with her creature.
4. *story*: with extracts from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein,* interacting with the female monster's modern adventures.
5. *crazy quilt*: this is made up of two parts in which the same content is repeated, the only difference being that in the second part the quotes used are not documented or presented with different typographies as they are in the first part (*scrap bag*). However, the lexias are presented with different colours in order to evoke the idea of that "crazy quilt," the governing metaphor for this section. It indicates a further step in the idea of "unceremonious appropriation" which questions the notion of literary property.

The hypertextual format allows for much of this material to be organized differently, with a special emphasis this time on the visual, in two other sections: *her*, where we find the image of a woman's body, traversed by multiple dotted lines resembling the scars and seams of her patched anatomy; and *phrenology*, which reproduces the figure of a large head divided into different sections by dotted lines. By clicking on these we access either women's names, leading in turn to the stories of women from whose prosthesis the

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Linda Hutcheon, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida, Mikhail Bakhtin or Donna Haraway. But the fragmentary is not exclusive to postmodernism. As we suggest at the beginning of our essay, fragments are a pivotal concept both thematically and structurally in Modernism, an example of which may be found in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*, "these fragments I have shored against my ruins" (l. 430).

    [5] In order to avoid confusion with quotations, we have chosen italics to indicate the titles of both sections and lexias.

monster is assembled, or theoretical statements that explore the notion of multiple subjectivity, this time not at the level of anatomy (as in the *her* section) but at the level of consciousness.

Other layers or tissues may also be mentioned in this summary. For example, *hercut 4*, where the instructions of the software program are revealed under one torn fragment of the image, so that we get a glimpse of the different tissues of a multilayered artifact and its scaffolding, in a kind of metafictional strategy whereby the material circumstances of the process of creation are made apparent.

Occasionally, another layer shows the presence of a metafictional subtext where the writer (a fictionalised persona of Shelley Jackson) is represented engaged in the process of writing. Thus, some lexias refer to the material moment of writing (as for example the *this* lexias), or generate spaces of indefinition by making the fictive and the real overlap (as in *one sip*). Others, such as *this writing*, self-referentially analyse the peculiarity of hypertextual reading/writing:

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

Another case in point would be the lexia *dotted line*. Because of its border-like quality ("a permeable membrane"), the image of the dotted line is used to explore the interaction between connectedness and separation ("the two sides of a page flow moebiously into one another. Pages become tunnels or towers, hats or airplanes, cranes, frogs, balloons, or nested boxes"). It also evokes the many creative possibilities of changing from the two-dimensional to the three-dimensional and of generating something new in the process. By being "permeable," "potential," "paradoxical" and "discontinuous," this specific typography becomes both a model of subjectivity and an indication of the experience of hypertextual writing and reading. As the next lexia in the "sequence" summarises: "I hop from stone to stone and an electronic river washes out my scent in the intervals. I am a discontinuous trace, a dotted line" (*hop*).

II

As a re-writing of a classic text such as *Frankenstein*, *Patchwork Girl* is contained within a double frame of reference: on the one hand that of critical theory, particularly poststructuralism,[6] and, on the other, that of a scientific language which, via many references, pervades the hypertext with allusions to contemporary physics and biology. Both frames are characterized by their emphasis on fragmentariness and, both at textual and anatomical level, Shelley Jackson proposes models of cultural production and subjectivity that are far from closed, unitary and coherent. That these two frames can be made to interact can be seen in the way Barthes distinguishes between the concept of Work and that of Text in terms of the language of science, ascribing them to the Newtonian and the Einsteinian paradigms respectively (1977: 156).

If hypertext is a turn of the screw in the progress "from work to text" then we must highlight the element of "unreadability," mentioned by Barthes as a key difference between Work and Text (1977: 157) arising from the typical resistance to closure, likewise an essential dimension of hypertext. Another concept relevant to this discussion is intertextuality because it helps us to understand the possibility of meanings existing in different texts simultaneously (almost as a tribute to quantum physics). In particular, it allows us to see the text as a space in which different texts coalesce, or, as Kristeva suggests, are "constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (1980: 66). Seen in this light, the body of allusions to critical theories and theorists performs a prosthetic function inasmuch as those allusions work as implants of alien tissue in a piece of fiction.

Foremost among the critics alluded to is Derrida, explicitly mentioned in *memento*, parodically interviewed in *interrupting D.* and whose work is alluded to variously, for example, in *already* ("one could say that I existed already before I severed past alliances") or in *it thinks*, where an echo of the all-too-quoted "death of the subject" seems to resonate ("There is a kind of thinking without thinkers. Matter thinks. Language thinks. When we have business with language we are possessed by its dreams and demons, we grow intimate with monsters"). The rest of this lexia introduces another of these critical implants, Donna Haraway (1991a) and her cyborg iconography: "We become hybrids, chimeras, centaurs ourselves: steaming flanks and solid redoubtable hoofs galloping under a vaporous machinery."

As regards scientific discourse, it is alluded to in various ways in Jackson's hypertext. Haraway's terminology is used to bring the description of the body to a new scale, that of the cell: "The body as seen by the new biology is chimerical. The animal cell is seen to be a hybrid of bacterial species. Like that many-headed beast, the microbeast of the animal cell combines into one entity, bacteria that were originally freely living, self sufficient and metabolically distinct" (*bio*). The body is also described (in *swarm*) as "a multiplicity of anonymous particles" with "no absolute boundaries: I am a swarm." Attention must be paid here to the notion of "swarm," which evokes the question of scale and which, together

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[6] In an interview, Jackson states the relevance of theory as one of the necessary frames of reference for her work: "[P]art of my motivation for writing *Patchwork Girl* in the first place was to interrogate hypertext in terms of its relationship to the rest of literature, so it was a foregone conclusion that my hypertext should have one foot in theory" (Amerika, 1998).

with the notion of "scraps," alludes to the existence of discrete elements with no inherent significance and yet waiting to be arranged into some meaningful pattern. In other lexias, the materiality of the body is noticeably emphasized: "we are unlike angels (who have diplomatic immunity to the laws of physics)" (*angels*); and in *flow*, apart from its metafictional quality, a classic portrait of a siren is contrasted with images taken from the language of physics enabling the hybrid subject to see herself as a sort of "quantum sky-diver." In *rest of my life*, the question of the breakdown of a linear sequence of reading (and of writing) is considered to finally "fall back into the muddled bedsheets, into the merged molecular dance of simultaneity."

Another group of allusions is focused on the relationship between body and text, implying that the same language is shared by the discourse of criticism and of science alike. Thus, for instance, in *seamed adhesive*, the same expressions refer to both the textual and the anatomical: "Being seam'd with scars was both a fact of eighteenth century life and a metaphor for dissonant interferences ruining any finely adjusted composition." Similarly, in *born*, this double reference is made more complex, for to the phrase "hideous progeny," which depicts both literary and biological filiation, is added a reference to the language of physics by means of the monster's confession, "I am a disturbance in the flow." This is rounded off in a lexia entitled *pattern* (or *designs*) which, paradoxically, emphasizes the random and chaotic nature of reading. Sometimes we even see how scientific phenomena are taken as models to illustrate or justify essential aspects of the rhetoric of the text/hypertext, evidencing that the two frames of reference (critical, scientific) do not exist independently, as they have been presented here, but complement each other and coexist in interrelated fashion particularly in the lexias of the section *body of text*, where a theoretical conception of the text is explored within this double frame.

III

As a re-writing of an earlier text, *Patchwork Girl or A Modern Monster, by Mary/Shelley, & Herself* presents a problem of filiation starting with the title. In the same way that in Shelley's novel the creation of the monster and even the text was at first attributed to her husband, likewise Jackson's hypertext seems to originate in different authors: Mary Shelley, Shelley Jackson, and the monster "herself." This deliberate confusion about authorship is also detected in the diversity of sources and borrowings from the literary tradition. Thus, a sample list might include those from her literary mother, Mary Shelley (*journal*), theorists such as Derrida (*sources*), not to mention the original owners of the monster's implants presented in the shape of memories and testimonies, particularly the whole *graveyard* section and the many allusions to the notion of "phantom limb." This sense of indebtedness is also apparent in lexias such as *she goes on* ("we are ourselves ghostly," "we are what we remember"), where a representation of a "haunting" presence that unconsciously determines our identity is offered, also as a memory of the different "body parts." The problem of literary property is often made analogous to that of physical (body) property: whose text/body is this? is the question raised by the ambiguous title page (Mary/Shelley and Herself). Thus, in *am I Mary*, body property is made equivalent to text property through the phrase "ghost writer" which plays with its implicit notions of "haunting" and "authorship," and in *births* the monster states that "birth takes place more

than once." An example of the so-called "unceremonious appropriation" is the interesting case of the third footnote to *bad dreams* where the anonymity of the donor of a textual "implant" is acknowledged.

In relation to its original text, Shelley Jackson's work can be interpreted as "the road not taken." Her starting point is the monster's request to Frankenstein that the scientist create a female partner for him "as deformed and horrible as myself" (Shelley 1992: 144), a possibility the doctor considers too terrible and finally rejects, throwing into the sea "the relics of my work" (Shelley 1992: 170). Jackson, however, decides to create that character who never existed in the original, her strategy being the use of material which in the original occupies only a minor eccentric position.[7] In doing so, Jackson recovers by extension the feminine/maternal body which is so decidedly negated and excluded in Shelley's text (as can be deduced from the successive deaths of most of the female characters in the novel: Victor's mother, Justine, Elizabeth and the female monster).

Frankenstein's relics have a counterpart in Jackson's notion of "workbasket," a reservoir of literary material from which to create a new work. By making use of the well-known body/text analogy, Jackson moves from the anatomical to the textual by comparing discarded limbs to "deleted passages" or even lost pages, and emphasizing, in opposition to the Romantic intentional quality (*agon*), the random-like component of postmodernist literary creation (*alea*).[8]

This filial relationship between original and "copy" is extensively explored in the first part of the *story* section containing literal quotes from relevant passages of Shelley's novel. For instance, the lexia *plea* records the monster's request to his creator, *promise* details Victor's promise to create the female monster whilst *treachery* focuses on the scientist's final refusal to do so, fearing that "she might become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate and delight for its own sake in murder and wretchedness" (Shelley 1992: 165). Later on, Jackson's female monster cuts her literary umbilical cord with Shelley's novel to start an independent life of her own, or as she says, to "set out to write my own destiny" (*birth*).

However, that liaison is never completely severed and there is a whole section in which we can see the intertextual relationship between the two works. In *journal*, Mary Shelley, who has become a character in Jackson's hypertext, gives an account of her relationship with her creature, enabling us to compare the different attitudes of Victor Frankenstein (in Shelley's text) and Mary Shelley (as fictionalized author in Jackson's text) towards their respective creatures. Thus, for example, we may contrast Frankenstein's abhorrence of the monster with Mary's maternal admiration and pride (as in *learn* or *infant*); or in terms of gender difference, the opposition between the masculinist laboratory and machinery of

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[7] In the Introduction to her work, Mary Shelley uses biblical language to refer to her creation: "And now once again, I bid my hideous progeny to go forth and prosper." (1992: 10) This comment turns Shelley (as author) into a God(dess) of her creation/creature. It is the ambivalence inherent in the metaphorical expression "hideous progeny" which serves as inspiration to Jackson to literally reproduce both the creature and the text.

[8] This is not a new idea in the history of literature. Examples can also be found in Vladimir Nabokov's idea of "discarded limbs" at the end of *Lolita* or the literary theory in Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* or in the genesis of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, originally conceived as a short story for *Dubliners*.

Victor Frankenstein and the feminine imagery of the quilt and workbaskets of Mary's "room of her own" (*written*).[9]

Many of these differences reflect the specific contexts in which Shelley's and Jackson's texts were composed. In this regard, we can begin by comparing the titles in full. We notice that *Frankenstein; or a Modern Prometheus* draws attention to the protagonist, a scientist, whereas *Patchwork Girl, or A Modern Monster* focuses on the monster, a marginal figure. In terms of organization, Shelley's novel has a very noticeable "Chinese box" structure which creates a distance between the story being told and the reader. This contrasts greatly with the hypertextual organization of Jackson's work, whose different ontological levels (author, character, reader) mingle monstrously. At the level of content, we can compare the death of each monster. In Shelley's novel we find the typically Romantic immolation of the monster on a funeral pyre, whereas in Jackson's there is an "insurrection" of the limbs or prostheses, in an act characterized by postmodern dismemberment, fragmentation and dispersion.

These differences between the two works are obviously conditioned by the ideological context of both texts and have a parallel in the diverse critical responses of readers with different theoretical backgrounds. Thus, it is interesting to compare, for example, Harold Bloom's reading of *Frankenstein* as the epitome of the exacerbated Romantic expression of the self (solipsistic, Promethean, and significantly supported by references to Milton, Blake and Byron), with those of Shelley Jackson and modern readers in the theoretical context of postmodern criticism, where identity is defined (following Haraway, Helène Cixous and Derrida) in terms of the fragmentary, the composite, and the hybrid.

In contrast to these differences a number of similarities between the two texts can also be observed. These affect two basic elements shared by both works: the use of fragmentariness and the question of re-writing as an instrument in the composition. In the case of Shelley Jackson, she is working with two intertexts dealing with the idea of animation or creation of life from inanimate creatures: *Frankenstein* and *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, although here we are only interested in the former insofar as it also inscribes itself in a tradition of literary and mythological re-writings.[10] Both Shelley's and Jackson's works can be considered as founded on a process of remembering (pun intended) from left-overs. But this process differs from one text to the other. Thus, in *Frankenstein*, the subject is reconstructed by means of an education that not only affects his senses but is at the same time based on the texts from a library (ultimately a symbol of the process of accommodation and cultural integration). However, even though the monster can read those books, he still does not participate in that culture which excludes him as something monstrous, an aberration.[11] In the case of *Patchwork Girl*, the limbs of the female monster keep their autonomous status, and each of them speaks "hysterically" of its origin, bringing

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[9] Most feminist criticism on *Frankenstein* agrees on interpreting Victor's creation of the monster as the masculine attempt at usurping the maternal and life-giving potential of female sexuality. See Moers (1977), Mellor (1988), Homans (1986), and Gilbert and Gubar (1979)

[10] Of course we could see Jackson's work as part of a succession of versions of the Prometheus myth, which would include the figures of Faust, Vathek and, naturally, Frankenstein.

[11] Feminist (Gilbert and Gubar [1979], Moers [1977]) and psychoanalytic (Mitchell and Rose [1982], Collings [1992]) critics of *Frankenstein* have remarked that the monster's acquisition of language by eavesdropping on the conversations of the De Lacey family is analogous to the position of woman who, like Eve or Mary Shelley, is forced to establish an oblique relationship to both language and culture, having been excluded from these two Symbolic processes.

to light the memory of their donors (their actual origin!), which in this case, over and above their organic quality, suggests ultimately a reference of a textual nature. In the case of *Frankenstein*, books do not contribute to the monster's integration but help him to acquire consciousness of himself as a subject while Dr Frankenstein's diary specifically allows him to establish his own genealogy. In *Patchwork Girl*, on the other hand, the literary is the referent that provides a final meaning for a subject whose limbs are articulating and integrating themselves.

It would seem that there is also a divergence in the fact that, in *Frankenstein,* the fragmentary is limited literally to the organic body while in *Patchwork Girl* the fragmentary also includes the social body, the cultural and literary corpus and the text. This, moreover, is not linear because its materiality is constituted by software and its physical existence is only momentary and temporary, being the result of electronic impulses on a screen. Yet only on a first reading can we sustain this divergence, since a more detailed analysis can show the traces of fragmentariness that reveals a composite, hybrid, monstrous (textually speaking) quality in Mary Shelley's novel at different levels too. For example, she refers to the anonymous *Fantasmagoriana, or Collected Stories of Apparitions of Specters, Ghosts, Phantoms, etc* of 1812, which excited in her "a playful desire of imitation" (Shelley 1992: 14).

At a different level, Victor Frankenstein makes use of the tradition of alchemy and the occult sciences. He devours the work of Paracelsus and Agrippa, recognising in his testimony (paradoxically given his abomination of his composite creature) his own monstrous and fragmentary nature. His visits to the "charnel houses" can be compared to visits to a library. In the same way as Jackson refers her text/monster to a literary antecedent (*Frankenstein*), so the scientist sees his creature as related to an earlier literary model: "…but when those muscles and joints were capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived" (Shelley 1992: 58). Here the reference to Dante's *Divina Commedia* is most appropriate since in that work there is also an attempt on the part of the poet to resurrect his beloved Beatrice by means of the alchemy of the word. Dante's *Inferno* is also used, together with Coleridge's "The Ancient Mariner," as a reference to deal with questions of fear and guilt (Shelley 1992: 59).

As far as the figure of the monster is concerned, he is also, in Shelley's novel, constituted by the things he reads. However, we must not forget that there is a monstrosity that is cultural as well as anatomical, similar to *bodies too*, where: "we have guidelines as to which arrangements are acceptable, are valid words, legible sentences, and which are typographical or grammatical errors: 'monsters.'" The monster achieves humanity through the books that he accidentally finds in a suitcase. In this, he forms part of a tradition that includes sources as varied as Don Quixote, Prince Hamlet, Robinson Crusoe, and later on, Emma Bovary, Anna Karenina and Leopold Bloom, who, according to Ricardo Piglia (2005), represent the process by which subjectivity is constituted through the experience of reading. His thesis implies that not only the text, but also the reading subject is composed of an unharmonious panoply of texts.

Frankenstein's monster reads these books –Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and Plutarch's *Lives*– and sets them up against his experience ("many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition," Shelley 1992: 129), and tries to measure his own misfortunes against those of the literary characters he has just become acquainted with and who, due to his abhorrent deformity, constitute his only intercourse with the world. Thus, his lament "[n]o Eve soothed my sorrows or shared my

thoughts; I was alone. I remembered Adam's supplication to his Creator, but where was mine?" (Shelley 1992: 131) is an interesting echo of a biblical passage he knows not through the Bible (which he has not read) but through *Paradise Lost*. This play with characters from the literary tradition has its counterpart in the way donors are providers in Jackson's work; in other words, what has a metaphorical value in Shelley becomes literal (and parodic) in the case of Jackson.

We sum up by arguing that just as Jackson's text possesses a monstrous and fragmentary quality which is parasitic on *Frankenstein*, so, in turn, Shelley's text, contrary to what one would expect in an "original," is far from being a coherent and unitary whole.[12] *Patchwork Girl* also dismantles this notion of a unitary origin in the lexia *whole?* which questions the idea of "wholeness" –moral, aesthetic, bodily, etc– even for those who, like angels, are defined essentially by that concept: "though they don't seem reft by racial and cultural differences, seem to believe in hierarchy, in assigned moral parking spots as if souls acquired goodness stepwise, in integral packets." Likewise, in order to dismantle the myth of alleged unitary origin, this time with the help of scientific language, Jackson borrows a piece of that discourse dealing with the molecular composition of *myxotricha paradoxa*. This is what we see in *mixo*, itself inspired by an earlier text by Donna Haraway (1991b).[13]

This is a new example of the interaction of the two frames of reference, one that is explicit both in its original source (the discourse of biology and the discourse of Haraway's social criticism) and in its final application (the discourse of biology, again, and of literary criticism implicit in Jackson's work). That the reader has simultaneous access to this multifarious material is only made possible by the hypertextual dimension of this unorthodox novel. We should not ignore the fact that Jackson's re-writing is assisted by the specificity of the electronic format because this system allows her to highlight certain questions that lie at the core of Mary Shelley's original. Fragmentation, for instance, which is an issue in Shelley's text, is obviously an inherent quality of the hypertext format ("haphazard hopscotch," we read in *this writing*); also the idea of the coexistence of different versions and voices in Shelley's story is presented in *Patchwork Girl* as a potentiality offered to the reader by the very nature of the hypertext ("as many stories as I care to put together," *this writing*). Similarly the question of creation/re-creation of life has

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[12] Mary Shelley's novel has already set the idea of an exclusive, disembodied, patriarchal origin in the figure of Milton's God (one of the myths by which her monster tries to make sense of his miserable existence) in opposition to that of the bodily, multiple and fragmented origin in Victor's act of creation. This opposition, suggested by Shelley, somewhere between a transcendental, invisible and powerful signifier on the one hand and dispersed, disempowered signifieds on the other, again seems to anticipate some of the tenets of poststructuralism. For an exploration of Milton's God as a divine version of the Lacanian father, see David Collings (1992).

[13] "I use *Mixotricha paradoxa* as an entity that interrogates individuality and collectivity at the same time. It is a microscopic single celled organism that lives in the hind gut of the South Australian termite. What counts as 'it' is complicated because it lives in obligatory symbiosis with five other kinds of entities....This is codependency with a vengeance! And so the question is – is it one entity or is it six? But six isn't right either because there are about a million of the five non-nucleated entities for every one nucleated cell. There are multiple copies. So when does one decide to become two? When does this whole assemblage divide so that you now have two? And what counts as *Mixotricha*? Is it just the nucleated cell or is it the whole assemblage? This is obviously a fabulous metaphor that is a real thing for interrogating our notions of one and many". (Haraway 1991b: 64-98).

its counterpart in *Patchwork Girl* in the way characters and texts are brought to life simply by an electronic impulse, "assembling these patched words in an electronic space" (*this writing*).

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IV

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Besides the obvious differences between the texts by Mary Shelley and Shelley Jackson, the re-writing process undertaken by the latter involves certain implications that go beyond the mere re-creation of a classic story. The first of them is that the postmodern author is given the best opportunity to establish an analogy between the textual and the anatomical, which systematically generates a specific subtext in the work.[14] Such an analogy is explored in depth in the whole section *body of text* (with its self-explanatory title) where most lexias make explicit allusion to the same issue. Thus, in *typographical*, *metaphor me*, and *cuts*, the rhetoric of the text is made analogous to anatomic harmony and the etymological meaning of "syntax" is evoked as the need for a "skeleton" that will articulate all the jumble and chaotic material. As Jackson states in a review of her own work, "[b]oundaries of texts are like boundaries of bodies, and both stand in for the confusing and invisible boundary of the self" (1997: 535). In this way, similar analogies between body and text recur in other lexias such as *dispersed*, where the monster describes herself as if she were a text; in *blood*, where this association is explored at a molecular level so that cells are equated with words; and in *birth*, where the creation of the protagonist takes place twice, "under the needle, and under the pen."

All the above examples can be summed up in the statement "the metaphorical principle is my true skeleton" (*metaphor me*), which explicitly stresses the afore-mentioned body-text relationship and the way each is defined in terms of the other. As a result of this interaction, the text generates a set of interrelated metaphors configuring the thematic scaffolding of the narrative. When the monster defines herself as a "mixed metaphor," she is not simply alluding to her hybridity (both anatomical and textual), but also to all those "borrowed parts, annexed territories" which, like Frankenstein's creature, acquire a life of their own and generate a conceptual space in which this hypertext is erected. This metaphorical principle alluded to by Shelley Jackson manifests itself in passages as diverse as those described below.[15]

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[14] Jackson stresses the centrality of this analogy when she explains that "[t]he stitched-together monster is an easy metaphor for any text, but especially hypertext, as the still uneasy offspring of a new technology and an old one: books, literature" (Amerika 1998).

[15] Jackson herself admits that, having planned to write a hypertext, she was already predisposed to follow "a meandering course", and emphasizes the importance of metaphors in the genesis of this work: "The graveyard section began, for example, as a rhetorical trope in the course of a long, looping mediation....[T]he section of *Patchwork Girl*...is structured like a graveyard, where you dig up body parts and learn their histories. Of course these [Storyspace] rectangles full of rectangles also brought to mind a quilt. Which is not unlike a graveyard, since traditional quilts are often machines for reminiscence, bringing together scraps of fabric, once in use, that memorialize family members and important times. And is also very like a Frankenstein monster (these multiply determined metaphors kept turning up). So I made a quilt, where each patch is itself a patchwork (in crazy-quilt style) of quotes from divers sources" (Amerika 1998).

If we begin with the most visible image of the story, the monstrous, we have to admit that this is not only a literal quality or attribute of the protagonist (one acknowledged in *I am*, a self-portrait where she gives a clear account of her fragmentary, hybrid, indefinite and queer nature) but it also bears a metaphoric value inasmuch as it embraces other related concepts that enable us to depict a very specific model of both textuality and subjectivity. Such a model necessarily re-values a body of concepts that have been historically stigmatized both by science and by culture. Consequently, terms such as *prosthetic, parasitic, impure, bastard, grotesque, dismembered, deviant, mutant, aberrant, abject, polluted,* or *incongruous* are given an unusually positive connotation in a text whose main merit lies precisely in its rich potential to create new forms out of disparate material. The lexia *degradation* explains this traditional rejection of fragmentariness by the classic aesthetic canons which explicitly recommended artists to avoid "motley assemblages," "patchwork," "chequered or mosaic work" and "ponderous abortions." Ironically, these aberrations are the most prominent features of the protagonist's physiognomy, as she declares in *why hideous?* ("Every part of me is human and proportional to the whole. Yet I am a monster, because I am multiple, and because I am mixed, *mestizo*, mongrel"); or in *manmade* where she adds that her monstrosity lies in her being "made, not born."[16]

Two other metaphors, important to the extent of providing the titles of two sections of the hypertext, are "quilt" and "graveyard." Both suggest a genealogy and a model for text and subject which are thus presented in terms of "assemblage" rather than "unity." Collage or mosaic composition is suggested everywhere in the work, highlighting the fragmentary quality of experience, whether cultural, biological, or textual. Hence the entire *graveyard* section proposes an extended approach to this notion of multiple subjectivities which the reader accesses through the different stories of the buried limbs and pieces. In *names*, she gives an account of this multiplicity, a notion that at times interacts paradoxically with the idea of wholeness: "I was both multiply estranged and gathered together in a dynamic union" (*her, me*). Similarly, the *story* section explores the same question from a different standpoint. Here we find several episodes that narrate the female monster's adventures on board a ship that took her to America and how she was forced to assume different disguises that generated a lot of speculation about her identity among the other passengers. The hypotheses ranged from those of her being a "Pygmalion-like trained gorilla" or a "satanic seductress," to those of a homosexual or a disfigured woman. The lexia *guises* is hence a good occasion to meditate on the problem of identity, something that can no longer be defined in traditional terms.[17] In line with Judith Butler's (1990) theories, Jackson seems to be proposing that an "identity" paradigm (which implies an ontological, essential and stable condition) be replaced by a "performance" paradigm (which assumes instead the provisionality and precariousness of subjectivity). The "performance" paradigm is

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[16] Apart from the ones already analysed, *Patchwork Girl* includes other figurations of the monstrous, from Haraway's technologically sophisticated cyborgs, to a more popular and folkloric version of monsters like the one offered by the circus freaks in *a tail*, or even the engraving reproduced in *chimera* resembling the classical iconography of medieval bestiaries, a repertoire that shows that the monstrous has a long tradition in the history of Western culture. For further analyses on monstrosity, see Creed (1993), Baldick (1987), Bann (1997), Nigg (1999), and South (1987).

[17] A comic turn of the screw to this episode is provided by this idea of re-cycling that is recurrent throughout the whole fiction, since the disguise ends up being a part of a "patchwork quilt made by a lady in Minnesota" (*guises*).

assimilated when, in the same vein, gender is comically deconstructed and reduced to "an entire portmanteau of lady-like gestures" (*femininity*).

"Quilt" and "graveyard" are not only metaphors that explain important topics in the novel but are also structural devices since the arrangement of the material in the hypertext bears a resemblance to the referents of the terms. Thus, as explained above, *graveyard* is the site from which other (textual) lives are resurrected, while *quilt* organizes critical material in a non-hierarchical order, "without pattern or plan" (*crazy*). It should also be borne in mind that "quilt" is often regarded as a metaphor of female collective creation. In this respect, it can be contrasted with classic (and masculine?) forms of composition where seams are made to look as invisible as possible, whilst in sewing they are clearly visible in order to indicate the different patches. This connection between writing and sewing is made explicit in two almost identical lexias (*written* and *sewn*) which should be read in parallel, where Mary Shelley writes her monster into life and assembles her by "stitching deep into the night by candlelight." Creation of life through sewing is also suggested by the many allusions to surgery, which would emphasize once again the afore-mentioned body/text relationship. Viewed from this perspective, the monster's scars and joints would be the epitome of the discontinuous writing and reading of hypertext.

Finally, another set of metaphors deals with the question of donors and prostheses, an idea that has many different versions in the history of literature. Imitation of the classics has always involved the appropriation of certain aspects and authors in the tradition, as if they were implants. The underlying implication is that literature is universal and timeless and that any text/body has the potential to become part of future texts/bodies, as suggested in *universal*: "Your bodies are already claimed by future generations, auctioned off piecemeal to the authors of further monsters." Such an intertextual model for body and text is also illustrated by the phrase "unceremonious appropriation" in *sources*, where Jackson acknowledges her critical debts but cannot, at the same time, avoid mocking the traditional notion of "literary property." In both a literal and metaphorical sense, the prosthesis is a highly evocative concept since it implies questioning the traditional boundaries of the subject: those existing between the self and the other, the original and the copy, the whole and the fragment, the mortal and the immortal. Another related idea that generates interesting connotations is that of the "phantom limb," a neurological syndrome that accounts for the amputee's awareness of a missing limb. Once again, Shelley Jackson resorts to scientific discourse and, making use of this richly suggestive phenomenon in the lexias *aggrieved*, *ghosts*, *bethieved*, tries to explain how the monster (and by extension all readers) can perceive the "presence" of an "absence." The entire *séance* episode carries this metaphoric value insofar as it implies bringing other texts, stories and characters back to life. The dead, both in the form of their donated prostheses or in the resource of borrowing texts from the past, are considered to be part of the present living body/text although "they are not here to stay." They are not "permanent residents" but "nomads," "ghosts" and "guests" (see *what shape*). Through such imagery, Jackson vindicates a sort of virtual, unstable existence, one that cannot be trapped within the traditional constraints of the biographical genre. Instead, in *a life* she proposes the possibility of an open, never-ending writing/life very much in line with the attributes of hypertextual literature: "I was not one person and there is more than one way to write this. I wish there were a way to show that every latest word I write has space for anything after it. Everything could have been different and already is."

Appropriating an organ, or a text, might lead to a process of fractalization on the basis of fragmentariness, so that the origin of meaning becomes dispersed through multiple allusions. A hand, for example, does not refer us to a single donor but can be seen as the sum of different fingers, each of which alludes to its own separate literary origin (the hand of Moll Flanders, the hand of Milton's daughter, in *hands*). Or it can be a matter of scale when the idea of fragmentation is taken to the level of the cell, the microscopic or the genetic (in *mosaic girl*, *bio*, *hazy whole*, *mixo*). Moreover, not only the idea of primeval unity but also of future unity is dismantled, as in the parodic vision of the resurrection of the bodies (in *resurrection* and *remade*).

Because conventional closure, one that would restore the text or the subject to that utopian unity, has been proved invalid, Jackson suggests an alternative scenario that accepts the multiple, discontinuous and protean as major human/literary conditions. In the last episodes of *story*, which is the only section that can be read in a linear sequence, the monster discovers that her assembled body is coming apart, and that her fate is not resurrection (in its biblical sense) but rather insurrection of the different limbs. In *diaspora* she gives a detailed account of her actual disintegration ("My foot strove skyward,… my guts split open and something frilly spilled out… my right hand shot gesticulating stump-first eastwards, the fingers on my left scattered like shrapnel") in a process that could be perfectly identified with the very mechanics of the present (hyper)text: "limbs ejected like sprung seed-pods, bearing only a raw beginning, the place to start a story from, and the thing ending no longer the same thing at all in the ending, so not ending, not beginning either."

In the light of this, through the realization that the monster is constantly returning to her original fragmentary state, we can conclude by emphasising that hypertext technology is guided by the same principles of discontinuity and endless recombination and, as such, does not allow the story to reach a conclusion that would justify a unique and coherent version. Just as the monster wonders (when experiencing her gradual dismemberment in *an accident*) whether there might be "a right way to go to pieces," the reader is always left in doubt as to the correctness of her/his readings. However, in the end it is only the reader, bringing to bear his/her experience of other texts with their various references to Romanticism, Modernism or Postmodernism, who can gather this body, this text, together in one piece.

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