The Limits and Powers of the Technological Text

Emma Lister

Abstract

This thesis examines the implications for text and subject of the digital technology of hypertext. Focussing on the printed texts of Alasdair Gray, it explores the complex relationship between humans and technology depicted in his fictions. Gray's fictional examples provide the basis for a wider discussion regarding the impact of technology upon the lives of the subjects who engage with it and in particular who engage with the technologies of writing. It aims to illustrate how digital technologies of writing can be considered in light of some of the textual concerns raised by fiction and criticism in the late age of print, notably issues of narrative theory and the cultural function of linear stories and histories. Straining in many respects against the limitations of the printed form, Gray's boundary-pushing texts, whilst remaining firmly rooted in the aesthetic tradition of the book as object, perhaps anticipate a more flexible textual form. The digital space of hypertext can be seen to offer a new arena for the textual debate, but does it live up to the claims of some of its critics, particularly in terms of its rapport with aspects of contemporary theory? And what may be the consequences of text dematerialised in the digital medium? As well as considering the textual possibilities of hypertext, the thesis also looks at the ways in which subjects relate to technology as well as those by which technology - and particularly writing technology - relates to them. Given the ambiguous role of technology in the life of the subject - employed on the one hand as part of a project and promise of rational enlightenment through science and on the other as a military and ideological means of repression - the consequences of technological development and of the digital revolution for the written word must be closely considered. Finally, the thesis questions the types of texts that may be constructed through an engagement with the digital technology of hypertext and what types of subjects these in turn might construct.
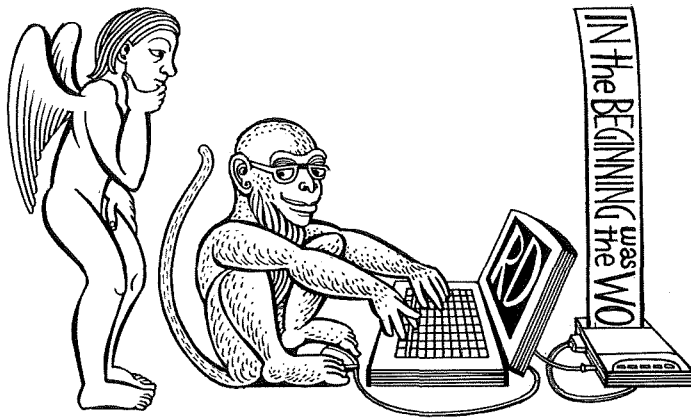
Contents

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Mopsy and Flopsy, the two black and white rabbits belonging to surgeon Godwin

Baxter in Alasdair Gray's *Poor Things* are not, by Baxter's own admission, happy

bunnies. "Mopsy and Flopsy were two ordinary, happy little rabbits," he explains

to Archie McCandless (his friend and the narrator of *Episodes from the Early Life*

of a Scottish Public Health Officer, the text making up the largest part of Gray's

novel), "before I put them to sleep one day and they woke up like this. They are

no longer interested in procreation, an activity they once greatly enjoyed" (*Poor*

Things, p. 23). That they no longer do the usual bunny thing should come as little

surprise to Baxter, given that his 'skeely' surgeon's fingers have bisected each

partner of the once heterosexual bunny couple and spliced the opposing halves.

The resultant bipolar specimens - male/female, black/white in equal and

opposite measures - are living contradictions. Fortunately for Mopsy and Flopsy,

their situation is only temporary; Godwin Baxter has decided that the following

day he will return them to their original happy states. Some of the

contradictions of modern science that they embody while spliced, however,

cannot be so easily dismissed. In particular, the spliced rabbits testify that while

scientific and technological advancement brings with it the capacity to solve

many problems - the problem of being able to keep tissue and organs alive long

enough to transplant them to a separate body, for example - it has also the

capacity to create problems, and in ways that cannot always be foreseen. The

rabbits are, one may say, a 'miracle' of science, but they are an unhappy

miracle at that, and while Baxter's achievement in successfully performing the operation has been great, the end result is, arguably, pointless. Baxter's motives too are unclear, underlining a theme that recurs elsewhere in Gray's fiction: the realms of scientific and technological possibility are vast, but such possibilities may tempt action for little more than action's sake.

Vague McMenamy ('The Crank That Made the Revolution') is particularly prone to such temptation and 'invents', among other things, an 'improved' mechanical duck. He does this by confining a real duck (belonging to his grandmother) in a contraption wherefrom its struggling legs power paddle wheels on either side. The result?

> On its maiden voyage the duck zig-zagged around the pond at a speed of thirty knots, which was three times faster than the maximum speed which the boats and ducks of the day had yet attained. McMenamy had converted a havering all-rounder into an efficient specialist.
> (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 38)

A triumph but for the fact that the duck can now neither walk nor fly. Like Baxter's rabbits, the duck is rendered miserable, but this is not enough to deter the zealous young McMenamy who, carried away by his perceived success, pursues the idea of the 'improved' duck to disastrous consequence.

> He did not stop there. If this crankshaft allowed one duck to drive a vessel three times faster than normal, how much faster would two, three or ten ducks drive it? McMenamy decided to carry the experiment as far as he could take it. He constructed a craft to be driven by every one of his Granny's seventeen ducks. ... Vague was fifteen years old when he launched his second vessel. Quacking hysterically, it crossed the pond with such velocity that it struck the opposite bank at the moment of departure from the near one. Had it struck soil it would have embedded itself. Unluckily, it hit the root of a tree, rebounded to the centre of the pond, overturned and sank. Every single duck was drowned.
>   In terms of human achievement, McMenamy's duckboat ranks with Leonardo Da Vinci's helicopter which was designed four hundred years before the engine which could have made it fly. Economically it was disastrous. Deprived of her ducks, McMenamy's Granny was compelled to knit faster than ever.
> (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, pp. 38-41)

The bathos here belies the seriousness of the situation: the ducks provided Vague and his grandmother with enough eggs to feed them, their only other means of sustenance being revenue from Mrs McMenamy's knitting. Without the ducks they must now also feed themselves from the knitting proceeds, forcing Granny to work doubly hard. As is so often the case with Alasdair Gray's writing, the comic

depiction of events is simply a palliative for a view of the world which is both deadly serious and inevitably political: Vague McMenamy's flirtations with technology are frivolous and comically absurd, yet their knock-on effects - from the ducks to his grandmother to the wider community of Cessnock who experience hardship after a knitting machine Vague invents to help out Granny costs them their businesses - provide shrewd commentary on the negative impact of industrialisation.

That rabbits, ducks and grannies tend to come off second best in these human encounters with technology suggests something of the Darwinian nature of technological advancement. As George P. Landow has observed in his book *Hypertext: The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology*, '[t]echnology always empowers someone. It empowers those who possess it, those who make use of it, and those who have access to it' (Landow, 1992, p. 169). In *Poor Things*, the elevated status Godwin Baxter attains in Archibald McCandless's eyes following his surgery on the rabbits is evidence of such empowerment. Prior to witnessing Baxter's work, McCandless does not claim to disagree with the rest of their medical class at university who consider Baxter "a harmless insignificant madman, who dabbles with brains and microscopes in an effort to look important" (*Poor Things*, p. 21). McCandless's reaction to Mopsy and Flopsy, however, sees Baxter set apart from his peer group - it is a mixture of wonder and pity, felt not just for the rabbits themselves but also for their 'creator'.

> The little beasts were works of art, not nature. The one in my hands
> suddenly felt terribly precious. I set it carefully down on the grass and
> gazed at Baxter with awe, admiration and a kind of pity. It is hard not to
> pity those whose powers separate them from the rest of us, unless (of
> course) they are rulers doing the usual sort of damage.
> (*Poor Things*, p. 23)

As scientific miracle-maker, Godwin Baxter's apotheosis is now more than merely nominal. The dangers that can inhere when men assume the role of God, however, become apparent when, according to McCandless's narrative, Baxter uses his unorthodox surgical skills to transplant the living brain of a nine-month-old foetus into its drowned mother's skull, thus bringing the drowned woman back to life, though with the mental capacity of an infant. That Baxter has been perceived as someone who 'dabbles with brains' is telling - McCandless has

3

already told us earlier in his narrative that '[m]ost thought him a scientific dabbler' (*Poor Things*, p. 15) - the implication being that he is toying with something he doesn't fully understand. "Medicine is as much an art as a science," he tells McCandless (*Poor Things*, p. 16), but such artful employment of it brings him trouble: Bella Baxter, the woman created, turns out to be something of a handful, her erratic behaviour playing havoc with the delicate constitutional disposition of her creator and bringing him ultimately to his death. As with Vague McMenamy and his grandmother's ducks, Baxter has interfered with the natural order of things, commingling nature with artistic creation without a full reckoning of the consequences. His scientific endeavours are seen to be not just frivolous but dangerous, creating a larger-than-life person for whom he is wholly responsible yet cannot control. The parallels with that other, most famous tale of human folly in the name of science, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, are clear enough.[1]

Where the creator's burden of responsibility is manifested in a sense of guilt that pervades the entire text of *Frankenstein*, it is more ambiguously dealt with in *Poor Things*. Certainly Godwin Baxter experiences moments of regret -

> "I deserve death as much as any other murderer. ... That little nearly nine-month-old foetus I took living from the drowned woman's body should have been coddled as my foster child. By recasting its brain in the mother's body I shortened her life as deliberately as if I stabbed her to death at the age of forty or fifty, but I took the years off the start, not the ending of her life – a much more vicious thing to do. And I did it for the reason that elderly lechers purchase children from bawds. ... Without Sir Colin's techniques Bell would now be a normal two-and-a-half-year-old infant. I could enjoy her society for another sixteen or eighteen years before she grew independent of me. But my damnable sexual appetites employed my scientific skills to warp her into a titbit for Duncan Wedderburn! *DUNCAN WEDDERBURN!*"
> He wept and I brooded.
>
> (*Poor Things*, p. 67-68)

- but such moments are invariably short-lived. It only takes a few words from McCandless saying that he loves Bell the way she is for Baxter to recover from his

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[1] Incidentally, our fictional 'father' in the text, Godwin Baxter, shares a name with William Godwin, Mary Shelley's real father, while the fictional mother-and-daughter (combined in one body) of the text, Bella Baxter, becomes a well-known feminist like Mary Shelley's mother, Mary Wollstonecraft. Mary Shelley's own elopement with Percy Bysshe Shelley parallels that of Bella Baxter with Duncan Wedderburn, who refers to Godwin Baxter in his manic letter as Godwin Bysshe Baxter, *Poor Things*, p. 94.

seeming torment, brighten up and state some of the more positive consequences of his actions.

> After this we grew slightly more cheerful. Baxter began strolling about the kitchen, smiling as he only did when he thought of Bell and forgot himself.
> "Yes," he said, "not many two-and-a-half-year-olds are so sure-footed, steady-handed, quick-witted. She remembers everything that happens to her and every word she hears, so even when it makes no sense she picks up the meaning later. And I have saved her from one crushing disadvantage I never had myself: she has never been small so has never known fear."
>
> *(Poor Things*, p. 69)

The 'creation' of Bella may cause Baxter's own health to deteriorate, but Bell herself develops into a healthy, well-balanced woman – happier certainly than in her previous life as the mentally tortured Victoria Hattersley, which had ended in suicide by drowning.[2] Unlike Victor Frankenstein, Baxter takes full

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[2] This is all assuming we accept the veracity of McCandless's narrative, that Bell has indeed been created from the body of the drowned Victoria Hattersley and the brain of her unborn child. If we instead choose to believe Bella/Victoria's 'Letter to Posterity' which follows it, it is still the case that Godwin Baxter's care for Victoria (who, this epistle asserts, arrived destitute on his doorstep as opposed to throwing herself off a bridge into the River Clyde) has had a huge positive impact in her development. See Bernstein, 1999, p. 114ff. for further discussion of Baxter's role in Bella/Victoria's transformation and, concomitantly, Gray's transformation of the *Frankenstein* story. The question of the creator's duty of care to the created, especially in terms of the need for knowledge and identity, is comically dealt with in Flann O'Brien's novel *At Swim-Two-Birds*, the text asking whether an author does not owe a duty of care to the written characters s/he creates. Dermot Trellis, the fictional author within the text is actually put on trial for his negligence in this respect towards his character, Furriskey. Furriskey has been fictionally created by Trellis - or 'born' - as a grown man and thus, it is suggested, has been denied the childhood experience necessary to his 'natural' development as an adult. Furriskey's situation is comparable with that of both Frankenstein's creature and Bella Baxter: they are adults without life experience, and for this their creators are responsible. The circumstances of Trellis's cross-examination are relayed in a shorthand textual summary:
'In what manner was he born?
He awoke as if from sleep.
His sensations?
Bewilderment, perplexity. ... He was consumed by doubts as to his own identity, as to the nature of his body and the cast of his countenance. ... He spent some time searching in his room for a looking-glass or for a surface that would enable him to ascertain the character of his countenance.
You had already hidden the glass?
No. I had forgotten to provide one.
By reason of his doubts as to his personal appearance, he suffered considerable mental anguish?
It is possible.
You could have appeared to him - by magic if necessary - and explained his identity and duties to him. Why did you not perform so obvious an errand of mercy?

responsibility for the care of his charge and the nurturing and education he gives Bella make all the difference. The point is that his advanced use of science is not a bad thing *per se*: Baxter succeeds where Frankenstein failed in bringing up (as opposed to just creating) a rounded person and not a monster, so some good comes out of his artful science. Perhaps a fictional lesson has been learned. Baxter's success though, as we know, still comes at a price for himself.

Differing again from Victor Frankenstein, Baxter takes pride in his creation and indeed in the fact that Bell has a will of her own. The God-fearing undercurrent of *Frankenstein*, too, is notably absent from *Poor Things*. Not having undergone any formative religious instruction and only reading the Bible later in life, Godwin Baxter views God in a refreshingly pragmatic way. Rather than thinking of himself as 'playing God' in the religious sense of transgressing a moral law, he sees it as the right and duty of humans to attempt to become Godlike. He argues both for the demystification of God and the democratisation of 'God's' knowledge:

> "Forgive my excitement McCandless. You cannot share it because you have never been a parent, have never made something new and splendid. It is wonderful for a creator to see the offspring live, feel and act independently. I read Genesis three years ago and could not understand God's displeasure when Eve and Adam chose to know good and evil – chose to be Godlike. That should have been his proudest hour."
> "They deliberately disobeyed him!" I said, forgetting *The Origin of Species* and speaking with the voice of *The Shorter Catechism*. "He had given them life and everything they could enjoy, everything on earth, except two forbidden trees. Those were sacred mysteries whose fruit did harm. Nothing but perverse greed made them eat it."
> Baxter shook his head and said, "Only bad religions depend on mysteries, just as bad governments depend on secret police. Truth, beauty and goodness are not mysterious, they are the commonest, most obvious, most essential facts of life, like sunlight, air and bread. Only folk whose heads are muddled by expensive educations think truth, beauty, goodness are rare private properties. Nature is more liberal. The universe keeps nothing essential from us – it is all present, all gift. God is the universe plus mind. Those who say God, or the universe, or nature is mysterious, are like those who call these things jealous or angry. They are announcing the state of their lonely, muddled minds."
> "Utter blethers, Baxter!" I cried. "Our whole lives are a struggle with mysteries. Mysteries endanger us, support us, destroy us. Our great scientists have cleared away these mysteries in some directions by deepening them in others.
>
> (*Poor Things*, p. 99-100)

I do not know. ... I suppose I fell asleep' (*At Swim-Two-Birds*, p. 42-43).

Baxter, a dedicated follower of science, believes that there is nothing, finally, that cannot be known or explained, though he concedes the impossibility of anyone ever being able to know more than a fraction of all that can be known. "[W]hat you call *mysteries*," he tells McCandless, "I call *ignorances*, and nothing we do not know (whatever we call it) is more holy, sacred and wonderful than the things we know – the things we are!" (*Poor Things*, p. 101). His belief in the ultimate presence of truth is indicative of the scientific desire to 'clear away' mystery – science, Baxter believes, can finally explain the universe.[3]

Both Baxter's and McCandless's arguments allude, through their respective references to truth and mystery, to the privileged status of knowledge and again the issue is one of empowerment. Akin to the notion of technological empowerment and its concomitant status, this may be termed *informational empowerment*; that is to say the status that accrues to those in possession of knowledge that others do not or cannot have. Duncan Wedderburn, driven to the brink of lunacy by Bella's nymphomania, certainly resents Baxter's scientific

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[3] According to Baxter, it could also have averted the crisis in the state of Denmark in Shakespeare's *Hamlet* which Baxter attributes wholly to sanitation problems at Elsinore, as Stephen Bernstein has pointed out (see *Poor Things*, p. 39-40 and Bernstein, 1999, p. 115). Baxter, of course, is living through a time (the nineteenth century) of radical scientific discovery and progress that threatened to undermine many of the prevalent doctrines of Christianity. The evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin in particular (especially his *The Origin of Species*), whilst heralding a massive advancement of thought, were treated with suspicion and contempt in many quarters (and indeed still are). Bella Baxter alludes to Darwin's particular attempt at to 'clear away' mystery by scientific enlightenment when she says "So at last it looks as if the mystery of the Origin of Bell Baxter's Species is going to be solved" (*Poor Things*, p. 205). Gray comments upon the challenges of this historical period in *A History Maker*, quoting a poem by transcendentalist essayist, Brahmin and raconteur Oliver Wendell Holmes ('*The times are racked with birth pangs. Every hour/ Brings forth some gasping Truth*,' *A History Maker*, p. 111) and writing of it: 'The monstrous but quickly domesticated truths he describes here are nineteenth-century geological and biological discoveries not foreshadowed in the Bible. At first many feared these contradicted the word of God, undermined organized religion and would overturn established authority. In a few years it was obvious that ecclesiastical, legal and political bosses were as firmly established as ever, and scientific discovery was making industrial investment more profitable' (*A History Maker*, p. 182). Godwin Baxter's belief in the final presence of truth, as well as being significant in terms of the ambitions of the applied sciences, is also indispensable to the entire project of Western philosophy from Plato onwards which attempts to thoroughly rationalise experience using reason and logic, although Baxter himself is concerned with the scientific rather than philosophical or metaphysical quest for truth. As he explains to McCandless earlier in the book he was taught at home by his father who "only taught what interested him. He was a severe rationalist. Poetry, fiction, history, philosophy and the Bible struck him as nonsense – 'unprovable blethers', he called them" (*Poor Things*, p. 19). Consequently, Baxter was only taught maths, anatomy and chemistry.

knowledge and use of it. In a raving letter to Baxter in which he accuses Bella of witchery and Baxter of devilry he writes:

> *Eve was ruled by the Serpent, Delilah by the Philistine Elders, Madame de Maintenon by Cardinal Thingummy and Bella Baxter by YOU, Godwin Bysshe Baxter, Arch-Fiend and Manipulator of this Age of Material Science! Only in Modern Glasgow – the BABYLON of Material Science – could you have gained wealth, power and respect by carving up human brains, prowling through morgues and haunting the death-beds of the poor.*
>
> (*Poor Things*, p. 94-95)

He goes on to list a number of biblical prophecies, countering them by contrived analogy with what he terms 'modern facts': under the heading '*BIBLE PROPHECIES*' is the statement '*The Beast (and the Woman he supports) are also called* Mystery'; under '*MODERN FACTS*' '*Chemistry, electricity, anatomy et cetera are Mysteries to nearly everybody* – except you!' (*Poor Things*, p. 96). Wedderburn, like Archie McCandless, uses the metaphor of mystery; he clearly considers that the knowledge Baxter possesses is valuable and arcane, beyond the reach of all but an élite few. Baxter himself seems aware of the power his knowledge gives him and despite there being evidence in the text of his willingness to *use* this knowledge in a benevolent and socially conscious way – as well as taking care to give Bella a liberal education, he has also worked in his spare time in a clinic treating injured employees of iron and locomotive works, 'victims of heavy industry' as he calls them (*Poor Things*, p. 195) – he nevertheless seems reluctant to *share* his knowledge. When Bella discusses her own plans to become a doctor she believes she can learn from both McCandless and Baxter:

> "Think of all the lectures you will be able to give me, Candle, and how hard I will have to listen!"
> "Baxter knows a lot more than I do," I told her.
> "Yes," said Baxter, "but I will never tell people all of it."
>
> (*Poor Things*, p. 197)

It is not just by virtue of his scientific knowledge that Baxter can claim to be élitist: he is a nonpareil when it comes to being able to read Bell's childish and elliptical handwriting. "What do the scrawls mean, Baxter?" McCandless asks in frustration when attempting to read her letters, "Here – take them back. Only you can decipher them" (*Poor Things*, p. 151). Once again Godwin Baxter achieves the status of God, having the singular ability to solve the mystery of

8

Bella's text. As the Bible points out in a passage used by Gray as an epigraph to *The Fall of Kelvin Walker,* complete control of language and meaning is normally reserved for God alone:

"In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God."
from Saint John's
GOSPEL
(Epigraph to *The Fall of Kelvin Walker*) [4]

Knowledge of language and writing, then, brings its own degree of eminence. Frankenstein's creature - who might also be termed a 'poor thing'[5] - recognises this while observing the cottagers in conversation:

> I found that these people possessed a method of communicating their experience and feelings to one another by articulate sounds. I perceived that the words they spoke sometimes produced pleasure or pain, smiles or sadness, in the minds and countenances of the hearers. This was indeed a godlike science, and I ardently desired to become acquainted with it. But I was baffled in every attempt I made for this purpose. Their pronunciation was quick, and the words they uttered, not having any apparent connection with visible objects, I was unable to discover any clue by which I could unravel the mystery of their reference.
> (*Frankenstein*, p.107-108)

Words and the knowledge of their meaning are once more considered a mystery, a divine secret. In an attempt to get to know the cottagers the creature

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[4] Gray's capitalisation of the word GOSPEL serves to remind us of the supposedly unquestionable truth and authority of the gospel – the gospel truth. The technique of capitalising words to confer authority is also used by John Irving in his novel *A Prayer for Owen Meany,* where all Owen Meany's dialogue is capitalised, elevating the status of his character to that of deity. Capitalisation is often used somewhat ironically in Gray's fiction however, particularly in the context of slogans (reminiscent of Orwell). Such sloganisation highlights the way that words can be manipulated to gain advantage and underlines the danger of taking any words, even the gospel, at face value, as 'the truth' – as a poster on a bus window in *Lanark* points out: 'ADVERTISING OVERSTIMULATES, MISINFORMS, CORRUPTS' (*Lanark*, p. 434). Also in *Lanark*, the capitalist tenets that money can buy happiness and that time is money are advertised in a poster stating 'MONEY IS TIME. TIME IS LIFE. BUY MORE TIME FOR YOUR FAMILY FROM THE QUANTUM INTERMINABLE. (THEY'LL LOVE YOU FOR IT.)' (*Lanark*, p. 454) - money is thus eventually equated to love. The 'truth' of this (literally) capitalist wisdom (produced by the logical argument) depends of course upon more conventional wisdoms, stating that neither love nor time can be bought, being considered false. Similarly, a capitalised piece of graffiti found both in Jake's bedroom in *The Fall of Kelvin Walker* and in the cathedral in *Lanark* reads 'GOD=LOVE=MONEY=SHIT' – the 'universal truth' of the statement 'God is Love' here being wholly undermined by the logic of the rest of the equation (*The Fall of Kelvin Walker*, p. 21, *Lanark*, p. 402).
[5] Each of the characters in *Poor Things* (whose working title was *Poor Creatures*) is, at one point or another, described with the adjective 'poor'.

endeavours to himself 'become master of their language,' believing that this may lead them to accept him in spite of his appearance (*Frankenstein*, p. 109). He is perceptive enough to understand the power of language but too naïve to fully estimate the impact his deformity will have upon his human counterparts. Only the blind man and, of course, the reader of his eloquent narrative are able to fall under the spell of his language. His reference to language as 'a godlike science' is significant: it not only emphasises the privilege that comes with language and its knowledge (as has now been established along with the idea of status being gained from technology and *its* knowledge), it also expresses a fact that is frequently overlooked and which in this case takes the naïvety of an innocent to point out: language itself is a science, a technology.

It is significant too that Frankenstein's creature recognises *spoken* language as a science: one of the many facets of Jacques Derrida's theoretical approach to language, his 'grammatology', is his critique of the commonly accepted view that speech is somehow more authentic or 'natural', more self-present - and thus closer to 'truth' - than the written word. For Derrida, the term *writing* signifies more broadly than the conventional notion of inscription (inevitably following on from precursory speech or thought) and refers rather to the general way that all language works, through systems of difference and deferral.[6] This will be discussed again in Chapter 2; for now it will suffice to say that for Derrida, spoken language presupposes and therefore depends on writing - it is always already suffused with writing's effects. As a system of knowledge codification dependent upon writing in its broad Derridean sense, speech is as much a science as is writing in its narrow inscriptional sense; speech, rather than being 'natural' as is usually assumed, is already mediated by writing long before inscription 'intervenes'.

If spoken language is only grudgingly recognised as a science, written language - inscription - too is commonly overlooked as a technology, at least until its transformations into printed and more recently digital text. The etymology of the word 'technology' however, as Jay David Bolter has also noted,

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[6] It should be noted that Derrida's term encompasses more than just the language of words - as Christopher Norris explains, 'Writing, for Derrida, is the 'free play' or element of undecidability within every system of communication,' (Norris, 1991, p. 28; see pp. 26-41 for a full and clear discussion of the speech/writing debate).

with its origins in the Greek *tekhnologia* meaning 'systematic treatment' from the root *tekhne* meaning 'art', justifies its use as applying to more than just mechanical (or machine) forms.[7] Bolter writes:

> In the ancient world physical technology was simpler, and the ancients put a correspondingly greater emphasis on the skill of the craftsman - the potter, the stone-mason, or the carpenter. In his dialogue the *Phaedrus*, Plato calls the alphabet itself a *techne*. He would also have called the ancient book composed of ink on papyrus a *techne*; Homeric epic poetry was also a *techne*, as was Greek tragedy. All the ancient arts and crafts have this in common: that the craftsman must develop a skill; a technical state of mind in using tools and materials. Ancient and modern writing is technology in just this sense. It is a method for arranging verbal thoughts in a visual space.
>
> (Bolter, 1991, p.35)

Bolter's broad definition of technology encompasses all forms of inscription and even stretches to methodical and artistic forms of spoken language. In fact Bolter's example of Homeric poetry as *tekhne* brings us back to Derrida's speech/writing debate: Homeric poetry is an oral form, delivered and passed on via speech and memory rather than inscription, yet the systematic composition of ideas quintessential to oral poetry and leading to its inclusion here as a basic form of technology also reaffirms the dependence of the spoken word on writing as Derrida describes it. Such a broad view of technology certainly challenges the popular and modern notion of technology as inextricably bound to the machine.

The portrayal of technology as being at odds with 'human' creativity is commonplace: Alasdair Gray's *Lanark* follows a long line of works - D.H. Lawrence's fiction and Fritz Lang's cinematic masterpiece *Metropolis* are good examples - that depict humans as struggling (usually vainly) in the face of increasing machine power. For the human subjects in these fictions the merciless efficiency of the machine creates an atmosphere of tedium and hopelessness, both in the workplace and at home (as clocks and mechanical instruments become domestic necessities). In these cases, as is common, technology is shown to exist in opposition to 'natural' human tendencies - the machine is the adversary of the individual. The danger for the humans in these situations is that, having to live and work with machines that curb their creativity (or at least disrupt their natural, biological rhythms of living and working), they lose their

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[7] Definitions from *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*.

humanity, becoming themselves machine-like, devoid of imagination and indeed of hope for a fulfilling life. Whilst the metamorphosis of afflicted humans into hard-skinned and cold-blooded reptiles in *Lanark* offers the most obvious example of such dehumanisation in Gray's fiction, similarly imaginatively crushed subjects are everywhere among his canon. The male narrator of 'No Bluebeard' offers up a particularly pertinent example: as a computer programmer who has become in essence as logical and predictable as one of his programs, the tensions created by his overly pragmatic attitude within a series of unsuccessful marriages (to wives he enumerates rather than names) represent, in microcosm, the tension brought to the scene of human domesticity by technology. The presence of his computer in the living room of the matrimonial home shared with wife number 3 is a symbolic source of disquiet, a physical manifestation of technology's impingement upon 'natural' order and domestic balance (on the disintegration of this marriage wife 3 tells the narrator: "This hasn't been my home since you brought in that bloody machine," *The Ends of our Tethers*, p. 57-58). Gray does offer his protagonist the chance of redemption at the end of the tale: the realisation of what he has become prompting the narrator to show some genuine warmth towards his current wife (whose name we know to be Tilda, perhaps an indicator of the likelihood of her not becoming simply (ex) wife number 4), a warmth that had been extinguished by his slippage into a mindset of dehumanised techno-logic.

> I lay weeping for my whole past and could not stop for I suddenly saw
> what I had never before suspected: that I had lost three splendid women
> because I had been constantly mean and ungenerous, cold and
> calculating. Even my lovemaking, I suspected, had not been much more
> generous than my many acts of solitary masturbation between the
> marriages. I wept harder than ever. I crawled off the sofa, switched on a
> lamp and knelt on the floor beside the bed. Tilda stopped snoring,
> opened her eyes and stared at me.
> "Please, Tilda," I said between sobs, "please just let me hold your hand
> for a while."
>
> *(The Ends of our Tethers*, p. 58-59)

Love, then, in this case provides the antidote for a life run according to technological (rather than human) principles. Here as elsewhere in Gray's fiction and the modernist tradition it follows, the introduction of technology into day-to-day life is accompanied by the loss of something more meaningful and symbolic, by a lack of the individual imagination necessary for human intimacy

12

and empathy. The end result is an individual within a society resembling that prognosticated by Herbert Marcuse in *One Dimensional Man*, created, of course, not by technology alone, but by technology as it functions and is manipulated politically. 'As a technological universe,' Marcuse writes, 'advanced industrial society is a *political* universe, the latest stage in the realization of a specific historical *project* - namely, the experience, transformation, and organization of nature as the mere stuff of domination' (Marcuse, 1964, p. *xvi*). Individuals subjected to such politics are never far from the centre of Gray's writing: once more the dragonhide sufferers of *Lanark* strike the mind as the most arresting victims, their humanity diminishing as it does daily until they finally expire with an explosive release of pent-up thermic energy (a consequence of their preceding inability to release human warmth); the dragonhide victims become no more than reptilian heat-fuel for the Institution that is supposed to care for them, literal grist to the State's techno-political mill. For Marcuse, the pursuit of the so-called technological project will always involve a stifling of the individual in the interests of industrial-capitalist 'progress':

> A comfortable, smooth, reasonable, democratic unfreedom prevails in
> advanced industrial civilization, a token of technical progress. Indeed,
> what could be more rational than the suppression of individuality in the
> mechanization of socially necessary but painful performances; the
> concentration of individual enterprises in more effective, more
> productive corporations; the regulation of free competition among
> unequally equipped economic subjects; the curtailment of prerogatives
> and national sovereignties which impede the international organization
> of resources.
>
> <div align="right">(Marcuse, 1964, p. 1)</div>

But where does this leave writing? In his book *Technology, Development and Domination*, Tom Kitwood writes: 'All cultures have developed their practical arts to a high level of sophistication, in one way or another. The distinctively technological approach, which eliminates drama, ritual, all expressive qualities and even a great deal of human skill, is the unique product of the Western European tradition' (Kitwood, 1984, p. 2). Such a view is in keeping with Marcuse's one dimension, but, as Bolter's position has illustrated, depends upon a pejoratively narrow definition of technology that would surely exclude writing. Human skill is required for even the most basic form of writing, writing is frequently expressive and handwriting (chirography) can itself become an art form (calligraphy); yet no matter how 'natural' even handwriting may seem, the

fact remains that it is an artificial process, a technology, albeit a more immediate form than machine technology. Setting technology and the creativity of the individual at loggerheads, then, is not so straightforward as is often implied; such an opposition is based upon a questionable premise, a presupposition that individual creativity and technology can in fact be separated. As Bolter has indicated, creativity frequently manifests itself in the individual in a technological way, the individual having to develop 'a technical state of mind' as he puts it in pursuit of his or her art (Bolter, 1991, p. 35). The individual engaged in writing is at once creative and technological; once again writing – in this case the technological condition of writing - has always already intervened.

Misgivings about technology and its apparatuses are understandable, given that so often throughout history technology has been misused by those it has empowered (as the parodic Vague McMenamy comically illustrates). Writing technology is no different in this sense: from its beginnings in chirography and later development into typography (print), writing – and thus knowledge, since knowledge is mainly passed on via the written word – was controlled by élite groups in society, as Kitwood recognises: 'Writing became a key instrument of administration, essential for the functioning of the centralised hierarchy. Of course only a very small proportion of the urban societies was literate, and these would virtually all be male' (Kitwood, 1984, p. 24). Initially ecclesiastical bodies and rulers of states controlled the production of manuscripts, codices and books, then, with the advent of print and the growth of industrial capitalism, those wealthy enough or with the good fortune to receive the patronage of the wealthy could pay to get published. In the nineteenth century of *Poor Things*, though books are in wide circulation it is still clear that access to books and the knowledge they contain – and of course access to a university education – is still largely a matter of privilege. Archie McCandless, son of a peasant farm worker, uses his mother's entire life savings to put himself through university, and cannot then afford a decent coat. Godwin Baxter on the other hand has the inheritance of his wealthy and learned late father, Sir Colin Baxter, to keep him going - this assures both his standard of living (in a multi-storey townhouse in a desirable area of Glasgow) and his access to knowledge which in turn enables

him to follow in the footsteps of his surgeon father and, as we have seen, ensures his own privileged status.

Certainly though, the élitism of writing has dissipated over time. Landow writes:

> The introduction of writing into a culture effects many changes, and all of them involve questions of power and status. When it first appeared in the ancient world, writing made its possessors unique. Furthermore, if writing changes the way people think as radically as [Marshall] McLuhan, [Walter J.] Ong, and others have claimed, then writing drove a sharp wedge between the literate and the illiterate, encouraged a sharp division between these two groups that would rapidly become classes or castes, and greatly increased the power and prestige of the lettered. In the millennia that it took for writing to diffuse through large proportions of entire societies, however, writing shifted the balance from the state to the individual, from the nobility to the polis.
>
> (Landow, 1992, p. 173)

It must be emphasised, however, that such 'democratisation' of knowledge through writing has only been able to take place among literate communities in countries wealthy enough to provide educational resources and support to its citizens. Because of this, wealthier, so-called 'developed' countries have attained greater power and status than their poorer counterparts. Industrial capitalism, ideologically tied to Western nations, has developed into global capitalism; the Western nations with their advantages in wealth and power are thus able to direct the movement of global capital in ways that suit themselves and maintain the status quo, making it difficult for poorer countries to create and foster wealth. Illiterate communities living in poor countries, then, are largely at the mercy of the literate (who make the laws they are expected to abide by) and it is difficult to argue that the technology of the written word has so far advantaged them in any way. For those of us fortunate enough to live in wealthier countries the contrast is stark: the written word has become such an ever-present feature of our everyday lives that we no longer even perceive it to be the technology that it is, but consider it a natural, even evolutionary process. We are no longer hostile to writing, as we often are to other forms of technology, since it is so customary it appears to pose no threat; put simply, we have assimilated writing to such an extent that we feel 'in control' of it. The same cannot be said of other technologies. We don't feel the same way about machines - about mechanical or digital technology - as we do about writing.

Machines, as depicted in *Lanark*, in *Metropolis* and elsewhere, are capable of such *inhuman* efficiency and power that they seem frightening - indeed monstrous - and outwith our control, engendering the feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness felt by so many of the inhabitants of Unthank, the post-industrial dystopia featured in *Lanark*.

Digital technology poses a further threat to the perceived autonomy of the individual: as an abstract technology based on billions upon billions of 'bits' of computer code - strings of binary data unintelligible to humans - it enables machines to carry out tasks far faster and with greater accuracy than mechanical technology could allow and infinitely faster than a human can even think. Digital technology is abstract to such a degree that even the most simple of tasks - typing a sentence into a word processing application for example - carried out on a computer involves processes incomprehensible to the human mind. Such a measure of abstraction, when applied to the written word, must necessitate a re-evaluation of the way we think about writing in general. Many people view the new form of technology with suspicion because of the way it changes their relationship to writing, making it seem less immediate and natural. Just as the introduction of technology into the workplace and home engendered feelings of disruption, of a distance being placed between humans and their domestic circumstances that compromised their creative and imaginative lives (leading to the sort of disengagement that affects the narrator of 'No Bluebeard'), so it is suggested that digital technology intervenes in the comfortable relationship between the human being and the written word, somehow alienating individuals from their (written) reality. It has long been forgotten by most that people felt the same way initially about early forms of writing and perceived the written word as mediating speech. The issue again concerns the degree of abstraction of the technology - writing (inscription) is a more abstract act than speech, involving tools external to the human body (Bolter terms this 'estrangement', commenting that: 'Estrangement is the original sin that belongs to the act of visual representation: the spoken word does not call forth the same sense of estrangement' (Bolter, 1991, p. 212)). Digital technology involves further layers of removal from the human. Yet, as Derrida has argued, speech itself is only seemingly immediate and natural; since it depends upon the effects of writing

(in the Derridean sense), the spoken word has always already been mediated. No words, therefore - spoken, written or displayed on a computer screen - are actually wholly natural, innocent or 'value-free' but are always subject to the general conditions of language, or textuality. Bolter comments:

> Writing, like language itself, is ... both natural and artificial. Even if the human capacity for language is innate, wired into our genes, we nevertheless use our innate capacity in an artificial, rhetorical way. Writing is certainly not innate. Yet writing can be taken in and become a habit of mind. What is natural seems more intimately and obviously human. For that reason we do not wish to dwell on the fact that writing is a technology; we want the skill of writing to be natural. We like our tools and machines well enough, but we also like the idea of being able to do without them. Putting away our technology gives us a feeling of autonomy and allows us to reassert the difference between the natural and the merely artificial. Since the time of Rousseau, much of the hostility directed against modern technology has been rooted in the belief that, as our technology becomes more complex, we are becoming creatures of our own creations. Today, the computer is a perfect target for such an assault on technology, because of the computer's apparent autonomy.
>
> But in the case of writing as elsewhere, it is not possible to put away technology. Writing with pen and paper is no more natural, no less technological than writing at a computer screen. It is true that the computer is a more complicated and more fragile device than a pen. But we cannot isolate ourselves from technology by reverting to older methods of writing.
>
> (Bolter, 1991, p. 36-37)

If it has been possible for us to assimilate earlier forms of writing to the extent that we have, then it is also possible that, in time, digital text will come to seem as natural to us as pen and paper. In *From Text to Hypertext*, Silvio Gaggi comments that the shifts in writing technology have 'produced changes in the psyche: changes in the way we structure our thinking, the way we feel ourselves to be, and the way we engage and interact with the world and others' (Gaggi, 1997, p. 113). Digital text and technology can already be seen to have changed the way many of us work and communicate: offices and homes in increasing number have personal computers, enabling digital rather than manual or mechanical word, image and audio processing; emails are frequently preferred to the now rather derogatorily termed 'snail mail'. The acceptance of digital technology has in this sense already begun and continues to increase. Yet the implications of the digital revolution on the written word in particular are more far-reaching than has so far been suggested here, for texts that exist in digital format exist differently to material texts - they are immaterial and as

such subject to change and manipulation beyond the possibilities of traditional text; that is to say they are dynamic rather than static. The possibilities for dynamic digital text provide the essence of the term 'hypertext' that has come to describe it.

Delany and Landow define hypertext as 'the use of the computer to transcend the linear, bounded and fixed qualities of the traditional written text' (Delany and Landow, 1991, p. 3). Traditional written texts exist materially. They can be picked up, read, put back down again, and the next time they are picked up they will exist exactly as they did before; that is to say, they are stable entities. "Reading," Professor Uzzi-Tuzii in Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller* says, "is always this: there is a thing that is there, a thing made of writing, a solid, material, object, which cannot be changed" (*If on a winter's night a traveller*, p. 72). The words making up printed texts are both fixed and permanent - it is impossible to change the words of a book without damaging or defacing it and even then the words will only have been changed in that single copy. Digital texts on the other hand are unstable, impermanent and changeable; because they exist only as binary data in the computer's memory they can be altered quickly and easily by just typing changes into the digital document as it is temporarily displayed onscreen. Saving the changes into the computer's memory effectively rewrites the text, so that the next time it is viewed the changes have been preserved - the text is no longer the same; it has changed and can be changed again at any time. If the computer is serving the document across a network the changes will have effect for everyone on the network viewing that document. Even if the document is not itself networked but exists in multiple digital copies on different users' machines, it is easy to electronically distribute the changed digital document to replace the old one. For such changes to be disseminated with traditional printed text, multiple copies of a changed document would have to be printed and distributed, a slow and laborious process, as well as a costly one (the reason that revised editions of textbooks, for example, appear only every few years rather than on an *ad hoc* basis).

The volatility and transience of digital text must of course have implications for writing, for its forms, its writers and readers. Bolter has argued that the

fixity of traditional text led to books being considered 'monuments', a term that reflects their static and permanent nature. This in turn led to writers - the literal figures of authority behind such monumental 'works' - being held in disproportionate regard: since the words of the text could not be changed, the author could not be challenged, thus the author was distanced from the reader. Bolter goes on to suggest that digital text will engender new attitudes toward both text (rather than 'work') and author and implicit in his argument is the idea that digital text, as a new form of writing technology, is responding to the ideological and cultural needs of the current society, particularly to the postmodern theory of a fragmented culture in which there can be no 'monuments', no stable explanations. Bolter uses as an example one of the most familiar of printed monuments, the encyclopaedia:

> The attitude toward the knowledge contained in electronic encyclopedias will be opportunistic, almost irreverent, because of the temporary character of electronic information. This was not the case for an encyclopedia in manuscript or in print, where the technology encouraged more or less permanent structures of knowledge. Today we cannot hope for permanence and for general agreement on the order of things - in encyclopedias any more than in politics or the arts. What we have instead is a view of knowledge as collections of (verbal and visual) ideas that can arrange themselves into a kaleidoscope of hierarchical and associative patterns - each pattern meeting the needs of one class of readers on one occasion.
>
> (Bolter, 1991, p. 97)

These collections of ideas can be thought of as 'little narratives' - rather than the 'grand narratives' or monuments of the past - and, as Bolter has pointed out, they can be organised according to the needs of the readers of texts. The inherent flexibility of dynamic digital text - hypertext - means that it contains the potential to be organised in ways other than that defined by the author of a traditional text and built into its linear form.

PART ONE

The Text

Chapter 1.

'Telling Stories': Narrative and the Book

The printed book, like the codex and papyrus roll before it, is designed to be read in a linear fashion and because of this texts have conventionally been written in linear form. In the storytelling, folklore tradition, linear narrative was seen to be representative of lived experience, of the continuous passage of time and 'natural' forward-motion of events; a 'narrative journey' if you like. This is true not only of fictional storytelling but also of the telling of 'factual stories', or history. Jean-François Lyotard writes that:

> Ethnocultures were for a long time the apparatuses for memorizing information such that peoples were able to organize their space and their time. They were, notably, the way in which multiplicities of different times could be gathered and conserved in a single memory (Bernard Stiegler). Themselves considered as *technai*, they allowed collections of individuals and generations to have real stocks of information at their disposal through time and space. In particular they produced the specific organization of temporality that we call historical narratives. There are many ways of telling a story, but the narrative as such can be considered to be a technical apparatus giving a people the means to store, order and retrieve units of information, i.e. events. More precisely, narratives are like temporal filters whose function is to transform the emotive charge

> linked to the event into sequences of units of information capable of
> giving rise to something like meaning.
>
> (Lyotard, 1991, p. 62-63)

As well as reiterating the point that techniques of knowledge storage and retrieval are constitutive of technology in its basic sense as *tekhne*, Lyotard's comment emphasises that collected knowledge as it is manifested in and divulged by narrative is organised linearly and sequentially and it has been argued by Michel Foucault in particular that the *desire* for such linear narrative is in fact ideologically determined. For Foucault, historical narratives function to configure history as a continuous and unified chain of events that occur on the simple and cumulative bases of cause and effect. In so doing they serve to suppress difference – differing accounts of history – instead presenting it from a single point of view and with a single voice. For Foucault, this theory of continuous history is inextricable from the notion of the free and autonomous subject since the idea of history as a settled and linear progression enables individual subjects to feel settled themselves, fully aware of their place within the historical milieu:

> If the history of thought could remain the locus of uninterrupted
> continuities, if it could endlessly forge connexions that no analysis could
> undo without abstraction, if it could weave, around everything that men
> say and do, obscure synthesis that anticipate for him, prepare him, and
> lead him endlessly towards his future, it would provide a privileged
> shelter for the sovereignty of consciousness. Continuous history is the
> indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject: the
> guarantee that everything that has eluded him may be restored to him;
> the certainty that time will disperse nothing without restoring it in a
> reconstituted unity; the promise that one day the subject – in the form of
> historical consciousness – will once again be able to appropriate, to bring
> back under his sway, all those things that are kept at a distance by
> difference, and find in them what might be called his abode. Making
> historical analysis the discourse of the continuous and making human
> consciousness the original subject of all historical development and all
> action are the two sides of the same system of thought. In this system,
> time is conceived in terms of totalization and revolutions are never more
> than moments of consciousness.
>
> (Foucault, 1982, p. 12)

Since history makes logical sense, the experience of the individual in a particular historical epoch also makes sense; thus are stable subjects created or, Althusser would say, interpellated. Unified historical narrative can therefore be argued to posit identity (both historical and individual), and if notions of stable identity are dependent on stable, continuous narrative it is natural that subjects in turn

desire and produce such narratives as will constantly and consistently reaffirm their own sense of identity.[8]

The idea of linear history as an ideological construct suppressing difference is explored by Alasdair Gray in *A History Maker*. In Kittock the henwife's notes on chapter five, history is set out as having been appropriated by different movements or groups of people at different stages of time and mythologised for their own ends; history is literally 'made' in this way. For each group or movement (except postmodernism[9]) their particular historical narrative is linear and functions ideologically as Foucault suggests. Take the example of the Renaissance:

> THE RENAISSANCE. Around A.D. 1400 some Italian republics and dukedoms so prospered by trade between Asia and Europe that they recovered the Roman sense that people could use intelligence to improve their community. Later historians called this recovery the Renaissance and redivided time as follows:
> 1 – The Ancient World – everything before Christianity became the Roman imperial religion.
> 2 – The Middle Ages – everything between the Ancient World and the Renaissance; a better time than the ancient world, because it made Europe Christian.
> 3 – The Modern World – everything after the Middle Ages but better than these, because with Christian faith in the future modern Europeans were scientists continually enlarging the wisdom of the present, artists continually adding to the world's stock of beautiful things, traders bringing back rare goods from every continent in the world. Some historians felt so pleased with their part of Europe that they thought history had reached a lasting state of perfection. Bishop Bossuet felt this about Catholic France in the seventeenth century, the French

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[8] This strategy of positing historical and individual identity is also correlative to the positing of linguistic identity in the two components of the linguistic sign, the signifier and signified, thereby stabilising meaning, affirming the authority of the sign and concealing the element of difference, or play.

[9] The postmodernist 'narrative' is not linear, though it still performs an ideological function. The scathing account of postmodernism here is characteristic of Gray - it is interesting to note the negative association between postmodernism and technological 'development', Kittock showing the kind of hostility toward technology and its misuse discussed earlier: 'POSTMODERNISM happened when landlords, businessmen, brokers and bankers who owned the rest of the world had used new technologies to destroy the power of labour unions. Like owners of earlier empires they felt that history had ended because they and their sort could now dominate the world forever' (*A History Maker*, p. 202). The alleged assertion of postmodernists that 'history had ended' echoes the comment in Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller* that 'the dimension of time has been shattered ... We can rediscover the continuity of time only in the novels of that period when time no longer seemed stopped and did not yet seem to have exploded' (*If on a winter's night a traveller*, p. 8). For more of Gray on postmodernism, see especially his poem 'Postmodernism' and postscript comments about it in his collection *Sixteen Occasional Poems 1990-2000*, as well as the further discussion at the end of this chapter.

(*A History Maker*, p. 199-200)

The story of the Renaissance, then, depicts history as *development*, a direct and cumulative progression from the experience of past ages, which like the other accounts of history or 'grand narratives' that are described, will culminate in an ideal society. That what constitutes that ideal can with the luxury of hindsight be shown to differ not only *between* the grand narratives of Marxism, Christianity, the Renaissance et cetera as listed but also even *within* such narratives – as the examples of Bishop Bossuet, the French revolutionaries and Hegel attest – indicates the extent to which difference has been contained by them. If such mythologised accounts of history are believed by the subjects they serve, and if indeed it is believed that a perfect society has been or will be attained as a consequence of following a particular historical path, there would of course be little impetus for subjects either to question their narrative history or to act to change the status quo. This is what Kittock in her prologue refers to as '*a dangerous easy-oasy habit of thinking the modern world at last a safe place, of thinking the past a midden too foul to steep our brains in*' – precisely the attitude that predominates in the society of which Kittock and her son Wat, the novel's protagonist, are part (*A History Maker*, p. XIV). Wat Dryhope lives in the supposed Utopia of the twenty-third century where material poverty has at last been consigned to the past by the development of household powerplants, giant quasi-organic, quasi-digital appliances that can create or 'synthesise' any object on demand.[10] The problem with Wat's Utopia is the same problem as exists potentially for every form of Utopia: that subjects will cease to be political or critical agents of change, resulting in a society that is static and in

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[10] This of course is one of the most forceful pro-technological arguments used to justify state spending on technological development: that technology can be finally used to eradicate human want. Such an argument brings the 'technological project' into line with the historical narrative of the Renaissance outlined in Kittock's notes - as Marcuse said, it is 'the latest stage in the realization of a specific historical *project*' (Marcuse, 1964, p. *xvi*) – and again suggests culmination in some form of rational Utopia. Meg Mountbenger in fact uses the term 'rational Utopia' to describe the society of *A History Maker* (*A History Maker*, p. 116). For Marcuse, arguing from a Marxist perspective, the technological and historical project will result only in more inequality and human suffering than at present since the project is founded on the principles of capitalism (and therefore exploitation).

danger of stagnation.[11] In order to avoid ennui it is imperative that history is considered as *process*, rather than simply as a linear narrative of the past that explains how society came to be in the state it finds itself in; history should be considered dynamic rather than static and an essential element in its dynamism is its difference, or as Foucault would say, its multivocality. There are enough dissenting voices in *A History Maker* to ensure that political and historical process, rather than inertia and stasis, prevail. Kittock's notes that show the differing narrative accounts of history, or grand narratives, also extend to cover the historical narrative of her own and of Wat's twenty-third century (under the heading 'MODERNISM') and they indicate that any attempt to inscribe this particular era as unified historical epoch will also be undermined by difference:

> MODERNISM developed when households became the largest units of government on earth and satellite co-operatives the largest off it. Once again time was split into three.
> 1 – Prehistory, before people lived in cities.
> 2 – History, when increasing numbers did so and city cultures shaped family life everywhere.
> 3 – Modernity, when the open intelligence network and powerplants made cities, nations, money and industrial power obsolete.
> The simplicity of our modern divisions misled many into treating history as a painful interval between prehistoric tribal communities and modern co-operative ones. Others wanted to lump the historic and prehistoric eras together with a new calendar dated from the start of modernity, but disagreed about where to place the first year. Open intelligence gurus said the new era opened when the United States government let an early open intelligence network take over the Montana state education service in the 1980s. Others put it in the twenty-first century when the first modern powerplant sythesized a bowl of rice, a Samurai sword and a perfect Hokusai print on a Japanese peninsula – others when the first self-sustaining powerplant community took root in an Israeli kibbutz or in Salt Lake City or in the Vatican – others when the Islamic league began distributing powerplants to every Mohammedan nation on earth – others when the open intelligence network announced an accord with Japan through which it would sell any sixty people in the world their own powerplant if they owned an area of land able to support one.
>
> (*A History Maker*, p. 203-204)

What Kittock's notes make obvious is that any given narrative 'history' is but one version of events among many. Certainly rhetoric is used to contain the multiplicity of the past by enveloping it in a linear and unified narrative; the

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[11] For an interesting discussion on the difficulties of Utopia, see Italo Calvino's essay 'On Fourier, III: Envoi: A Utopia of Fine Dust' (Calvino, 1987, pp. 245-255). Also relevant are Fredric Jameson's comments on the 'anxiety' of Utopia in Jameson, 1991 (see in particular p. 331ff.).

question of which narrative history or version of events prevails over time is largely a question of politics and power.

This is nowhere more potently observed than in Gray's 'Five Letters from an Eastern Empire'. In this story the tragic poet of the empire, Bohu, is commanded by the emperor - literally a puppet manipulated by a clique of imperial 'headmasters' - to compose a poem celebrating what is termed the emperor's "irrevocable justice" (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 113). Since the emperor then informs Bohu that he has just destroyed the empire's old capital and everyone living in it (including Bohu's own parents) for "the crime of disobedience" (*ibid.*), it is unsurprising that Bohu resorts to his own act of disobedience, writing against the emperor's wishes and actions. The poem he composes is as follows:

> TO THE EMPEROR'S INJUSTICE
> Scattered buttons and silks, a broken kite in the mud,
> A child's yellow clogs cracked by the horses' hooves.
> A land weeps for the head city, lopped by sabre, cracked by hooves,
> The houses ash, the people meat for crows.
> A week ago wind rustled dust in the empty market.
> "Starve," said the moving dust, "Beg. Rebel. Starve. Beg. Rebel."
> We do not do such things. We are peaceful people.
> We have food for six more days, let us wait.
> The emperor will accommodate us, underground.
> It is sad to be unnecessary.
> All the bright mothers, strong fathers, raffish aunts,
> Lost sisters and brothers, all the rude servants
> Are honoured guests of the emperor, underground.
> > (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 127)

The survival of Bohu's poem intact would ironically relate the emperor's brutality and irrevocable *in*justice to future generations of the Eastern empire; instead the imperial clique, guided by the headmaster of modern and classical literature, ensure that Bohu's poem is manipulated to convey a rather different message. The rhetorical function of literature in general is here brought under scrutiny, the headmaster of literature writing: 'the headmaster of civil peace will remind me that the job of a poem is not to describe reality but to encourage our friends, frighten our enemies, and reconcile the middling people' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 131). The manipulation of Bohu's poem is in fact restricted to the changing of just a single syllable: the '*INJUSTICE*' of the poem's title is to be changed to read '*JUSTICE*', enabling the poem to then be interpreted as having fulfilled the original imperial requirements. Rereading the poem in light of this

simple change is both disconcerting and chilling. It provides comment both on the persuasive power of language used rhetorically and, crucially, upon the role of (institutionally controlled) interpretation in language and writing. The 'critical appreciation' of the poem delivered to the Imperial College of Headmasters by the headmaster of literature is itself a rhetorical redoubling (to borrow Derrida's term), highlighting the rhetorical force not just of Bohu's poem but of the headmaster's own reading of it, which too is designed for persuasion: 'With a single tiny change the poem can be used at once,' he writes, 'I know some of my colleagues will raise objections, but I will answer these in the course of my appreciation' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 130). His critical appreciation takes the form of practical criticism - a technique commonly practised in literature departments of academic institutions, so often the target of such wry volleys from the writing of Gray - and acts to justify using Bohu's poem in service of the empire by arguing in turn that the poem itself acts to justify the emperor's actions. He writes:

> Bohu ... presents the destruction as a simple, stunning, inevitable fact.
> The child, mother and common people in the poem exist passively, doing
> nothing but weep, gossip, and wait. The active agents of hoof, sabre,
> and (by extension) crow, belong to the emperor, who is named at the
> end of the middle verse:
> > *The emperor will accommodate us, underground.*
> and at the end of the last:
> > *Bright mothers, strong fathers ... all the rude servants*
> > *Are honoured guests of the emperor, underground.*
> Consider the *weight* this poem gives to our immortal emperor! He is not
> described or analysed, he is presented as a final, competent, all-
> embracing force, as unarguable as the weather, as inevitable as death.
> This is how all governments should appear to people who are not in
> them.
> > (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly* p. 132)

Both Bohu's altered poem and the headmaster's appreciation of it can therefore be seen to perform precisely the function of unified and linear historical narrative as outlined above, presenting a singular account of events as 'simple, stunning, inevitable fact ... as unarguable as the weather'. What is clear from this story however, as well as from Kittock's notes in *A History Maker*, is the insufficiency of any single narrative account (and the insufficiency of taking any such account) to accurately represent the transformations, historical, political and cultural, of a particular time. Grand, exclusive and linear narratives have hence faced challenge from both literature and theory, and the digital

environment of hypertext now appears to offer an extremely hospitable arena for the development of such ideas. In order to illustrate the particular relevance of hypertext, however, it is worthwhile first to consider how ideas of multiple and non-linear narratives - narratives that do not deny difference - have been developed through fictional experiment and through the work of theory within the bound domain of print.

As Mark Currie has observed, it is useful to consider the Derridean concept of the *trace* in relation to the insufficiency of linear historical narratives.[12] Without swimming too far among the complexities of Derridean theory at this point, it should be explained that Derrida uses the notion of the trace (with its connotations in French of track or footprint) to undermine the typically Western metaphysical concept of presence, of the self-sufficiency of written concepts (at the level of both signifier and signified). For Derrida, written concepts cannot meaningfully exist entirely *in themselves*: since they rely on difference - an accompanying concept of what they are *not* - they will always contain the trace of this difference, this negative 'other'.[13] According to the logic of the trace then, linear historical narratives already contain the elements of their own undoing; their own insufficiency is inscribed in them. Currie writes:

> When Derrida refers to the metaphysical concepts of meaning, time and history he is drawing attention to this foundational illusion of presence which is destroyed by the trace - by the fact that the present, or presence itself, is a crossed structure of 'protensions' and 'retensions', bearing within it the spectres of its own past and future. If time and history are being readmitted here, it is in an unrecognisable form that destroys the linear sequence of past, present and future with the logic of the trace which understands the components of any sequence as constitutive of each other.
>
> (Currie, 1998, p. 78)

Written histories must then always be incomplete, paradoxically constituted as much by what they lack as by what they contain.

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[12] See Currie, 1998, p. 78ff.

[13] Derrida writes: 'The trace is not only the disappearance of origin - within the discourse that we sustain and according to the path that we follow it means that the origin did not even disappear, that it was never constituted except reciprocally by a nonorigin, the trace, which thus becomes the origin of the origin. From then on, to wrench the concept of the trace from the classical scheme, which would derive it from a presence or from an originary nontrace and which would make of it an empirical mark, one must indeed speak of an originary trace or arche-trace. Yet we know that that concept destroys its name and that, if all begins with the trace, there is above all no originary trace' (Derrida, 1976, p. 61).

The recognition that singular linear narrative is inadequate to the task of representing the heterogeneity of historical experience has long led writers working with the medium of print to experiment with narrative form. In the Scottish fictional tradition, the double narrative is one device that has been used to counter singular narrative accounts with often antithetical accounts that serve to represent the unrepresented, to offer the mirror-image or narrative 'other' of the other narrative. Such conflicting narrative accounts can be considered as speaking the unspoken, fictively as well as in terms of the history of Scotland as a nation, representing the estrangement, marginalisation and indeed exclusion felt by many Scots subjects throughout the course of their turbulent historical relationship with their English neighbours and as part of a United Kingdom run largely (even now, in spite of the devolved Scottish parliament) from Westminster.[14] In James Hogg's 1824 novel *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, the narrative is split into two. The first part, 'The Editor's Narrative', tells the story of events in the life of one Robert Wringhim, the wretched adopted son of an over-zealous Calvinist minister. Filled with jealousy and spite towards both the natural father who shunned him and the elder brother who commands the father's favour, Wringhim malevolently pursues his brother, eventually murdering him. The second narrative takes the form of the alienated Wringhim's own private memoirs, which relate how he feels *himself* to

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[14] The decision to involve UK troops in the Iraq war is a case in point. As a 'reserved issue', the decision to despatch troops (including many Scots troops) without a clear second UN resolution on the matter was made solely by Westminster, without the requirement that MSPs at Holyrood be consulted. For Gray on this subject see his story '15 February 2003' - the date of the anti-war march in Glasgow - in *The Ends of Our Tethers*, pp. 146-160. It should be pointed out, too, that the suggestion of a Scottish fictional 'tradition' is in itself troublesome, since Scottish voices are not always in agreement. Gray writes: 'I often get letters nowadays from people keen to discuss or discover views of Scottish *identity*, as if more than five million folk could possibly have a single identity' (*The Ends of Our Tethers*, p. 155), while Mark Currie comments: 'The most obvious point to make about a nation is that, if it is a thing in any sense, it is one of the most complex things one could think of, so that any attempt to represent it in its totality will be forced to employ a strategy of totalisation: that is, using some parts or characteristics to represent the whole complex entity. The nation is the structure of exclusion *par excellence* in that any attempt to totalise it will have to exclude, or marginalise, those parts of the nation that are not deemed representative of its total essence' (Currie, 1998, p. 91-92). Included among Scotland's many national voices are of course the voices of those who leave the legacy of a written Scotland; the Unionist voice of Sir Walter Scott is one that, while at odds with so many, is still widely recognised as the prime purveyor of 'Scottish tradition'. For a stimulating discussion of Scott's and Gray's written Scotlands see Stephen Bernstein's chapter on *A History Maker* in Bernstein, 1999, pp. 134-152.

be pursued by the evil shape-shifter Gil-Martin, who goads him into the murder (and whom he eventually discovers to be Satan). According to Wringhim, Gil-Martin convinces him that the antinomian religious belief he has inherited from his adopted father actually provides justification for his crime, arguing that since Wringhim is among the number of preordained, his actions on earth are inconsequential. The second narrative, presenting Wringhim's side of the story, functions both to illuminate and to call into question the first, bringing into play the whole issue of naïvely reading the text: readers must twice 'suspend disbelief' and are thus unable to place complete faith in either version of events; each narrative account reveals the insufficiency of the other.[15] This split narrative tradition is continued by Robert Louis Stevenson in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (which also considers the accompanying notion of the split personality or despicable alter-ego hinted at in Hogg's text), and is employed by Alasdair Gray in *Poor Things*, where Archie McCandless's narrative *Episodes from the Early Life of a Scottish Public Health Officer* is followed by and countered with his wife's 'Letter to Posterity'. In each case the second narrative provides a voice for the marginalised of the first - Robert Wringhim, Jekyll/Hyde and Bella/Victoria are all represented in terms of madness or mental instability and are all thus largely discredited by the first narratives - which challenges and weakens the status of these primary, allegedly factual (and allegedly sane)

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[15] At the same time each is inscribed with its own insufficiency, each is subject to the logic of the trace: the memoirs constituting the second narrative have been written by someone in an obviously unstable mental state and are thus presented to the reader as being perhaps unstable or unreliable themselves; neither is the supposed impartiality of the first-person 'Editor's Narrative' altogether straightforward (its very title begging the question to what extent and to what end it has in fact been edited). The novel's title page describes the editor's contribution as 'a detail of curious traditionary facts, and other evidence,' but there is no indication of the editor's identity or of his possible motivations for collecting and 'publishing' such evidence; perhaps he simply has a penchant for a compelling yarn. At one point in the narrative the editor writes: 'We cannot enter into the detail of the events that now occurred without forestalling a part of the narrative of one who knew all the circumstances - was deeply interested in them, and whose relation is of higher value than anything that can be retailed out of the stores of tradition and old registers; but, his narrative being different from these, it was judged expedient to give the account as thus publicly handed down to us' (*The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner*, p. 55). This statement serves to undermine the narrative that contains it - relegating it almost to the status of hearsay - whilst at the same time conferring authority on the other narrative whose author, although subject to mental delusion, nevertheless 'knew all the circumstances.'

narratives.[16] Outwith Scottish fiction, William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* presents the reader with multiple narrative accounts of events: four consecutive narratives, narrated by four very different characters, while B.S. Johnson's *House Mother Normal* consists of ten narrative accounts centring around the same event, given by ten occupants of a geriatric home at varying stages of infirmity.[17] Offering more than a single line of narrative can thus be seen to problematise the notion of a single, unified story and instead reiterates the point that any given historical 'moment' or narrative account will be representatively inadequate and shot through with difference.

In *Poor Things*, as well as having the two countering 'main' narratives we also have the added convolutions of the 'Introduction' to the two narratives by the inscribed author and editor, Alasdair Gray, and his 'Notes Critical and Historical' that follow them. This third narrative level functions to frame the texts of McCandless and Bella/Victoria; it also, against its own alleged design, brings into question the authority of the McCandless text and at the same time suggests its own inadequacy as authority source. In so doing it subverts not just the notion of a singular authoritative narrative, but also the hierarchy of the narrative: editorial notes are conventionally considered 'objective' and therefore to have a higher status than the narrative they provide comment on, but the editor's introduction and notes in this case are anything but objective; similarly, although the McCandless text comes next in terms of narrative order, its place in

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[16] Although, as has already been noted, the texts of the first narratives contain their own aporia: they question themselves from within as well as being questioned from without. In the case of *Poor Things*, Bernstein has argued that the contradictory narratives are representative of the contradictory era in which the novel is set: 'Better than trying to unearth some final truth in this novel, we might instead relish the discursive power arising from among its various voices; the resulting babble of contestation about the truth of the nineteenth century says most by saying most' (Bernstein, 1999, p. 111).

[17] Johnson also uses repetitive and parallel patterning throughout the ten narratives, encouraging an awareness of their spatial as well as temporal relationship to one another. Jonathan Coe writes: 'Taking his cue from Philip Toynbee's novel *Tea with Mrs Goodman*, he divides the book into ten sections of twenty-one pages each, and ensures that in every section, the same event (and the characters' differing responses to it) occurs not just on the same page but at precisely the same point on that page: so that the whole book becomes – to use a musical analogy – richly polyphonic, fugal, a novel that can be read 'vertically' as well as 'horizontally'' (Coe, 2004, p. 24-25). Such interest in the spatial arrangement of the text of course prefigures the potential of hypertext, since it can be structured as a network rather than as a linear hierarchy, as will be discussed in Chapter 2. Further spatial experiments within print will also be discussed a little later on.

terms of narrative hierarchy is dubious. This much can be garnered from the editor's discussion of it in the introduction. The Alasdair Gray that edits the book is certain of the veracity of McCandless's narrative and dismissive of Bella/Victoria's and for this reason he exercises his editorial duties to place McCandless's text first and Bella/Victoria's second. This is a self-confessed attempt to sway the reader towards accepting the primary, McCandless narrative above that of Bella/Victoria, whose mental state he all too readily questions:

> I print the letter by the lady who calls herself "Victoria" McCandless as an epilogue to the book. Michael would prefer it as an introduction, but if read before the main text it will prejudice readers against that. If read afterward we easily see it is the letter of a disturbed woman who wants to hide the truth about her start in life. Furthermore, no book needs two introductions and I am writing this one.
>
> (*Poor Things*, p. XIII)

Gray the editor comes across as being not entirely reliable, at best scatterbrained and disorganised, at worst negligent or even mendacious. He has managed to lose the original volume of *Episodes from the Early Life of a Scottish Public Health Officer*, claiming that '[s]omewhere between editor, publisher, typesetter and photographer the unique first edition was mislaid,' adding, '[t]hese mistakes are continually happening in book production, and nobody regrets them more than I do' (*Poor Things*, p. XVI). Aspersion is thus cast on the authenticity of the McCandless narrative as well as on Gray's own 'editorial' capacity.[18] The following excerpt from the introduction similarly undermines both its own text and that of McCandless; moreover, it once again questions the whole process of inscribing history in narrative by suggesting that the boundary between history and fiction is neither clear nor given:

> I ... told Donnelly that I had written enough fiction to know history when I read it. He said he had written enough history to recognize fiction. To this there was only one reply - I had to become a historian.
>
> I did so. I am one. After six months of research among the archives of Glasgow University, the Mitchell Library's Old Glasgow Room, the Scottish National Library, Register House in Edinburgh, Somerset House in London and the National Newspaper Archive of the British Library at Colindale I have collected enough material evidence to prove the McCandless story a complete tissue of facts. ... Michael Donnelly has told me he would find the ... evidence more convincing if I had obtained official copies of the marriage and death certificates and photocopies of

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[18] Although Gray insists on the integrity of the McCandless text: 'I promised to make no changes to Archibald McCandless's actual text. Indeed, the main part of this book is as near to a facsimile of the McCandless original as possible' (*Poor Things*, p. XIII).

the newspaper reports, but if my readers trust me I do not care what an "expert" thinks.

(*Poor Things*, p. XV-XVI)

That this inscribed Gray believes he has become a 'historian' in the space of six months should of course worry rather than reassure his readers, as should his lack of regard for the advice of the text's 'real' historian, Michael Donnelly. All his statement does reassure readers of, in fact, is the peril of taking any narrative at face value, and the disturbance of the book's narrative hierarchy indicates that the principle of taking narrative level as a general indictor of narrative authority is not to be trusted either. This is true for historical narratives as much as for fictional ones; indeed history and fiction, since both are subject to the conditions of narrative, are shown here to be inseparable.

In addition to this literary and theoretical critique of authoritative singularity in narrative, linear and unified narratives have also faced interrogation within the important context of narrative representations of the passage and experience of time, the chronological notion of time being bound up with the representation of history/story as linear progression (and the reader may here be referred back to the earlier quote from Lyotard). Gérard Genette in *Narrative Discourse* writes of the well-known distinction between 'story time' (the time of the story being told, or order of events) and 'narrative time' (the time of the telling of the story, or the time of the discourse) and describes some of the techniques at the author's disposal for using narrative time to disrupt the time or linear chronology of the story.[19] As Genette points out, authors can use techniques like flashback or retrospection (analepsis) and foreshadowing or anticipation (prolepsis) to change the order of the story's events as it is related and have done so since Homer (the opening of *The Iliad* first describing the wrath of Achilles and its consequences then retrospectively recounting the reasons for it (Genette, 1980, p. 36-37)). In Gray's fiction such narrative anachrony occurs most explicitly in *Lanark*, where the order of the four constitutive Books is 3, 1, 2, 4 rather than the chronological 1, 2, 3, 4, and where, as Cairns Craig has noted, repetition and recurrence are indicative of a

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[19] See Genette, 1980, p. 33ff. Genette categorises the techniques under the headings of order, duration and frequency. For a discussion of Genette's categories in relation to hypertext see Liestøl, 1994.

force at times more powerful than simple forward motion.[20] In *Lanark*'s intercalendrical zone - a zone connecting the underworld of the Institute with the living world sustaining it from above - the protagonist Lanark's efforts to traverse the zone with his girlfriend Rima are continually met with the same impasse: the door with the paradoxical sign:

EMERGENCY EXIT 3124
NO ADMITTANCE

(*Lanark*, pp. 378, 381).

Forward progress in the intercalendrical zone is an impossibility for within it the dimensions of time and space are skewed; as Munro tells Lanark and Rima as they enter it, "[a] month is as meaningless there as a minute or a century" (*Lanark*, p. 374). Lanark and Rima's experience of time within the zone is circular and repetitive rather than linear and progressive and is in fact symbolic of their experiences outwith the zone in the larger environment of the novel as a whole: there they struggle to move beyond or escape from a number of difficult situations, finding themselves trapped within the moment, inhibited in any attempt to move from present to future by the seemingly insurmountable obstacles that repeatedly present themselves and by their own incapacity for meaningful action. Their fictive experiences suggest that human experience of time is not always straightforward and chronological - as linear narrative suggests - and should not therefore always be represented as such. In this case the subversion of linear movement in the narrative reflects more accurately the experience of its characters than would a linear or chronological narrative. Just as *Lanark*'s narrative cannot move sequentially from Book 1 to Book 4, neither can its subjects direct themselves beyond the circumvolutions of the narrative's logic: 3124, as emergency exit and order of Books, affords them no temporal future, no final means of escape.

Linear and temporal advancement of the story may also be subverted by narrative digressions or interpolations (which as well as taking the form of topical digressions from the 'main' story can include analeptic or proleptic digressions within it).[21] Digressions, in the Proustian (and Joycean) mode,

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[20] See Craig, 1991, p. 98ff.
[21] In their most extreme form, digressions can even replace the main story, as in Italo Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller*. In this text, the reader's desire for a single,

operate to defy story time through lyrical expansion in narrative time, the

textual interruptions they effect being an aspect of modernist writing designed

to figuratively undo the demands of time perceived as controlling force. [22] This is

connected to the notion of technology's apparently unwelcome appearance on

the domestic scene, since the instrument of time in human life is a technological

one, the clock. [23] As such, fictional depictions of the relationship between

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linear story is continually exploited and frustrated as a series of digressions successively spin off along completely new trajectories, repeatedly assuming the status of the 'main' story and in fact confirming that there is no 'main' story in this text, no one story that dominates at the expense of the others (or, perhaps more accurately, each story only temporarily moves to the centre, is only temporarily admitted as being the 'main' story). The only 'story' that remains stable is that of the reader's search for a story: this is the constant thread that runs through the separate stories or narratives presented by the text, the text's inscribed reader embarking on a mission to follow up or retrieve the various story threads he encounters as a result of his engagement with a number of 'faulty' textual copies, books within the book. The inscribed reader's efforts aim to ensure that each story is granted a beginning, a middle and an end, in order that he might thus bring his experience of reading these texts into line with his hitherto familiar, conventional and comfortable experiences of reading linear books linearly. This process is reinforced by the real reader's act of reading the text, which, since this is a printed book, will conform to the linear experience of reading the book page by page, from start to finish. It is this pursuit of linear story that works eventually, and paradoxically, to unify the text, at the very same time as the text is involved with the contradictory work of presenting itself as anti-story, as a fragmentary rather than continuous and unified narrative. The digressions in Calvino's text also work to disrupt conventional notions of narrative hierarchy: digressions in texts usually take the form of temporary diversions from a 'main' story and are therefore subordinate to the primary narrative. Since the diversions in this text never return to any other 'main' story and are simply replaced by further diversions, they can be considered as neither embedded nor subordinate digressions and therefore each of them assumes (temporarily) the status of 'main' narrative. The only possible indicator of a hierarchy in terms of these narrative diversions comes from the position imposed on them by the linear structure of the text: that is to say that the first narrative in the sequence may be assumed to have a higher status than the second, the second higher than the third and so on, purely as a result of their ordinal placing within the book (and since the episodes in this book are designed to be read linearly, rather than in a random order). Linearly structured books in general may therefore be seen to reinforce narrative hierarchies through their very form, and Calvino's text in particular again upholds a tradition of print while working to interrogate it.

[22] For a discussion of the functioning of lyrical enlargements and recurrences in the fiction of both Proust and Joyce, see Coyle, 1995. Time has commonly and superstitiously been looked upon as authoritarian and personified as male, as with the mythical figure of Father Time (an alternative paternal authority source to God the Father). In Alasdair Gray's *1982 Janine*, Jock McLeish's father adopts this role. Jock tells us early on in the novel that 'my father ... was a timekeeper at the pithead, a strong union man' (p. 18), and subsequently reinforces this description: 'my father the timekeeper' (p. 91); 'My father the socialist timekeeper' (p. 138).

[23] See Stevenson, 1991 for comment on the portrayal of the clock in modernist writing as well as in Gray's, and Bernstein, 1999, p. 63ff. which pays particular attention to the subject of digital timekeeping in Gray's work.

humans and their technological timepieces have tended to carry negative undertones. As the Lilliputians take inventory of Lemuel Gulliver's possessions in Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, their comments regarding his attitude to his pocket-watch satirically hint that his reverence towards it verges on enthralment:

> There were two pockets which we could not enter: these he called his fobs ... Out of the right fob hung a great silver chain, with a wonderful kind of engine at the bottom. ... He put this engine to our ears, which made an incessant noise like that of a watermill. And we conjecture it is either some unknown animal, or the god that he worships: but we are more inclined to the latter opinion, because he has assured us ... that he seldom did any thing without consulting it. He called it his oracle, and said it pointed out the time for every action of his life.
>
> (*Gulliver's Travels*, p. 28-29)[24]

The clock has already undergone the transformation currently taking place in the domain of writing, that from mechanical to digital technology, and while this has facilitated a greater accuracy in timekeeping, James Gleick in his book *Faster* offers a fascinating account of the detrimental effect of this change in terms of our quality of life. Focussing on time with such precision as digital technology allows, he hypothesises, has made us overly aware of the role of time in our lives, resulting, as the book's subtitle asserts, in *The Acceleration of Just About Everything*, an obsession with doing things quickly, efficiently and with optimal

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[24] Flann O'Brien both explores and exploits our attitudes to time in *At Swim-Two-Birds*. The fictional depiction of a clock by the text's narrator (himself an inscribed author) is surprising in that it shows the clock to be weak, struggling to control time rather than powerfully (and manfully) representing and reinforcing it: 'On the window-ledge there was a small bakelite clock which grappled with each new day as it entered his room through the window from Peter Place, arranging it with precision into twenty-four hours. It was quiet, servile and emasculated; its twin alarming gongs could be found if looked for behind the dust-laden books on the mantelpiece' (*At Swim-Two-Birds*, p. 31). This forms a clear contrast to the image of the clock as carried by Gulliver: it is 'quiet' as opposed to making 'an incessant noise'; 'servile' rather than oracular. Nevertheless, this clock still manages to organise time precisely. It also appears 'emasculated', but only by virtue of human intervention, the forced removal of its gongs. Time and its instruments of keeping are elsewhere in this text associated with male authority, in the same vein as Jock McLeish's father in *1982 Janine* is timekeeper. In *At Swim-Two-Birds*, the male authority figures are the narrator's uncle and his network of cronies who are seen, like time, to be presiding over events: 'The old boys know a thing or two,' the narrator's uncle tells him, 'There are more things in life and death than you ever dreamt of, Horatio' (*At Swim-Two-Birds*, p. 214). It is significant that on the occasion of the narrator passing his university exams the 'old boys' make a gift to him of a watch: this is representative of his coming-of-age and his own admittance into the network of male timekeepers who bear witness to, or 'watch' over, the passing of time. On presenting the gift of the watch, the uncle says, 'We hope that you will accept it and that you will wear it to remind you when you have gone from us of two friends that watched over you - a bit strictly perhaps - and wished you well' (*ibid.*).

saving of time.[25] We are now in a rush to do everything, Gleick maintains, so that we may cram as much into our day as possible and still finish our daily tasks with time to spare. This he terms the 'lose-not-a-minute anguish of our age,' suggesting that our obsession with time now defines us (Gleick, 2000, p. 9). Spending more time working, shopping and commuting than ever, we now spend less time on even our most basic human needs of eating and sleeping. Relaxation time, too, is often carefully accounted for, organised into precise temporal slots for things like exercising and entertainment. Truly 'spare' or 'free' time is fast becoming an endangered species, something we seem never to be able to accumulate enough of. Little wonder then that time comes at such a premium, to be saved at all costs. Time, the poster slogans in *Lanark* tell us, is the most valuable of commodities, necessary for both life and love -

> MONEY IS TIME. TIME IS LIFE. BUY MORE LIFE FOR YOUR FAMILY FROM THE QUANTUM INTERMINABLE. (THEY'LL LOVE YOU FOR IT.)
>
> *(Lanark, p. 454)*

- but it is in scarce supply:

> YOU HAVEN'T MUCH TIME – PROTEST NOW.
>
> *(Lanark, p. 42)*

The acceleration of life and compulsion to save time described by Gleick is recognisable in Unthank's slogans too:

> QUICK MONEY IS TIME IN YOUR POCKET - BUY MONEY FASTER FROM THE QUANTUM EXPONENTIAL.
>
> *(Lanark, p. 432-433)*

A consequence of doing things faster may of course be that we do things with too much haste, without enough careful thought, with the result that our experience of the things we do will be impoverished, lacking the richness and resonance that comes with experience entered into thoughtfully, savoured

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[25] This may even include our habits of lovemaking. Milan Kundera in his novel *Slowness* writes: 'Speed is the form of ecstasy the technical revolution has bestowed on man. ... A curious alliance: the cold impersonality of technology with the flames of ecstasy. I recall an American woman from thirty years ago, with her stern, committed style, a kind of apparatchik of eroticism, who gave me a lecture (chillingly theoretical) on sexual liberation; the word that came up most often in her talk was 'orgasm'; I counted: forty-three times. The religion of orgasm; utilitarianism projected into sex life; efficiency versus indolence; coition reduced to an obstacle to be got past as quickly as possible in order to reach an ecstatic explosion, the only true goal of lovemaking and of the universe' (*Slowness*, p. 4).

rather than rushed.[26] Reading and writing, too, may fall victim to this tendency. Gleick amusingly but depressingly observes:

> Even reading to children is under pressure. Hence the 1983 volume *One-Minute Bedtime Stories*, traditional stories condensed, according to its publisher, "so they can be read by a busy parent in only one minute." You may feel that children themselves are not that busy. At least they may not need a stopwatch for the dash from once-upon-a-time to happily-ever-after, even if *Sesame Street* has done its work on their little psyches. But this book must have hit the mark, because many sequels followed, including *One-Minute Birthday Stories, One-Minute Teddy Bear Stories*, and *One-Minute Christmas Stories*. Perhaps the young targets of this bedtime largesse will grow up to join the ranks of those who consider a full-length book to be a quaint object.
>
> (Gleick, 2000, p. 142)

It is against this impulse of moving too readily onwards, eye ever on the next thing in a race towards the finish line, that texts such as those of Proust and Joyce operate, requiring a contemplative disposition rather than an eager or impatient one on the part of the reader. Creating space for contemplation is one of writing's and reading's most important functions, engendering deep thought and difficult but productive discourse and some criticism has been levelled at hypertext on this basis, the digital environment of hypertext being viewed by many as one inconducive to quiet thought and absorbed reading. (This point will

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[26] And Gleick points out that some of the most prominent historical thinkers took their time in evincing the theories that have become central to modern life: 'One could make an all-star list of slow but effective thinkers. Charles Darwin considered himself too slow-witted to engage in argument. "I suppose I am a very slow thinker," he said the year he published *The Origin of Species*. Einstein modestly described himself as a slow thinker' (Gleick, 2000, p. 109). Being slow these days, however, taking one's time in life, is less and less considered a positive attribute. 'Why has the pleasure of slowness disappeared?' asks Milan Kundera ruefully, 'Ah, where have they gone, the amblers of yesteryear? Where have they gone, those loafing heroes of folk song, those vagabonds who roam from one mill to another and bed down under the stars? Have they vanished along with footpaths, with grasslands and clearings, with nature? There is a Czech proverb that describes their easy indolence by metaphor: 'They are gazing at God's windows.' A person gazing at God's windows is not bored; he is happy. In our world, indolence has turned into having nothing to do, which is a completely different thing: a person with nothing to do is frustrated, bored, is constantly searching for the activity he lacks' (*Slowness*, p. 4-5). Kundera goes on to remark upon a situation highlighting perfectly the point that experience is impoverished through haste: 'I check the rearview mirror: still the same car unable to pass me because of the oncoming traffic. Beside the driver sits a woman. Why doesn't the man tell her something funny? Why doesn't he put his hand on her knee? Instead, he's cursing the driver ahead of him for not going fast enough, and it doesn't occur to the woman, either, to touch the driver with her hand; mentally she's at the wheel with him, and she's cursing me too' (*Slowness*, p. 5). On the same topic and with specific reference to Proust's writing, see also Alain de Botton's highly readable *How Proust Can Change Your Life*, particularly (if in a rush) the chapter 'How To Take Your Time'.

be returned to in the following chapter). Calvino, in *If on a winter's night a traveller* compares the act of reading with that of lovemaking, and asks whether the race towards climax may be 'opposed by another drive which works in the opposite direction, swimming against the moments, recovering time?' (*If on a winter's night a traveller*, p. 156). His question is relevant to the task of patient reading, an undertaking also addressed by Lyotard:

> Development imposes the saving of time. To go fast is to forget fast, to retain only the information that is useful afterwards, as in 'rapid reading'. But writing and reading which advance backwards in the direction of the unknown thing 'within' are slow. One loses one's time seeking time lost.
>
> (Lyotard, 1991, p. 3)

'Seeking time lost' is precisely the work of Proust's narrator Marcel in *Á la recherche du temps perdu*, and his narrative digressions are a means of forcing pause, of losing time, or in any case of resisting the advancing and seemingly inexorable tug of time. Rather than conveying a sense of forward directional force, the narrative creates instead a space for taking stock, for contemplation. Marcel's mythical experience of tasting the madeleine in the Combray section of the text facilitates his vivid recollection of his own past (the involuntary memory it prompts being deemed more truthful than a voluntary remembering of events which, being merely 'the memory of the intellect,' would be lacking in substance and so distorting (*In Search of Lost Time, Vol. 1*, p. 50)). Marcel's involuntary memories enable him to conceive of his childhood time spent in Combray in full and accurate detail and as such they fill in the blank space of a newly imagined pyramid, opening exponentially outwards from the seemingly isolated 'moment', replacing the 'slender cone of this irregular pyramid' - formed in his imagination by the downstairs rooms of his grandmother's house in Combray and the staircase leading up to his own bedroom 'at the summit' - where he had previously felt himself held in isolated captivity by his inability to recollect the past (and thereby to expand the moment) (*ibid.*). Marcel's bedroom, until the epiphany brought on by the madeleine, had been for him

> seen always at the same evening hour, isolated from all its possible surroundings, detached and solitary against the dark background, the bare minimum of scenery necessary ... to the drama of my undressing; as though all Combray had consisted of but two floors joined by a slender staircase, and as though there had been no time there but seven o'clock at night.

The taste of the madeleine, however, enables him to lyrically reconstruct the Combray beyond his bedroom:

> And as soon as I had recognised the taste of the piece of madeleine soaked in her decoction of lime-blossom which my aunt used to give me (although I did not yet know and must long postpone the discovery of why this memory made me so happy) immediately the old grey house upon the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set to attach itself to the little pavilion opening on to the garden which had been built out behind it for my parents (the isolated segment which until that moment had been all that I could see); and with the house the town, from morning to night and in all weathers, the Square where I used to be sent before lunch, the streets along which I used to run errands, the country roads we took when it was fine.
> (*In Search of Lost Time, Vol. 1*, p. 54)

Such poetic narrative expansions as the Combray section function in Proust's text to recapture time lost to Marcel - opening doors in his memory that had been closed for years and enabling him to gently meditate on the fullness of his past rather than merely compelling him to hurry towards his future - and in so doing they also forestall the direct and forward progression of story time in the narrative.[27] As with the non-chronological narrative of *Lanark*, it is suggested that the narrative convolutions of *Á la recherche du temps perdu* may be more adequate to human experience of time than directly linear narrative. Genette observes:

> Interpolations, distortions, temporal condensations - Proust, at least when he is aware of them ..., justifies them constantly (according to an old tradition that will not die with him) by a realistic motivation: he invokes in turn the concern to tell things as they were "lived" at the time and the concern to tell them as they were recalled after the event. Thus, the anachronism of the narrative is now that of existence itself, now that of memory, which obeys other laws than those of time.
> (Genette, 1980, p. 157)[28]

Whereas such digressive enlargements are used by Proust's narrator to defy the onward march of time by expansively recalling the past, the narrator of

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[27] This notion of unexplored areas of the mind, of memory, also lies behind the quote from Paul Valéry that provides the epigraph for Alasdair Gray's *1982 Janine*: 'There are boxes in the mind with labels on them: To study on a favourable occasion; Never to be thought about; Useless to go into further; Contents unexamined; Pointless business; Urgent; Dangerous; Delicate; Impossible; Abandoned; Reserved for others; My business; etcetera'.

[28] See also Genette's footnotes to pp. 157 and 158 for further evidence of this concern on the part of Proust (Genette, 1980).

Alasdair Gray's *1982 Janine*, Jock McLeish, uses them likewise to resist the linearity of time but in a converse manner, as a technique deliberately to deny his past. McLeish's digressions take the form of graphically detailed pornographic fantasies, functioning in his narrative as an avoidance tactic, an effort to postpone narration of the real circumstances of his life. These are so painful he would rather not think about them: a failed marriage and series of failed relationships; a job as an on-the-road supervisor of a nationwide security installation firm that only serves to increase his isolation; a conscience that quite simply will not let up in the task of torturing him mentally about his failings in life; these, in conjunction with his chronic alcoholism make his reality a rather sad story. Pornographic fantasy, for Jock, offers a temporary escape, and in order that fantasy can provide him with sufficient fodder to hold reality at bay he creates a parallel fantasy universe, a life for himself wherein he never fails since he is in complete control of everyone and everything in it, especially its main character, Janine. Unlike Proust's Marcel, Jock does not want to recall the details of his life, does not seek time to contemplate, and would drink himself into oblivion rather than investigate the contents of his memory. 'I refuse to remember my marriage,' he stubbornly states. 'I will pour into the mouth of this head another dram of stupidity. The questioning part of this brain is too active tonight' (*1982 Janine*, p. 15). Jock adopts a strategy of deliberate forgetting in order to repress memories of his past and he attempts to apply this strategy whenever he feels himself to be in danger of remembering anything too painful. The word 'forget' is used repeatedly in his narrative as an abrupt stay against his thoughts of people and events that have figured in his past: memories of happier times as a child at home with his mother: 'forget that' (p. 20) and of his mother's dissatisfaction with her own life: 'oh forget it forget it forget it' (p. 23); his best friend Alan: 'He died. Forget him' (p. 106); his first love Denny: 'Denny was seventeen forget her' (p. 129); his ex-wife Helen's affair: 'Then Helen met whatsisname and grew younger, yes, and beautiful, yes, and I was growing interested in her again when forget all that' (p. 33) and the episode he identifies as the defining point in his life, when, in the face of her threatening and humiliating father, he makes the decision to marry Helen:

> We all have a moment when the road forks and we take the wrong turning. Mine was when Helen told me she was pregnant and I said I

> needed a week and later the doorbell rang and, forget it, I opened the
> door and Mr Hume and his two sons walked straight past me and, forget
> it, stood in the middle of my own room, yes, my own room and FORGET
> IT. FORGET IT.
>
> *(1982 Janine*, p. 26)

Eventually even God - Jock telling us 'He detests my fantasy life' (*1982 Janine*, p. 133) - comes in line for the forgetting treatment: 'Fuck off God and don't come back. I intend to forget you' (*ibid.*).

Just as he so often describes his fantasy heroine Janine, however, McLeish, too, is 'worried and trying not to show it' (*1982 Janine*, pp. 12, 13, 18, 311, 340): his strategy is failing him. Less and less able to voluntarily forget all that he would, he becomes increasingly dependent on alcohol as an artificial source of memory loss. Once more finding himself haunted by his self-confessed 'wrong turning', he turns to drink to help him forget:

> I hated most of all a total stranger old enough to be my father who
> walked past me with his two sons into the middle of my own room and
> WHISKY quickquickquickquickquick on to the floor, get the emergency
> bottle out of the, damn this lock, case under the bed. Raise lid, grasp
> bottle, unscrew top. Good stuff. Take it from neck. Again. Again. Dip this
> foul brain deep in cleansing alcohol. Again. Oh warmth, stupidity, my
> dear dear friend ... Carefully pour glassful. Get in bed. Sip slowly. The
> parts of this mind are blissfully disconnecting, thoughts separating from
> memories, memories from fantasies. If I am lucky nothing now will float
> to my surface but delicious fragments.
>
> *(1982 Janine*, p. 69)

Even whisky cannot, in the end, protect Jock from the facts of his past. He continues trying to use his fantasy digressions to distract himself, ceding, 'Since the best whisky in the world cannot fill my mind with happy memories I must get back to a fantasy and keep control of it this time' (*1982 Janine* p. 86), but involuntary memory proves in this text to have just as much force as in Proust's and Jock ultimately fails in his attempts to stop the encroachment of reality on fantasy. He can neither control his involuntary memories nor fully escape them through alcohol and decides that his only remaining option is complete termination of thought and memory in suicide. But in this he also fails. He must, therefore, finally face up to his reality.

Though McLeish's approach to dealing with his past is far removed from Marcel's, the form of his narrative nonetheless owes much to its modernist predecessors, as Stephen Bernstein points out:

But as with Joyce's unpacking of 16 June 1904 until one day seems to encompass all time, *1982 Janine*'s single night contains the story of Jock McLeish's life. Gray's model is Proustian as well. Even though Jock gives up reading the French author's *Á la recherche du temps perdu* because he dislikes "books with heroes who do not work for their living," Marcel's experience of the *madeleine* makes "a distinct impression" on McLeish since it "abolished time for him. Women's bodies do that for me ... " (166-67). McLeish's avoidance techniques are to some degree on display here as he conceals the actual Proustian dimensions of his childhood experience. Among the earliest memories introduced into his narrative is "the taste of a chocolate biscuit," which combines with other elements to recover the sense that "I was vast. I was sure that one day I would do anything in the world I wanted" (19). By the end of the novel, with his desires redirected, McLeish is indeed poised to do anything in the world he wants. True to the anglicized title he gives Proust's work, he too can boast of Time Redeemed.

<div align="right">(Bernstein, 1999, p. 62)</div>

McLeish, in the second half of the novel, and somewhat gingerly at first, attempts to come to terms with his past and this part of his narrative becomes more or less a straightforward *bildungsroman,* a fairly traditional linear and chronological narrative. Up until his decision to tell his story straight, however, his narrative is laced with a series of ever more fantastical diversions and deferrals that inhibit the linear unfolding of his life story (and even his 'straight' story may not be altogether straight: as he prepares to narrate it, the margins of the text proclaim it to be yet another 'DIVERSION' (*1982 Janine*, pp. 192 and 193), while Jock points out that, 'Telling a straightforward story is like cooking a meal, hard to do thoroughly if you are doing it for yourself alone.' He thus resolves, 'I must use my imagination again, deliberately this time, to conjure up a suitable audience' (*1982 Janine*, p. 194). We are made aware, therefore, that the story we are about to be told is subject to his skills of narration and, as we know, narratives - like memory - can play tricks. 'Remember.' He later tells himself. 'If you cannot remember, invent.' (*1982 Janine*, p. 317)).[29] At the same time as pornographic fantasy imposes itself on the story of Jock's life, however, postponing its linear narration, his life story may similarly be considered an

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[29] Jock, as the narrator of his story, of course has the prerogative to tell it however he likes, directly or indirectly, plus or minus a few embellishments here and there. When describing the director of the theatre group he does the lighting for he tells us: 'The director, who also played the hero, struck me as a silly man and a bad actor. I can still picture him distinctly: effeminately handsome with narrow, pale-blue eyes and well-groomed wavy blond hair. He wore sandals, black slacks and sweater, also an earring and many silver necklaces. But in the fifties men who wanted to look gorgeous never wore jewellery, so I have imposed these on him from a later decade' (*1982 Janine*, p. 221).

imposition on and digression from the sequential divulgence of his fantasy. Two interweaving narratives are here at play, each disrupting and impinging on the other. Each time reality inadvertently threatens to invade Jock's fantasy world in the form of a digressive and involuntary memory, it is forcefully expelled as he invokes his technique of deliberate forgetting and returns once more to his similarly digressive fantasy universe and to the story of Janine. The text is in a state of flux as the two narrative strands vie for textual space: the fantasy narrative continually slips into that of real thought and memory -

> But Janine is not (here come the clothes) happy with the white silk shirt shaped by the way it hangs from her etcetera I mean BREASTS ... the white suede miniskirt supported by her hips and unbuttoned as high as the top of the black fishnet stockings whose mesh is wide enough to insert three fingers I HATED clothes when I was young. My mother made me wear far too many of them, mostly jackets and coats.
> (*1982 Janine*, p. 18)

- whilst the narrative of reality is persistently and abruptly abandoned in favour of fantasy:

> The clean tidy room, the click of my mother's needles, Jane Russell's soft shoulders and sulky mouth, the evening sunlight over the town in the bend of the river where the colliers' sons were guddling trout, a mushroom cloud in the Pacific sky above Bikini atoll, Jimmy Shand's music and the taste of a chocolate biscuit were precisely held by my mind and nobody else's. ... I thought it likely that I would marry Jane Russell. I was ten or twelve at the time and believed sex and marriage were nearly the same thing. Now I am almost fiforget that forget that forget that where did I leave Janine?
> In a fast car trying not to be afraid, her vulnerable breasts in a white silk shirt [...]
> (*1982 Janine*, p. 19-20).[30]

Each narrative strand, fantasy and reality, destroys the linearity of the other, preventing it from progressing and this lack of forward movement is comparable with the circular narrative logic of *Lanark*. As with Lanark and Rima, McLeish too is hemmed in by his own text, continuously forced back upon himself since he fails to move either of his narratives forward. Time does not move forward in the first part of *1982 Janine* since McLeish finds himself unable to comprehend his own time linearly; as he says (and his words could equally be those of Lanark or Rima), 'I am travelling in a circle again' (*1982 Janine*, p. 194). He can deal with

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[30] The influence of Proust's text upon Gray's is evident, the syntax of this lyrical passage offering an explicit pastiche of a Proustian sentence.

neither concept of past or future: both to him are unthinkable. As far as time goes, Jock is stuck.

1982 Janine and *Lanark* do not just upset the temporal linearity of their narratives though: they also subvert the spatial or structural linearity of conventional narrative through typographical departures from the printed norm. The technology of print goes hand in hand with the linear development of narrative since the words on a printed page, like the pages in their own turn, follow one after the other, presenting their story through the linear sequence of consecutive words, sentences, paragraphs and chapters. Print, as a textual form, can therefore be seen to reinforce linearity as a property of narrative. In *1982 Janine*, following Jock's attempt at suicide through swallowing pills, the words on the printed page begin to behave unexpectedly, separating into three columns representing the 'Ministry of Voices' inside Jock's head and forming sections of text that appear in irregularly shaped paragraphs, and that are at times upside-down or on their sides.[31] In *Lanark*'s 'Epilogue' section, the Index of Plagiarisms and scholarly footnotes that here accompany the 'main' story of Lanark the character are metatextual devices entailing a similar splitting of the page into columns or sections that follow separate narrative trajectories; the use of columnar text also features in Gray's short story 'Logopandocy' and in *The Book of Prefaces*. In each case the text ceases to be organised linearly and the reader must decide how to make progress through the text, choosing which among the alternative textual trajectories to follow: s/he may either pursue a single trajectory through its constitutive pages until its end is reached, then turn back through the pages to its start point to pick up another narrative thread, or may read through all the information that appears on a single page before turning over, thus moving linearly through the pages of the text but non-linearly through the individual columns or narrative paths (since each column or path

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[31] Alasdair Gray, in an interview with Kathy Acker explains: 'I came to imagine my man taking pills and falling into a fever in which the voices crowding his mind become simultaneous. On one margin the voice of his body complains of the feverish temperature he's condemned it to, while in the middle his deranged libido fantasises and alternates with his deranged conscience denouncing him for having such fantasies. On the other margin, in very small print, the voice of God tries to tell him something important, tell him he has missed the point of living in a voice he can hardly hear, because it is not thunderously denouncing, to correct him in gentle, sensible words' (Acker, 2002, p. 55-56).

spans a number of pages, necessitating its temporary abandonment if the reader wishes to read the rest of the page's contents).[32]

Columnar text is not of course a new invention on the part of Gray, but his use of it within a fictional context is fairly unconventional: it is more commonly found in 'factual' texts such as newspapers and reference books (encyclopaedias, dictionaries, telephone directories and the like). These types of texts may also be considered to be structurally non-linear, the reader more often opening them at specific points in search of information confined to a page or two, rather than reading them consecutively from start to finish (indeed anyone attempting such a task with a text like a dictionary or phone book would be considered somewhat eccentric). Works of reference in particular depend largely on structural and organisational elements like indices, contents pages, page and chapter numbers which provide a guide to the reader, enabling him or her to dip into the text and find information relatively quickly; they also provide the reader with an important element of *choice* regarding the order in which

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[32] The abandonment of a singular narrative path in favour of multiple paths also brings into play the issue of narrative hierarchy, Gray's texts exploiting conventional typographic and metatextual devices to explore and to question the status relations between the different textual elements (the 'editorial' Introduction and Notes Critical and Historical of *Poor Things* have already provided an example of this, functioning to undermine rather than to reinforce their own, allegedly objective and authoritative position in the textual hierarchy). In each text ('Logopandocy', *Lanark*, *1982 Janine*) one particular narrative path appears privileged (if not initially then as the paths progress) due to the larger size of its columns and often also of its font. In *1982 Janine*'s 'Ministry of Voices', the 'main' path (as the previous footnote explains) follows Jock's alternating fantasy/reality mind-state while the voice of God - theoretically the most authoritative - is represented by the most marginalised textual path. The textual hierarchy of *Lanark* is similarly subversive: here the Index of Plagiarisms and footnotes are subordinate to the text they accompany, which assumes the status of 'main' narrative (by virtue not only of the large proportion of the page it occupies and its larger font size but also of its content since it continues the narrative of Lanark's journey which had been the main narrative up to this point). On p. 489, however, the supposedly marginal Index and footnotes threaten to crowd out the so-called 'main' narrative, in spite of its larger font, by taking up the majority of the page and reducing the space available for Lanark's story to a small block paragraph. The footnotes also pull rank on the body of the text, authoritatively (and condescendingly) commenting upon the words of Nastler, the text's inscribed author/God: '[O]ne is compelled to ask why the "conjuror" introduces an apology for his work with a tedious and brief history of world literature, as though summarizing a great tradition which culminates in himself!,' (*Lanark*, p. 489-490). The footnote thus undermines the supposedly infallible authority of Nastler whilst providing a fictional send-up of footnotes in conventional scholarly texts which often impose editorial 'corrections' or conditions on the body text. It also admits to having 'thieved ... from T.S. Eliot, Nabokov and Flann O'Brien,' the fictional means of offering 'a parade of irrelevant erudition through grotesquely inflated footnotes' (*Lanark*, p. 490).

s/he wishes to read the text, denied in strictly linear narratives. Delany and Landow comment that, 'Over the centuries, readers developed a repertoire of aids to textual management; these aids operated both within a single volume, and in the relations between volumes. They constituted a *proto-hypertext*, in which we can find important models for hypertext design today' (Delany and Landow, 1991, p. 4). In the advent and development of such devices for textual organisation we may therefore see the structural signs of an emerging resistance to the inherent linearity of the printed textual form, a resistance that has evolved concomitantly within the sphere of narrative and narrative theory as has already been outlined, and which prefigures the capabilities of digital textuality. Bolter writes:

> In a modern book the table of contents (listing chapters and sometimes sections) defines the hierarchy, while the indices record associative lines of thought that permeate the text. An index permits the reader to locate passages that share the same word, phrase, or subject and so associates passages that may be widely separated in the pagination of the book. In one sense the index defines other books that could be constructed from the materials at hand, other themes that the author could have formed into an analytical narrative, and so invites the reader to read the book in alternative ways. An index transforms a book from a tree into a network, offering multiplicity in place of a single order of paragraphs and pages. There need not be any privileged element in a network, as there always is in a tree, no single topic that dominates all others. Instead of strict subordination, we have paths that weave their way through the textual space.
>
> (Bolter, 1991, p. 22)

Structural and organisational elements of printed texts like those that have been mentioned form part of what is termed the paratext: those features that do not strictly comprise the main body of the text but which surround and accompany it. The role of the printed paratext is a paradoxical one for structurally paratextual elements can work against the principle of linearity imposed on a text by its printbound form at the selfsame time that they help constitute the text as book. Genette, in his book *Paratexts*, writes:

> [The] text is rarely presented in an unadorned state, unreinforced and unaccompanied by a certain number of verbal or other productions, such as an author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations. And although we do not always know whether these productions are to be regarded as belonging to the text, in any case they surround it and extend it, precisely in order to *present* it, in the usual sense of this verb but also in the strongest sense: to *make present*, to ensure the text's presence in the world, its "reception" and consumption in the form (nowadays, at least) of a book. These accompanying productions, which vary in extent

> and appearance, constitute what I have elsewhere called the work's
> *paratext.*
>
> <div align="right">(Genette, 1997, p.1)</div>

The paratext is indispensable to the notion of the book as object; a text without paratext would appear naked, stripped of the accoutrements that would normally indicate its status as book.[33] In providing alternatives to a singular, linear reading of the text while working still to *present* it as linear, bounded artefact, however, the paratext can be seen to unravel the printed form of the book in the very act of confirming it.

It would not be an exaggeration to claim that Alasdair Gray's books are nowadays unique in terms of their attention to paratextual detail: indices, footnotes, detailed chapter headings, synopses and marginal summaries like those encountered in *Lanark* and *1982 Janine* - organisational paratextual features that would seem more at home in the non-fiction environment and which allow the fictional text to be consulted akin to the manner of a reference work - comprise only some of the paratextual devices he exploits in his publications. As Genette's definition of the paratext points out, it includes visual embellishments in addition to organisational ones and Gray's texts are as visually stimulating as they are textually adventurous. Furnished with his own illustrations inside and out and, in the hardback editions, offering decorated book boards and inner papers as well as the odd erratum slip, that rather charmingly tactile textual corrective from a bygone era, Gray's creative paratexts present his texts not just as books but as *objets d'art*, as Elspeth King, former curator of the People's Palace local history museum in Glasgow where Gray worked for a while as Artist Recorder, appreciates:

> The reading of a book by Alasdair Gray provides an aesthetic, sensory
> pleasure, from the dust jacket to the valediction on the last page. Every
> part of his own books has been designed by him. No other Scottish writer
> has sought and obtained involvement in the design and production in this
> way. His commitment to perfection and to producing work that
> contributes to re-enforcing local and national identity has raised
> publishing standards. There is so much visual interest in each work, with
> board papers either profusely illustrated (as in *Unlikely Stories, Mostly*
> and *The Book of Prefaces*) or in primary colours (*Something Leather, Ten
> Tales Tall and True*), and followed by end papers, title and contents

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[33] Derrida, in *Glas*, offers a useful analogy regarding paintings: 'just imagine the havoc of a theft that would only deprive you of frames and of every possibility of reframing your valuables or your art objects' (Derrida, 1986, p. 94).

pages that pay homage to the best traditions of book production, that readers sometimes omit to remove the dust jackets and discover the boards themselves, beautifully stamped in gold and silver with bold designs and Gray's guiding principle: Work as if you live in the Early Days of a Better Nation.

Gray has always used typography to change mood, enhance the meaning of the text or convey a mindset. The changes in typeface are never gratuitous. The appearances of words have been selected with the same care as they have been written, and work together for a purpose. His encyclopaedic knowledge of the printer's art has enabled him to invent historical title pages (as in *Poor Things*) and his love of beauty in books has led to the re-introduction of the book ribbon (*Poor Things, Mavis Belfrage, The Book of Prefaces*) by the publishers Bloomsbury. Two errata slips were issued in red and black type for Prefaces within days of its publication. ... The dropped capitals containing portraits (*Something Leather*) and animals (*Ten Tales Tall and True*) are stunning in their economy of line, and in their effect on the page.

In short, the books written and designed by Gray are beautiful works, which do homage to the arts of the type setter, printer and bookbinder .... Each publication by Gray is as much a work of art as it is a work of literature.

(King, 2002, p. 117-118)[34]

Gray is every inch the artist as well as writer - he studied to be a mural

painter at Glasgow School of Art, worked for a time as an art teacher and painter

before fully developing his writing career and continues to paint as well as write,

most recently working on a mural on the ceiling of a renovated church in

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[34] His paratexts are also party to a fair amount of mischief-making and trickery, as the wilfully obstinate editorial notes of *Poor Things* should already have indicated. Beware the reader who takes them at face value! As often as not, they provide a tongue-in-cheek challenge to authority: the authority and privilege that different textual and particularly paratextual elements, masquerading as metatexts, profess to have over others in the conventional context of print. So the textual 'corrective' provided by the metatextual erratum slip of *Unlikely Stories, Mostly* reads simply and playfully: 'Erratum: This slip has been inserted by mistake.' Likewise, the reviews and blurb that adorn most of Gray's book covers are rarely of certain origin. Those plainly written by himself, under the aegis of an obviously contrived or comically assumed pseudonym, inevitably throw the others into doubt, leaving them struggling to fully shake off the apocryphal suggestion. Genette forms a distinction between those paratexts he terms autographic, written by the author, and those written by another, such as an editor, publisher or reviewer which are termed allographic. Gray's autographic paratexts can be seen to diffuse this separation since they so often pose as allographic. The metatextual privilege of the 'allographic' comment is undercut both because of this and by its invented content, which is typically comic; one of the funniest examples is a review on the back cover of the paperback edition of *Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, allegedly by 'Lady Nicola Stewart, Countess of Dunfermline, The Celtic Needlewoman': 'This anthology may be likened to a vast architectural folly imblending the idioms of the Greek, Gothic, Oriental, Baroque, Scottish Baronial and Bauhaus schools. Like one who, absently sauntering the streets of Barcelona, suddenly beholds the breathtaking grandeur of Gaudi's *Familia Sagrada*, I am compelled to admire a display of power and intricacy whose precise purpose evades me. Is the structure haunted by a truth too exalted and ghostly to dwell in a plainer edifice? Perhaps. I wonder. I doubt.'

Glasgow's West End - so he understands well the power of the visual icon as well as the verbal one. The visual icon - the image - can symbolise a scene or narrative within a single space and as such is both spatially and temporally non-linear. Images in fact carry the mythical significance of Proust's madeleine or Borges's Aleph, symbolically expanding the moment from a single fixed point, offering many meanings simultaneously (globally and synchronically rather than linearly and diachronically). Derrida, in *The Truth in Painting*, writes:

> A spatial, so-called plastic, art object does not necessarily prescribe an order of reading. I can move around in front of it, start from the top or the bottom, sometimes walk round it. No doubt this possibility has an ideal limit. Let us say for the moment that the structure of this limit allows a greater play than in the case of temporal art objects (whether discursive or not), unless a certain fragmentation, a spatial *mise en scène*, precisely (an effective or virtual partition) allows us to begin in various places, to vary direction or speed.
>
> (Derrida, 1987, p. 49-50)

Paratextual features of texts may be considered as providing some degree of fragmentation, enabling the reader to 'begin in various places,' but they still operate within consecutive pages of a book (the case of the 'spatial *mise en scène*', the fragmentation of the book, will be returned to shortly). Images, though, while they can be seen to function in a similar way to poetic or lyrical text in that they create a contemplative space with which to counter straightforward directionality, can go further in their disruption of temporal linearity than can text because of their own temporal non-linearity. Fictional texts like those already discussed can work to intervene in the discursive linearity of narrative by manipulating the order and pace of the telling of the story, but they themselves are still temporal objects in the sense that they require forward movement through the pages of the text on the part of the reader (paratextual features, such as we have seen exploited in Gray's fiction, can displace this forward movement up to a point, but most fictional texts are nonetheless designed to be read linearly, from start to finish). Fictional narratives such as we have seen can therefore disrupt story-time but rely on the consecutive arrangement of pages and another form of temporality - the time it takes to work through them (narrative or discourse time) - to do so. Genette writes:

> Like the oral or cinematic narrative, [the written literary narrative] can only be "consumed," and therefore actualized, in a *time* that is obviously reading time, and even if the sequentiality of its components can be undermined by a capricious, repetitive, or selective reading, that undermining nonetheless stops short of perfect analexia: one can run a film backwards, image by image, but one cannot read a text backwards, letter by letter, or even word by word, or even sentence by sentence, without its ceasing to be a text. [35] 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. ...The temporality of written narrative is to some extent conditional or instrumental; produced in time, like everything else, written narrative exists in space and as space, and the time needed for "consuming" it is the time needed for *crossing* or *traversing* it, like a road or a field. The narrative text, like every other text, has no other temporality than what it borrows, metonymically, from its own reading.
>
> (Genette, 1980, p. 34)

This borrowed temporality, or what Genette calls, 'this false time standing in for a true time and to be treated - with the combination of reservation and acquiescence that this involves - as a *pseudo-time*,' is what constitutes narrative time (*ibid.*). The image does not require such a process of sequential temporal 'traversal'.[36]

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[35] [Although Lotaria, a character in Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller*, comes close to having such an 'analexic' reading experience: she claims to have 'read' books by virtue of reading just a computer-generated list of the words of the text in order of their frequency of occurrence! See *If on a winter's night a traveller*, pp. 186-189.]

[36] Gunnar Liestøl has observed that all forms of reading and writing, including hypertext since it is a form of writing, are temporally linear in this sense of their dependence upon narrative or discourse time, the time it takes the reader to traverse the textual space: 'Reading and writing are linear phenomena;' he writes, 'they are sequential and chronological, conditioned by the durative ordering of time, although their *positions* as stored and *in space* may have a nonlinear organization. But once a word or sentence is read, it is chosen and taken out of its nonlinear context and positioned as a sequence in the linear chain and in conditioned time. However discontinuous or jumpy the writing or reading of a hypertext might be, at one level it always turns out to be linear. ... Thus, nonlinearity exists only as positions *in space*, different alternatives of which one may choose only *one at a time*. But in the act of choosing ... one moves from the dimension of space to the dimension of time. So the moment one reaches into nonlinearity ... one reduces nonlinearity to linearity. We cannot escape. We always find ourselves at the intersection of time and space, and this situation frames all our actions. It is the *origo* where history and stories are created and where we all live our lives. Nonlinearity, one might say, is never actually experienced directly. It exists only as a logical negation and at a distance in both time and space' (Liestøl, 1994, p. 106-107). This is also the rub of Proust's madeleine and Borges's Aleph for those in the texts who attempt to inscribe them: the simultaneity of the witnessed image – the vast involuntary memories in Marcel's case and the infinity of the view offered the narrator of 'The Aleph' – may only be related through writing them down sequentially, word by word, in a descriptive process of *ekphrasis*. Borges's narrator writes: 'How can one transmit to others the infinite Aleph, which my timorous memory can scarcely contain? ... the central problem – the enumeration, even partial enumeration, of infinity – is irresolvable. In that

Images formed an important part of early written texts. Mediaeval manuscripts were often elaborately decorated - illuminated - with illustrations and rubrication and Gray pays homage to their beauty both visually, through his own illustrated books, and verbally:

> At Jarrow, Wearmouth and the Holy Isle of Lindisfarne [the monks from Iona] and their pupils made gospel books in a style sometimes called Hiberno-Saxon, meaning Irish-English. The initials of words were surrounded or filled with richly interwoven Celtic scrolls and spirals, skilfully inlaid with gold and the jewelled colours the Anglo-Saxons used in their finest metal ornaments. Remember a piece of music, or a building, or machine, or anything which gave you delight along with the astonishment that people could make it. Pages of the book of Kells and the Lindisfarne gospel are as good as that.
> (*The Book of Prefaces*, p. 37-38)

In the era of print, however, images found themselves marginalised, due for a long time to the technological limitations of the printing press and the expense of creating print blocks with engraved images that could be used only once (in comparison to moveable type, which could be reused in different textual combinations). By the time that technological developments could enable images to be more easily included, their exclusion from the printed page had been sealed through force of habit: it no longer seemed necessary or indeed proper to include visual information alongside text, except perhaps in the form of illustrations to children's books or 'special' books like encyclopaedias, or as diagrams in technical or scientific documents. In the realm of books, then, the potential of the image as signifier - and as non-linear signifier - was sacrificed in favour of printed text and has not since been fully rediscovered. In Gray's texts, however, the image once again assumes the status accorded it in mediaeval manuscripts.

The Book of Prefaces in particular, with its illustrations, red rubrication and marginal glosses, has a distinctly mediaeval appearance.[37] The marginal gloss

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unbounded moment, I saw millions of delightful and horrible acts; none amazed me so much as the fact that all occupied the same point, without superposition and without transparency. What my eyes saw was *simultaneous*; what I shall write is *successive*, because language is successive' (Jorge Luis Borges, *Collected Fictions*, p. 282-283).

[37] And Landow has suggested that mediaeval texts in many ways offer the type of textual accompaniment that, while marginalised by print technology could be easily incorporated into hypertext. He describes how, 'Medieval manuscripts present a sort of hypertext combination of font sizes, marginalia, and illustrations, and visual

was another prevalent feature of handwritten manuscripts that offered an escape from the straightforward linearity of the text and which largely disappeared with print, as Bolter has pointed out:

> The margins of a medieval manuscript often belonged to the scholarly reader: they were the reader's space for conducting a dialogue with the text. The margins defined a zone in which the text could extend into the world of the reader. And during generations of copying, text could also move from the margins into the center, as glosses from readers made their way into the text itself. In the age of print, marginal notes became truly marginal, part of the hierarchy of the text that only the author defined and controlled: eventually they became footnotes and endnotes. Readers could still insert their own notes with a pen, where there was sufficient white space, but these handwritten notes could no longer have the same status as the text itself. They were private reactions to a public text.
>
> (Bolter, 1991, p. 162-163)

The Book of Prefaces reinstates the marginal gloss in print, once more dividing the page into columns that engage the reader in a process of reading multiply rather than singularly and linearly. The marginal glosses also offer a paradoxical means of commenting on and questioning the main body of text, comprised of a series of prefaces to works written in English from the period of Old English up until 1920 (due to issues of copyright thereafter). By definition, marginal text is marginalised, pushed to the side of the 'main' or central text on the page, and as Bolter notes above, if marginal text is handwritten it does not carry the same weight as the printed text it accompanies (due both to its appearance and to the fact that it is most likely anonymous: without an attached name it lacks literal authority). The printed margins of *The Book of Prefaces*, however, though still marginalised in terms of their size and position on the page, can no longer be considered secondary to the main text in terms of content: since they contain commentary from authors (since Gray required the assistance of several others to complete his anthology) esteemed enough to have their own words permanently consigned to print - just like the authors of the prefaces they accompany - their status is elevated. By commenting authoritatively on the contents of the main text they challenge its very status as primary text and their own status as marginal. It is also significant that the 'main' text being questioned from the margins is a preface, for the preface usually occupies a

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embellishment, in the form of both calligraphy and pictorial additions' (Landow, 1992, p. 52).

position of privilege in the textual hierarchy. Prefaces would normally be privileged over the texts they introduced since, as Derrida has observed, they serve to present these texts, after the event of their being written (belatedly), as unified (having 'continuity and underlying laws' and an 'overall concept or meaning' (Derrida, 1981, p. 3)). The preface, therefore, conventionally operates as a representative act of textual mastery.

The Book of Prefaces, though presenting itself beautifully and deliberately *as a book*, as an object of aesthetic pleasure that relies completely on the conventions of print technology and the paratextual features of the text to constitute it as such, manipulates these very conventions and paratextual features to question some of the textual inhibitions and assumptions that the book form engenders. *The Book of Prefaces* is designed as a reference book, using organisational paratextual elements to assist the reader in reading it non-linearly. Gray, in his own preface to the text, offers this injunction: 'since nobody reads a book like this from start to finish, I advise you to tackle it like a reviewer. Go first to the author and period you like best, then fish for tasty bits in other places' (*The Book of Prefaces*, p. 11). The structural elements that enable the reader to read the text in small and separate sections (separate not only between individual prefaces but also among them, due to the columnar arrangement of each preface and its accompanying marginal gloss), along with this piece of authorial advice in the preface (itself a composite element of the paratext) work together to subvert the linearity of the page-by-page reading that the book form encourages and that the chronological arrangement of material also suggests. And the authority of text that would comply with the singular and linear development supported by the bound form of the book has also been dissolved. As already explained, this text is made up of a series of prefaces: it therefore consists of many little texts rather than one single text, and these little texts are themselves interrogated from the sidelines, by the margins that comment on them. Neither does the text fit straightforwardly into either category of 'fact' or fiction, in spite of its appearance as conventionally factual reference book: though presenting itself in the 'Publisher's Blurb' on the book's dust jacket as historical document - 'This book is ... a unique history of how literature spread and developed through three British nations and most North

American states' - and suggesting it be kept for reference 'in every household and hotel bedroom,' the text also acknowledges an inherent element of creative licence (inherent and necessary, since no language, and thus no metalanguage, is ever transparent). It reminds us of language's trickery, its built-in multiplicity, when offering two separate definitions of the word 'gloss': 'gloss' is both a noun, meaning 'a marginal commentary,' and a verb, meaning 'to veil in specious language' (*The Book of Prefaces*, p. 11). In giving this double definition, the text hints at its own doubleness since it functions itself as a gloss of past texts. It warns, then, that the words of its glosses will, necessarily, 'veil' as much as reveal the 'facts' about these texts; as with all written histories, the line between fact and fiction in this text can never be altogether clear. Gray typically pre-empts (and so perhaps tries to deflect) criticism - in this case regarding the unavoidable insufficiency of his text as 'factual' and complete work of reference - when he suggests, in the 'Author's Blurb' of the dust jacket, that the book be kept in the toilet. Hailing it 'A BOOK FOR TODAY,' he writes, 'Only the rich and illiterate can ignore our anthology. With this in their lavatory everyone else can read nothing but newspaper supplements and still seem educated.' Such a statement is characteristic Gray doublespeak, simultaneously elevating and deprecating his own work, keeping the reader all the while vigilant to the rhetorical dangers - and playful charms - of language and textuality.

The Book of Prefaces, in fact, can be seen in its entirety to function in an identical manner to the paratext in general, for it is *all* paratext, composed entirely of prefaces, commentary and other paratextual constituents. If the paratext is considered - as it has been by both Genette and Derrida - as occupying an ambiguous zone between text and *hors-texte*, this book in particular must also be considered as operating in the same ambiguous way: as both book and non-book.[38] As book of paratexts and as paratextual book, *The*

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[38] Genette writes: 'More than a boundary or a sealed border, the paratext is, rather, a *threshold*, or - a word Borges used apropos of a preface - a "vestibule" that offers the world at large the possibility of either stepping inside or turning back. It is an "undefined zone" between the inside and the outside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side (turned toward the text) or the outward side (turned toward the world's discourse about the text), an edge, or, as Philippe Lejeune put it, "a fringe of the printed text which in reality controls one's whole reading of the text"' (Genette, 1997, p.1-2). In *The Truth in Painting*, Derrida discusses the function of the *parergon* (Kant's terminology), the ornamentation that surrounds the work (*ergon*) and occupies

Book of Prefaces, though undoubtedly celebrating the artistic potential of the book as object, is nevertheless straining against its limitations. S.B. Kelly has written that '*The Book of Prefaces* is a hymn to the book' (Kelly, 2002, p. 68); it might more accurately be described as an elegy. Like the order of constitutive books in *Lanark*, the printbound form itself appears to be a trap, from which textuality struggles to free itself. Whilst Lanark's attempts to move beyond his narrative's entrapping logic end in his final interment in and by the book -

> THE LAND LIES OVER ME NOW.
> I CANNOT MOVE. IT IS TIME TO GO.

<div align="right">(Lanark, p. 560)</div>

- the paratextual logic of *The Book of Prefaces*, on the other hand, offers a means of circumventing the book's boundaries, a potential escape route from its linear form. Whilst proclaiming itself on its dust jacket to be 'THE BOOK OF BOOKS,' *The Book* in the end destroys the book by tearing it into paratextual pieces.

Gray is not the only one tearing up books. Derrida is at it as well, in recognition of the insufficiency of its form. He writes:

> While the form of the "book" is now going through a period of general upheaval, and while that form now appears less natural, and its history less transparent, than ever, and while one cannot tamper with it without disturbing everything else, the book form alone can no longer settle ... the case of those writing processes which, in *practically* questioning that form, must also dismantle it.

<div align="right">(Derrida, 1981, p. 3)</div>

Like Alasdair Gray in *The Book of Prefaces*, Derrida, in *Glas*, presents the fragments of torn-up books by other writers, at the same time that he develops more fully the potential of columnar text - a textual device already encountered in Gray's writing - to 'dismantle' the book by working against its linear form. With *Glas*, Derrida puts theory into practice in typical fashion, exploring the possibilities for reading textual columns by means of a text itself written entirely in columns. The text is composed of two physically separate but semantically

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the same position - in 'para' or 'beside' the work – as the paratext: 'the *parergon*: neither work (*ergon*) nor outside the work {*hors d'oeuvre*}, neither inside nor outside, neither above nor below, it disconcerts any opposition but does not remain indeterminate and it *gives rise* to the work. It is no longer merely around the work. That which it puts in place ... does not stop disturbing the *internal* order of discourse' (Derrida, 1987, p. 9). On the prefix 'para', see J. Hillis Miller, quoted in a footnote to Genette, 1997, p. 1.

interrelated columns: the left-hand column contains commentary on translated philosophical passages - textual fragments - from Hegel; the right-hand column commentary on passages or fragments translated from the literary writer Jean Genet.[39] Derrida's concern is with illustrating how the two columns interact: they may appear separate on the page and deal each with separate content, yet when reading the text of the two columns this apparent separation dissolves. Acting, as Christopher Norris describes it, as 'a kind of perverse interlinear gloss,' text from the one column seems to offer comment on that of the other and vice versa, so that the reader continually reads among the two rather than linearly reading one at a time (Norris, 1991, p. 166). The interdependence of the textual chunks in and among both columns demonstrates and celebrates the play of language: 'The columns deceive and play with you, threaten to beat on each other without leaving you any issue' (Derrida, 1986, p. 224). Whatever meaning the separate texts of Hegel and Genet may originally have purported to carry has been dismantled along with the texts themselves and may only be reconstructed insofar as the reader performs the endless work - or plays the endless game - of pursuing intertextual traces between the texts. The text offers its own

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[39] As always, Derrida's writing works to undo oppositions, or rather to let oppositions undo themselves. In the case of *Glas* as elsewhere, one of these oppositions is that between literary and philosophical discourse. For Derrida, philosophical discourse (and critical discourse in general, including criticism of literary texts) sets itself up falsely as an objective discursive form, a metalanguage, involved with the rational quest of discovering the 'truth' about its object. In doing so, it is argued, philosophical and critical discourse is in denial of its dependence on language (as vehicle of expression) and thus of its own rhetorical nature, since language is inherently rhetorical. Philosophical discourse *is*, therefore, literary discourse: they are the selfsame (this inherent literariness of criticism is precisely what Alasdair Gray recognises when he offers the double definition of 'gloss', as already mentioned). Literature, on the other hand, since it is explicitly rhetorical, does not make the pretence of objectivity: it avoids the deceit of criticism by admitting its own deceit. Norris writes: 'Derrida's attentions are ... divided between 'literary' and 'philosophical' texts, a distinction which in practice he constantly breaks down and shows to be based on a deep but untenable prejudice. His readings of Mallarmé, Valéry, Genet and Sollers are every bit as rigorous as his essays on philosophers like Hegel and Husserl. Literary texts are not fenced off inside some specialized realm of figurative licence where rational commentary fears to tread. Unlike the New Critics, Derrida has no desire to establish a rigid demarcation of zones between literary language and critical discourse. On the contrary, he sets out to show that certain kinds of paradox are produced across all the varieties of discourse by a motivating impulse which runs so deep in Western thought that it respects none of the conventional boundaries ... There is no language so vigilant or self-aware that it can effectively escape the conditions placed upon thought by its own prehistory and ruling metaphysic' (Norris, 1991, p. 21-22).

hypothesis, and again, like Gray's blurb to *The Book of Prefaces*, suggests that the book - or indeed the form of the book - is toilet-fodder:

> *"what remained of a Rembrandt torn into small, very regular squares and rammed down the shithole"* is divided in two. ... Each little square is delimited, each column rises with an impassive self-sufficiency, and yet the element of contagion, the infinite circulation of general equivalence relates each sentence, each stump of writing ... to each other, within each column and from one column to the other [...]
>
> In little continuous jerks, the sequences are enjoined, induced, glide in silence. No category outside the text should allow defining the form or bearing of these passages, of these trances of writing. There are always only sections of flowers, from paragraph to paragraph, so much so that anthological excerpts inflict only the violence necessary to attach importance to the remain(s). Take into account the overlap-effects, and you will see that the tissue ceaselessly re-forms itself around the incision.
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> <div align="right">(Derrida, 1986, pp. 1 and 25)</div>

A new text is therefore built, or grafted, from the reader's work of tracking the overlaps between the leftover pieces of the old. *The Book of Prefaces*, too, has presented itself in similarly surgical terms as the result of a process of 'grafting together pieces cut from the corpus of other writers' (*The Book of Prefaces*, dust jacket).[40] This carries associations of the collection or amalgamation not only of the textual fragments (or tissue), but also of the work, or graft, of both author and reader: 'grafting together,' they create a new type of text (their joint endeavours constituting a form of *bricolage*). The process of 'work' or labour as necessary for human life and happiness is a central tenet in Gray's *oeuvre*: almost all of his hardback books are emblazoned with the motto, 'Work As If You Live in the Early Days of a Better Nation.' We have already seen how Jock McLeish, in *1982 Janine*, dislikes *À la recherche du temps perdu*'s Marcel because he does not work for a living. In *Lanark*, the absence of meaningful occupation in Lanark's life gnaws at him, festering (literally as well as metaphorically) like a disease:

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[40] This surgical metaphor of dissection and graft among the textual *corpus* has been used elsewhere by Derrida - in *Dissemination*, he writes: 'Dissemination generalizes the theory and practice of the *graft* without a body proper,' (p. 11) - and also by Gray, if *Poor Things* is considered as a textual reworking, or re-grafting, of the *Frankenstein* corpus (which itself of course centres around a grafted corpse). This textual metaphor will be returned to again in the course of this thesis, particularly with reference to Shelley Jackson's hyperfiction *Patchwork Girl*.

> The directions on the cigarette packet led me to the house where I write
> this, thirty-one days later. I have not looked for work in that time or
> made friends, and I count the days only to enjoy their emptiness.
> Sludden thinks I am content with too little. I believe there are cities
> where work is a prison and time a goad and love a burden, and this
> makes my freedom feel worthwhile. My one worry is the scab on my arm.
> There is no feeling in it, but when I grow tired the healthy skin round the
> edge starts itching and when I scratch this the scab spreads. I must
> scratch in my sleep, for when I waken the hard patch is always bigger. So
> I take the doctor's advice and try to forget it.
>
> (*Lanark*, p. 23)

Perhaps Lanark's skin condition, dragonhide, could be eased by some 'grafting' on his part, rather than through him simply trying to forget about it (as we have seen from the example of Jock McLeish, forgetting about things is sometimes easier said than done and does not in any case deal effectively with the problem), though Lanark's reluctance to work comes from a lack of ideas about what to do with himself rather than from unwillingness. As he observes above, his happiness has already been questioned by Sludden, the rather unpleasant leading member of the young clique that frequents Unthank's Elite Café. Lanark, having conceded that he is not himself happy, but is at least content, explains his contentment simply with the words "What else can I have?" (*Lanark*, p. 5). Sludden, though, persists in arguing that Lanark should pursue happiness rather than simply settle for contentment:

> He said carelessly, "Moments of vivid excitement are what make life
> worth living, moments when a man feels exalted and masterful. We can
> get them from drugs, crime and gambling, but the price is rather high.
> We can get them from a special interest, like sports, music or religion.
> Have you a special interest?"
> "No."
> "And we get them from work and love. By work I don't mean shovelling
> coal or teaching children, I mean work which gives you a conspicuous
> place in the world." ...
> Lanark brooded on this. It seemed logical. He said abruptly, "What work
> could I do?"
>
> (*Lanark*, p. 5-6)

Although Sludden's reasons for recommending work as a vehicle for personal happiness are not necessarily admirable - gaining 'a conspicuous place in the world' and 'mastering other people' (*Lanark*, p. 6) are reasons based purely on personal betterment at the expense of others rather than on any notion of work as socially as well as personally fulfilling - his argument nevertheless has some merit in the basic sense that work can make people feel better about

themselves.[41] Lanark counters the need for work with the need for freedom: the human requirement for both leads to a classic double bind, for if the individual engages in work s/he must generally surrender an element of freedom (few work for themselves, and even those that do will largely do so of necessity, through the need to earn some money). He does, however, begin to do some writing following his chat with Sludden and it has a positive effect on his life. Describing it as "disciplined work," he admits, "I sleep better after it" (*Lanark*, p. 29). "In a couple of terse, commonplace sentences," as a stranger at a party tells him, he has "connected the ideas of work, discipline and health" (*ibid.*). His landlady,

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[41] Lanark's idea of work as a potential 'prison' is, however, a valid one: work can seem that way, since usually its terms are controlled not by the workers themselves but by others, by sometimes unscrupulous employers, often in the form of faceless (and so impersonal or inhuman) corporations. This notion on Lanark's part comes from his own experience in Glasgow, in his previous incarnation as Duncan Thaw, though he does not recognise it. Thaw's friend, Coulter, had there experienced work in this negative way, controlled by employers who have little concern for the wellbeing or safety of their employees: 'Coulter was talking about work. "At first the novelty made it not too bad. It was different from school, and you were getting paid, and you felt a *man* … sitting in your overalls with the other workers, crowding in at the gate and clocking on and then intae the machine shop … and then the thumping and banging and feeling of danger … and you turn and there's a ten-ton girder swinging toward you on the overhead crane." "That's hellish! Are there no rules against that sort of thing?" "There's meant tae be a lane kept clear up the middle of the shed, but in a work like McHarg's it's not easy." Coulter chuckled. … "Aye. Well, anyway, this business of being a *man* keeps you happy for mibby a week, then on your second Monday it hits you. To be honest the thought's been growing on you all through Sunday, but it really hits you on Monday: I've tae go on doing this, getting up at this hour, sitting in this tram in these overalls dragging on this fag, clocking on in this queue at the gate. 'Hullo, here we go again!' 'You're fuckin' right we go!' and back intae the machine shop. … I chose it. And I'm a man now. I have tae take it seriously, I *have* tae keep shoving my face against this grindstone"' (*Lanark*, p. 215-216). For Coulter, work is a sort of hell to which he is continually compelled to return, made bearable only eventually through his complete emotional detachment from it: "Mind you, this feeling doesnae last. You stop thinking. Life becomes a habit. You get up, dress, eat, go tae work, clock in etcetera etcetera automatically, and think about nothing but the pay packet on Friday and the booze-up last Saturday. Life's easy when you're a robot. Then accidents happen that start you *thinking* again" (*Lanark*, p. 216). Like the narrator of 'No Bluebeard,' Coulter has himself become machine-like, dehumanised by too much work that involves no real imaginative process (and again the notion of technology, of the machine, as having a negative impact on the human sphere is apparent). His sense of detachment, his disengagement from *thinking* about things can also be compared to that of Jock McLeish, whose own work is unsatisfactory and which he persistently tries to forget about, attempting to desensitise himself with alcohol. The problem with work in these cases – unlike work that would bring a sense of satisfaction, the type of work that is needed - is that it is dull and repetitive (and sometimes also exploitative), providing no imaginative nourishment, no real sense that it is worthwhile.

Mrs Fleck, has also made the connection between work and health and tries to encourage Lanark to work when his depression causes his condition to worsen:

> "Why don't you get up, Lanark, and look for work? I've lost a husband by that" – she nodded to the arm – "and a couple of lodgers, and all of them, before the end, just lay in bed, and all of them were decent quiet fellows like yourself ... I don't like talking about it, but I've an illness of my own – not what you have, a different one – and it's never spread very far because I've had work to do. First it was a husband, then lodgers, now it's these bloody weans. I'm sure if you get up and work your arm will improve."
>
> (*Lanark*, p. 40-41)

Lanark's despair at the prospect of finding suitable work for himself and submission to his dragonhide – 'Let it spread! he thought. What else can I cultivate?' (*Lanark*, p. 40) - is a critical reflection of the unemployment crisis in Scotland around the time of *Lanark*'s publication; the steady erosion of the industries that had once supported the nation – mainly steel, coal and shipbuilding, reduced largely to servicing scarce Ministry of Defence projects (work at the Forge in *Lanark*'s Unthank, too, consists only of making components for the Q39 missile, see *Lanark*, pp. 30 and 41) - and the unsympathetic political climate of the Thatcher era were making it increasingly difficult for 'decent quiet fellows' like Lanark to find jobs. Doctors' surgeries along with dole offices became overcrowded as the lack of work took its toll on people's mental and physical wellbeing. An old woman campaigning for more sunlight in Unthank tells Lanark, "for troubles of that personal kind hard work is the only answer, hard work for a decent cause" (*Lanark*, p. 43). The importance of this notion of work or 'graft' is indispensable to an understanding of Gray's own work and will be returned to again in the course of the thesis.

Throughout *Glas*, Derrida puns on the word 'remain(s)' and its different signifying senses, one of these being the sense of what is left over of something (the remainder), with the associative notion of what remains, what is left behind after death (as in human remains).[42] Derrida muses upon what remains of the

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[42] It also carries the notion of what 'remains' as being waste, perhaps waste suitable for the toilet, as has already been suggested. Derrida has touched on this idea before: in 'Outwork', his preface to *Dissemination* and dissemination of the preface, he argues that the text which follows the preface actually essentially erases it, cancels it out by saying again and in greater detail what the preface has already said. The preface does not completely disappear, however, but 'remains' residually (like the imprint on a so-called 'magic slate', the child's writing toy referred to by Freud as a "mystic writing-pad", see

texts of Hegel and Genet in this new text and in so doing he picks up on the idea of the written text as monument (observed earlier by Bolter). In this case, the written monuments of Hegel and Genet remain only as remains, as the columns of a structure in ruin, a structure that has fallen, paradoxically, to create another form of monument, the tomb (playing on the associations in French of the phrase 'la tombée', translated as 'falls' or 'falls away'): 'Therefore, but as a fall, it erects itself there' (Derrida, 1986, p. 1). What is being undone here, what 'falls (to the tomb(stone)),' is the printed text's own status as monument (Derrida, 1986, pp. 1 and 2). The remaining monumental columns are compared to the pillars of Hercules and to the phallic columns of India and it is suggested that these columns contain elements that necessitate their structural re-evaluation, just as the intertextual language of the textual columns requires and facilitates a renegotiation of textual form and reading practice.[43] The monumental columns, textual and physical, are (always already) engaged in a process of transformation, a process of redefinition:

Derrida, 1981, p. 8-9 and accompanying footnotes). Derrida writes: 'Prefaces, along with forewords, introductions, preludes, preliminaries, preambles, prologues, and prolegomena, have always been written, it seems, in view of their own self-effacement. Upon reaching the end of the pre-(which presents and precedes, or rather forestalls, the presentative production, and, in order to put before the reader's eyes what is not yet visible, is obliged to speak, predict, and predicate), the route which has been covered must cancel itself out. But this subtraction leaves a mark of erasure, a remainder which is added to the subsequent text and which cannot be completely summed up within it' (Derrida, 1981, p. 9). He goes on to ponder the form this 'remainder' might take and here makes reference to the notion of it as toilet waste: 'But if something were to remain of the prolegomenon once inscribed and interwoven, something that would not allow itself to be sublated {relevé} in the course of the philosophical presentation, would that something necessarily take the form of that which falls away {la tombée}? And what about such a fall? Couldn't it be read otherwise than as the excrement of philosophical essentiality - not in order to sublate it back into the latter, of course, but in order to learn to take it differently into account?' (Derrida, 1981, p. 11). Derrida similarly puns on the word 'remain(s)' in the chapter and essay 'Cartouches,' in Derrida, 1987, pp. 183-247.

[43] The columns – textual and monumental – also occupy the position 'para' to the text or monument: they are both parerga. 'What constitutes them as parerga is not simply their exteriority as surplus, it is the internal structural link which rivets them to the lack in the interior of the ergon. ... [W]hen it supports an edifice, the column was ... a parergon: a supplement to the operation, neither work nor outside the work' (Derrida, 1987, pp. 59 and 121). The form of the column – as both geometric textual and architectural feature – is also considered in B.S. Johnson's fictional text Albert Angelo. Centring around the eponymous character Albert, an architect, the discussions of architecture and construction of buildings in this text are self-reflexive, commenting also upon the construction of the text, the novel form (see particularly p. 66 and ff., where the text splits into monument-questioning columns).

Now at the outset - but as a setting out that already departed from itself - these columns were intact, unbreached, smooth. And only later (*erst später*) are notches, excavations, openings (*Öffnungen und Aushöhlungen*) made in the columns, in the flank, if such can be said. These hollowings, holes, these lateral marks in depth would be like accidents coming over the phallic columns at first unperforated or apparently unperforatable. Images of gods (*Götterbilder*) were set, niched, inserted, embedded, driven in, tattooed on the columns. Just as these small caverns or lateral pockets on the flank of the phallus announced the small portable and hermetic Greek temples, so they broached/breached the model of the pagoda, not yet altogether a habitation and still distinguished by the separation between shell and kernel (*Schale und Kern*). A middle ground hard to determine between the ... column and the house, sculpture and architecture.

So no one can live there. Whether dead or alive. It is neither a house nor a burial place. Who contemplates such a structure, who can do so, one wonders. And how can an altar, a habitat, or a burial monument, town planning or a mausoleum, the family and the State, find their origins there.

(Derrida, 1986, p. 3)

How then, as readers, do we contemplate these remain(s), this textual structure wherein 'no one can live'? Perhaps we can start by leaving behind our rational and metaphysical quest for the stable house of originary meaning, or singularly stable and linear textuality, and work instead with what remains: the multiplicity of textual remnants and the nomad logic of the trace.

If *The Book of Prefaces* can be considered an elegy to the printbound form of the book, then *Glas* sounds its death knell.[44] The problem faced by *Glas*, however, and identified by Derrida elsewhere, is that it is obliged to denounce the printbound form from within the printbound form, and while the text recognises that it depends upon machine technology to set itself forth as a challenge to linear writing -

No *glas* without the interposition of machinery.
This is not handled like a pen.

(Derrida, 1986, p. 224)

- the form of technology it relies on is nevertheless the restricted one of print. 'The end of linear writing,' Derrida writes in *Of Grammatology*, 'is indeed the end of the book, even if, even today, it is within the form of a book that new

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[44] 'The glas
In my voluptuous bell {cloche}
death's bronze dances
the clapper of a prick sounds
a long libidinal swing' (Derrida, 1986, p. 220).

writings - literary or theoretical - allow themselves to be, for better or worse, encased' (Derrida, 1976, p. 86). Bearing in mind that *De la Grammatologie* was first published in France in 1967, 'new writings' from that era began to take up the task of attempting to tear the text from the encasing straightjacket of the book. Philippe Sollers, on the cover of his *Numbers,* a novel consisting not of continuous narrative but of separately numbered passages grouped in sets of four, writes:

> How can the contradiction between discourse and (hi)story be lifted? unless it be through an exit out of the representational scene that maintains their opposition? through a text whose orderly permutations open not upon some spoken expression, but upon the constantly active historical real?
> Between the imperfect (sequences 1/2/3) and the present (sequence 4), which make up the square matrix that engenders the narrative and its reflection, is inscribed the textual work that destroys any spectacular or imaginary "truth." That destruction affects not only the hypothetical "subject" of the story - his/her body, sentences, and dreams - but also the story itself, which is overturned and gradually immersed in texts of various cultures. Writing thus begins to function "outside," to burn in a self-constructing, self-effacing, self-extending, space according to the infinity of its production. Such a theater, having neither stage nor house, where words have become the actors and spectators of a new community of play, should also enable us to capture, across its intersecting surfaces, our own "time": the advent of a dialogue between West and East, the question of passage from alienated writing to a writing of the trace, through war, sex, and the mute, hidden work of transformation.
> The novel printed here *is not* a printed novel. It refers to the mythical milieu that is now washing over you, slipping into you, out of you, everywhere, forever, as of tomorrow. It attempts to winnow out the movement of the depths, the depths that follow upon books, the depths of the thought of masses, capable of shaking the very foundations of the old mentalist, expressionist world, whose end, if one takes the risk of reading, is at hand.
> (Sollers, Barbara Johnson trans., quoted in her introduction to Derrida, 1981, p. xxix-xxx)

Sollers attempts to represent the 'mythical milieu' he describes by disturbing the structure or form of his narrative, enabling his text to be read in more than one order. By writing that, 'The novel printed here *is not* a printed novel,' he also explicitly and emphatically denies the book form as a suitable vehicle for his experiment. The transformations of 'our own "time"' are to be 'captured,' ensnared or entangled perhaps, like a fly in a sticky web, in the 'intersecting surfaces' of the spatial textual matrix he creates (rather than being divulged in a conventionally linear temporal narrative). *Numbers* uses the metaphor of the theatre to create an imagined space wherein the text is free to perform, or play,

and it also relies on the visual arrangement of text into geometric shapes, organised vertically as well as horizontally on the page, creating (once again) textual columns (to support the textual 'stage'). Malcolm Charles Pollard comments:

> there are references to the vertical, suggesting Chinese, where writing works along a vertical rather than a horizontal plane, that is from north to south. One should interpret therefore these allusions to the horizontal and vertical ... in terms of the flow and breaking in upon the flow of Western writing. This verticality [is] a metaphor of the disruption of narrative continuity ... [and] also a reaffirmation of the spatial over the temporal ... The repeated use of the word 'colonne' [column] in *Nombres* ... relates this vertical cut in narrative continuity to the structure of a peculiarly textual theatre. So the theatre could be said to provide an abstractly geometric framework, which in a sense takes the novel outside its own parameters as if towards a different genre, or territory and, through the implicit references to artifice, makes it less concerned with representation than with what has already ... been called 'la véritable histoire'
>
> (Pollard, 1994, p. 87).

The 'genre, or territory' that Sollers's text gestures towards could be argued, with justification, to be that of hypertext.

Rendering 'la véritable histoire' can also be seen as the concern of B.S. Johnson's 1969 novel, *The Unfortunates*, the following quote (from Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*) providing one of the text's three epigraphs:

> "I will tell you in three words what the book is. – It is a history. – A history!
> of who? what? where? when? Don't hurry yourself – It is a history-book, Sir (which may possibly recommend it to the world) of what passes in a man's own mind."

History, then, is seen to be no more than a single person's account (his story).[45] The 'his story book' in this case is famously presented not in printbound form but in a box, as a collection of pamphlets and loose leaves to be read:

> Apart from the first
> and last sections
> (which are marked as such)
> ... in random order.
> (*The Unfortunates*, inner cover of book box)

Johnson goes on to add, tongue-in-cheek:

> If readers prefer not
> to accept the random order in

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[45] Tackling the gender presumptions of this statement would take another thesis.

which they receive the novel,
then they may
re-arrange the sections into any
other random order before
reading.

Like Sollers, Johnson too argues that the 'contradiction between discourse and (hi)story' may only be properly addressed by exiting the linear-historical representational scene: 'his story' is not linear. Another of the text's epigraphs printed on the inside of the book's box, calls, in the words of Samuel Johnson, for "a judicious and faithful narrative" of life. Johnson (B.S.) believes this can only be achieved through a narrative which, rather than being organised into a neat order, is instead disorganised and fragmentary, displaying some of life's own tendency toward randomness. For Johnson, truthfulness to life is fundamental to good writing, all else is lies.[46] 'Life does not tell stories,' he wrote in the introduction to his short prose collection *Aren't You Rather Young To Be Writing Your Memoirs?*. 'Life is chaotic, fluid, random; it leaves myriads of ends untied, untidily. Writers can extract a story from life only by strict, close selection, and this must mean falsification. Telling stories really is telling lies' (quoted in Coe, 2004, p. 5). *The Unfortunates* deals with the difficult subject of the death from cancer of one of Johnson's close friends, Tony, at the age of only twenty-nine. Johnson witnessed the disintegration and wreckage of Tony's

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[46] He writes: 'The difficulty is to understand without generalization, to see each piece of received truth, or generalization, as true only if it is true for me, solipsism again, I come back to it again, and for no other reason. In general, generalization is to lie, to tell lies' (*The Unfortunates*). Although it should be clear, following what has so far been observed of Gray's and Derrida's attention to the inherently rhetorical and playful nature of language, that no writing can ever really claim truthfully to tell the truth (if the truth is even there to be told. This belief in the ultimate presence of truth underpins the whole history of Western metaphysical thought, as has already been explained, yet Derrida's concept of the trace undermines any such stable notions of absolute presence, of complete self-sufficiency), it should also be clear that singular and linear narratives are particularly unrepresentative of life and experience since they present only single versions of events with a single voice. The recognition that the complexity of experience may be better represented by a more complex narrative form does not involve the same degree of reduction that is required with conventional linear narrative: offering multiple or fragmentary accounts of events rather than single or unified ones is a means of admitting that any notion of 'objective truth' is in fact unstable, since 'truth' is composed of many, continually fluctuating, elements or traces. As Mark Currie has earlier put it, 'presence itself, is a crossed structure of 'protensions' and 'retensions'' (Currie, 1998, p. 78). Johnson, by making reference to his own solipsism, recognises that he is only qualified to attempt to represent the 'truth' according to himself, to give his own particular version and no-one else's. He does not, therefore, purport to write of general or transcendental truths, 'universally acknowledged.'

previously orderly life as he fought the ravages of the disease and his own recalled memories of Tony are, for him, too difficult and ruptured to be dealt with chronologically, linearly, other than fragmentarily. He writes in *The Unfortunates* of his difficulty in finding a way to cope with his own thoughts – the thoughts of what he perceived to be an untidy mind - as he is prompted, by returning (as a football writer) to the city where Tony had studied, to remember their earlier meetings and conversations:

> Tony ... had a great mind for such detail, it crowded his mind like documents in the Public Records Office, there, a good image, perhaps easy, but it was even something like as efficient, tidy, his mind, not as mine is, random, the circuit-breakers falling at hazard, tripped equally by association and non-association, repetition, ... My visits here were long talks broken only partly by eating, what a generalization, there, more talk on his part than mine, far more, but I learnt, I selected and elected to hear what I needed, what was of most use to me, at that time most use, from his discourse, yes, the word is not too pompous, discourse, a fine mind, a need to communicate embodied in it, too, how can I place his order, his disintegration?
>
> *(The Unfortunates)*

For Johnson, he could place Tony's 'order' only through ordering his own text paradoxically as non-ordered, 'his disintegration' only through the disintegration of the form of his book. Johnson, in his introduction to the Hungarian edition of the text, published due to cost restrictions as a printbound book, writes of, 'the physical feel, disintegrative, frail, of this novel in its original format; the tangible metaphor for the random way the mind works' (quoted in Jonathan's Coe's introduction to *The Unfortunates*, p. xii). The conventional bound format of the book, Johnson recognises, does not carry the same significance, does not convey the same sense of randomness as do the scattered pages and pamphlets. He wrote:

> The memories of Tony and the routine football reporting, the past and the present, interwove in a completely random manner, without chronology. This is the way the mind works, my mind anyway {... But} this randomness was directly in conflict with the technological fact of the bound book: for the bound book imposes an order, a fixed page order, on the material. I think I went some way towards solving this problem by writing the book in sections and having those sections not bound together but loose in a box.
>
> (From *Aren't You Rather Young To Be Writing Your Memoirs?*, quoted in Coe, 2004, p. 22)

As Johnson recognises, the problem imposed by the fixed page order of the book is not completely solved by his text, since the sections of text making up *The Unfortunates* themselves still rely on the linear page-turning mechanism to greater or lesser degrees, depending on their length, and he does still provide specific 'first' and 'last' sections, ensuring that the text, like the printbound book, still has fixed points of entry and exit. He still, therefore, maintains some of the author's traditional prerogative in exerting control over the sequence of his narrative.[47]

This is also true of Julio Cortázar's book, *Hopscotch*, despite the assertion in the blurb on the back cover that '*Hopscotch*, written in 1963, was the first hypertext novel. Anticipating the age of the web with a non-structure that allows readers to take the chapters in any order they wish, *Hopscotch* invites them to be the architects of the novel themselves.' In fact Cortázar invites the reader to choose between two possible orders of reading the text, composed of a series of sections of varying length. *Hopscotch* takes the form of a printbound book, but like *The Unfortunates* meditates on the frailty or fragmentariness of experience; Morelli, the inscribed author within the text, has written a fragmented text on the basis that, from his experience, life is not orderly but is rather an impressionistic arrangement of juxtaposed events, ordered and unified only by their metamorphosis into narrative, into story (not 'his' but 'hers' in this instance):

> Somewhere Morelli tried to justify his narrative incoherencies, maintaining that the life of others, such as it comes to us in so-called reality, is not a movie but still photography, that is to say, that we cannot grasp the action, only a few of its eleatically recorded fragments.
> ... [G]iving coherence to the series of pictures so they could become a movie (which would have been so very pleasing to the reader he called the female-reader) meant filling in with literature, presumptions, hypotheses and inventions the gaps between one and another photograph.
>
> (*Hopscotch*, p. 458)

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[47] The French writer Marc Saporta, in his novel *Composition No. 1*, presents the entire text in loose-leaf form. For further discussion of Saporta's text, see Bolter, 1991, p. 140ff. He writes: 'Saporta's experiment in chance fiction seems to be an inevitable step in the exhaustion of printed literature. When all the other methods of fragmenting the novel have been tried, what remains but to tear the pages out of the book one by one and hand them to the reader? From the ideal of perfect structural control, Saporta brings us to the abdication of control' (Bolter, 1991, p. 142).

Both Johnson's and Cortázar's texts are concerned with the presentation of thoughts and memories. Memory, which comprises in effect the history 'of what passes in a man's own mind,' is not of course linearly structured: memories are stored randomly in the neural network of the brain. The idea of the mind as a type of storage unit – more or less tidy depending on the person, as Johnson has pointed out – has been explored by Alasdair Gray in *1982 Janine,* as Jock McLeish struggles to organise the contents of his head and as Paul Valéry's epigraph to the text has already made clear ('There are boxes in the mind with labels on them'). Such a spatial metaphor of the mind is directly compatible with the way the computer stores information, to be used when needed and recalled, hence the acronym RAM, the computer's own Random Access Memory. This connection is explicitly detailed in *Hopscotch*:

> Each neuron in the brain contains millions of different molecules of ribonucleic acid, which are distinguished by the disposition of their basic constituent elements. Each molecule of ribonucleic acid (RNA) corresponds to a well-defined protein, the way a key is perfectly adapted to a lock. The nucleic acids tell the neuron the make-up of the protein molecule it is to form. According to the Swedish researchers, these molecules are the chemical translation of thoughts.
>
> Memory would correspond, therefore, to the ordering in the brain of the nucleic acid molecules, which play the same role as perforated cards in modern computers. For example, the impulse which corresponds to the note mi as it is picked up by the ear, will slide rapidly along from one neuron to another until it has reached all of those containing the molecules of RNA corresponding to that particular stimulus. The cells immediately construct molecules of the corresponding protein which that acid governs, and we have the auditory perception of the note.
>
> (*Hopscotch*, p. 354)

If it is suggested that the form of the novel can offer 'a diagram of certain aspects of the inside of [a] skull,' as B.S. Johnson writes at the end of *House Mother Normal* (p. 204), a spatial representation of the way the human mind works, then hypertext, as a form of textuality operating upon and within the network system of the digital computer, clearly offers a particularly relevant vehicle for the expression of such novel ideas based on the notion of the mind as network and the transmission of message data – thoughts and memories - within it. This will be discussed again in the following chapter. The form of the book as such a vehicle on the other hand has been stretched to its very limits, literally torn apart in the process of attempting to traverse the breach between its own linear-hierarchical model and that of the network. Printed texts that attempt to

undo the spatial linearity of the printbound form and to mimic the properties of the network can therefore be viewed as providing a 'bridge to the literature of the electronic medium,' as Bolter has observed (Bolter, 1991, p. 142).

The fragmentary texts of *The Unfortunates* and *Hopscotch* more or less constitute what Derrida earlier referred to as 'spatial *mise en scène*': although both texts have defined start points, thereafter the reader - in the case of *Hopscotch* - can move backwards as well as forwards through the text while the reader of *The Unfortunates* can also 'move around' (in both senses of the phrase) the separate sections of text on account of its spatial dislocation (*Hopscotch* relies on 'virtual' textual partitions, while *The Unfortunates* is physically ('effectively') partitioned. See Derrida, 1987, p. 49-50, quoted above). Their fragmentation - spatial and temporal - is also indicative of the condition of human life and experience in the modern and postmodern eras. As the earlier discussion of Michel Foucault's critique of the idea of a continuous and singular history has illustrated, history can no longer be considered as a simple, straightforward and cumulative progression of events through time, but is manifold and complex, bearing always the trace or mark of its own difference. Any attempt to represent history as unified and singular - through a unified and singular narrative account - will therefore be both inaccurate and misleading and attempts to convey in some way the difference and discontinuity of human experience, particularly regarding our relationship with time, have characterised the printed texts considered here so far. The emphasis in literature has shifted from exposition of so-called 'universal truths' encapsulated in grand narrative accounts to creating instead a more particular sense of history, of events and experience as they occur to individuals at given times in their lives. B.S. Johnson's experimentation with narrative form is a direct response to the writings of James Joyce and Samuel Beckett, whose ideas he tried to develop in his own work. He argues, 'Present-day reality is markedly different from [...] nineteenth-century reality. Then it was possible to believe in pattern and eternity, but today what characterises reality is the possibility that chaos is the most likely explanation' (from *Aren't You Rather Young To Be Writing Your Memoirs?*, quoted in Coe, 2004, p. 13). Of the fragmentariness of life as it came

to be expounded by modernism and the resultant shift in attitudes toward history David Harvey writes:

> If modern life is indeed so suffused with the sense of the fleeting, the ephemeral, the fragmentary, and the contingent, then a number of profound consequences follow. To begin with, modernity can have no respect even for its own past, let alone that of any pre-modern social order. The transitoriness of things makes it difficult to preserve any sense of historical continuity. If there is any meaning to history, then that meaning has to be discovered and defined from within the maelstrom of change, a maelstrom that affects the terms of discussion as well as whatever it is that is being discussed. Modernity, therefore, not only entails a ruthless break with any or all preceding historical conditions, but is characterized by a never-ending process of internal ruptures or fragmentations within itself.
>
> (Harvey, 1990, p. 11-12)

The effect on the individual of this jettisoning of the past will be considered in greater detail in Part Two. The direct influence of modernist writings upon Alasdair Gray's texts has already been witnessed and it is not surprising that Cortázar's text, too, pays explicit homage to the literary tradition it succeeds. Morelli's conception of his fragmented text as offering a kaleidoscopic view of events is one that shades from the modern expanded moment of the Proustian madeleine – here a 'Bagley biscuit' - into the simultaneity of the Borgesian Aleph and the postmodernist realm of insuperable diversity and collage:

> Reading the book, one had the impression for a while that Morelli had hoped that the accumulation of fragments would quickly crystallize into a total reality. Without having to invent bridges, or sew up different pieces of the tapestry, behold suddenly a city, or a tapestry, or men and women in the absolute perspective of their future, and Morelli, the author, would be the first spectator to marvel at that world that was taking on coherence.
>   But there was no cause for confidence, because coherence meant basically assimilation in space and time, an ordering to the taste of the female-reader. Morelli would not have agreed to that; rather, it seems, he would have sought a crystallization which, without altering the disorder in which the bodies of his little planetary system circulated, would permit a ubiquitous and total comprehension of all its reasons for being, whether they were disorder itself, inanity, or gratuity. A crystallization in which nothing would remain subsumed, but where a lucid eye might peep into the kaleidoscope and understand the great polychromatic rose, understand it as a figure, an *imago mundi* that outside the kaleidoscope would be dissolved into a provincial living room, or a concert of aunts having tea and Bagley biscuits.
>
> (*Hopscotch*, p. 459)

Postmodernism admits no unified or totalising narratives, only 'little' narratives of difference and this brings us back to Bolter's point from the

introduction about information in the electronic medium: like Morelli's text, it too can be kaleidoscopic, organised into a vast number of possible combinations (see Bolter, 1991, p. 97, quoted above). The text, therefore, in addition to its literariness, can also become subject to the mathematical rules of possibility and chance. This combinatory factor is key to an understanding of postmodern culture (and to the concept of textual work as *bricolage*, as mentioned earlier). Italo Calvino writes:

> In the particular way today's culture looks at the world, one tendency is emerging from several directions at once. The world in its various aspects is increasingly looked upon as *discrete* rather than *continuous*. I am using the term "discrete" in the sense it bears in mathematics, a discrete quantity being one made up of separate parts. Thought, which until the other day appeared to us as something fluid, evoking linear images such as a flowing river or an unwinding thread, or else gaseous images such as a kind of vaporous cloud – to the point where it was sometimes called "spirit" (in the sense of "breath") – we now tend to think of as a series of discontinuous states, of combinations of impulses acting on a finite (though enormous) number of sensory and motor organs. Electronic brains, even if they are still far from producing all the functions of the human brain, are nonetheless capable of providing us with a convincing theoretical model for the most complex processes of our memory, our mental associations, our imagination, our conscience.
> ... The process going on today is the triumph of discontinuity, divisibility, and combination over all that is flux, or a series of minute nuances following one upon the other. The nineteenth century, from Hegel to Darwin, saw the triumph of historical continuity and biological continuity as they healed all the fractures of dialectical antithesis and genetic mutations. Today this perspective is radically altered. In history we no longer follow the course of a spirit immanent in the events of the world, but the curves of statistical diagrams, and historical research is leaning more and more toward mathematics. And as for biology, Watson and Crick have shown us how the transmission of the characteristics of the species consists in the duplication of a certain number of spiral-shaped molecules formed from a certain number of acids and bases. In other words, the endless variety of living forms can be reduced to the combination of certain finite quantities. Here again, it is information theory that imposes its patterns.
>
> (Calvino, 1987, pp. 7-10)

Such kaleidoscopic patterning of fragments takes the place, in postmodern culture, of any notion of unity. The fragmentation of culture and dismantling of the 'monument' is addressed in Alasdair Gray's short story 'Wellbeing'. This story was first published as 'Wellbeing: A Fiction' at the end of Gray's political pamphlet *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland 1997* and has been reworked for the recent collection of stories *The Ends of Our Tethers*. Here the story opens:

> I saw a plain strewn with marble rocks, the smallest higher than a man,
> the largest as big as a cathedral. They were pieces of a statue that had
> once stood taller than Ben Nevis. Groups of little people moved with
> horse-drawn wagons among these rocks. They were searching for a piece
> recognisably human yet small enough to carry away – the lobe of an ear
> or tip of a toe. Each group wanted to put such a fragment where they
> could love and pray to it, as it would prove there had once been power,
> beauty and unity that the world no longer contained. A group found a
> rock pierced by a beautifully smooth oval arch, part of a nostril. As they
> lifted it into their cart other groups combined to attack and rob them.
> This happened to all who found a good fragment, so none was ever
> carried away and love and prayer were impossible.
>
> (*The Ends of Our Tethers*, p. 161-162)

The shattered statue here is reminiscent of that in Percy Shelley's poem 'Ozymandias', but whereas Ozymandias's 'colossal wreck' of stone ('Ozymandias', 13) signifies the hollow end of an era of control by a cruel and tyrannical king, mourned by no one, the breaking up of the monument in Gray's story is a source of lament. The fall of Ozymandias's stone figure is just, since Ozymandias himself was despotic enough to be considered almost inhuman, but in 'Wellbeing' the disintegration of the stone human form is treated as signifying a loss of humanity, a sad destruction of what was once valuable. This depiction of loss is a typical indicator of Gray's attitude towards postmodernism, despite the fact that many of his texts operate in ways that may justifiably be described as postmodern (the ludic and self-reflexive game-playing of *Lanark*'s Epilogue section and the 'metafictional' Notes of *Poor Things* and *A History Maker* give a few ready examples). For Gray, postmodernism offers a theory of culture that, because it lacks any unifying principles, lacks real meaning. It is perhaps significant that the word 'unity' did not appear in the original incarnation of 'Wellbeing: A Fiction' but was added to the later one, suggesting Gray's increasing intolerance and criticism of postmodernism's theories of disunity.[48] In the notes to his poetry collection *Sixteen Occasional Poems 1990-2000* he writes of listening to a speaker at a conference in 1995 about visual and verbal art talk mostly about postmodernism:

> His energetic speech led to a discussion that said nothing about links
> between vision and word and ignored descriptions of our intricate
> universe and how well or badly we live in it. Ideas Homer, Jesus,

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[48] The relevant sentence in the earlier publication reads: 'Each group wanted to remove such a fragment to where they could love and pray to it, because it proved there had been power and beauty the world no longer contained' (*Why Scots Should Rule Scotland 1997*, p. 112).

> Shakespeare, Mark Twain et cetera thought important seemed irrelevant
> to the Postmodern speech game. Then chaos theory was mentioned with
> enthusiasm by one who seemed to think it a liberation from logical
> constraint instead of a logical way to solve problems.
> *(Sixteen Occasional Poems*, postscript) [49]

What is hinted at here is the notion of postmodern theory as somehow absolving the individual of responsibility to *act,* a criticism that will also be looked at more closely in Part Two. Gray's hostility is towards postmodernism as it has been received by critics like Fredric Jameson and Jean Baudrillard, as a cultural ideology that, through its attention to surface, to only the superficial qualities or simulated representations of things - since 'pattern and eternity' are no longer deemed relevant - lacks depth or substance (the emphasis upon simulation will be returned to later in the thesis). For Jameson this focus on superficiality is dangerous for it masks the real workings of politics and movement of capital at a structural level (see Jameson, 1991). As has been observed in an earlier footnote, this view of postmodernism as pulling a veil over the more sinister concerns of big business is one that has been voiced by Gray in his fiction, in the notes of Kittock, the 'wise' henwife of *A History Maker* (see footnote 9). The result is that 'love and prayer [are] impossible' and individuals lose control over their own lives, which become meaningless and shapeless, shattered like the fictional statue. At least according to this rationale. There are, however, alternative approaches to postmodernism and the consequences of its fragmentary logic for text and subject.

More positively, the proliferation of possible combinations (and thus of available choices) that postmodernist theory points to may be considered as providing diversity and interest enough to be life-enriching; thought is not stifled

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[49] Gray's concern to illustrate the importance of ideas of thinkers from the past like Shakespeare and Mark Twain, and indeed to illustrate a *continuity* of thought is evident in *The Book of Prefaces,* where he writes of 'The Pleasure of History' and the merits of observing pattern – unity of thought – through literature: 'It is refreshing to read how makers find great allies in the past to help them tackle the present. It helps us to see that literature is a conversation across boundaries of nation, century and language. ... Great literature is the most important part of history. We forget this because we are inclined to see great works as worlds of their own rather than phases of the world shared by everyone. ... It is very hard to imagine a passage of history in any solidity and fluidity for more than a few years, even when we have lived through it. But we may get some experience of a civilization over several centuries from extracts which let us see, on adjacent pages, language changing from decade to decade in words of authors who usually know they are changing it' (*The Book of Prefaces,* p. 9-10).

or closed off by being forced along a rational, unified - and therefore predictable - path.[50] This is alluded to in *Hopscotch* with reference to the possible capacities of the neural network:

> The richness and variety of thought is explained by the fact that an average brain contains some ten thousand million neurons, each of which contains in turn several million molecules of various nucleic acids; the number of possible combinations is astronomical. This theory, furthermore, has the advantage of explaining why it has not been possible to discover in the brain clearly defined and special zones for each one of its higher functions; since each neuron has several nucleic acids at hand, it can take part in various mental processes, and evoke diverse thoughts and memories.
>
> *(Hopscotch*, p. 354)

Hypertext, as a fragmentary textual form that operates, like the human brain, on the principles of the network, should offer a more suitable vehicle for experimenting with this theory of combination and possibility than does the printbound form. Postmodern theories of time and space would also seem incompatible with the singular and linear form of the book; they are more akin to the type of writing space - the theatrical matrix that gestures towards hypertextuality - suggested by Philippe Sollers's *Numbers*, of which Pollard writes:

> Fundamental to a theatre-like stage in the text are the many allusions to the horizontal and vertical axes. However these allusions do not produce a precisely delimited space such as that contained within the theatre's boards and walls, but tend to create in the reader's mind an image of abstract space that unlike the theatre building has no inside and no outside.
>
> (Pollard, 1994, p. 86)

This notion of the textual space as an abstract theatrical space is consonant with the postmodern metaphor of the city space as theatre space, as discussed by Jonathan Raban in his book *Soft city* and documented by Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity*. Harvey writes of Raban's text: 'The city was more like a theatre, a series of stages upon which individuals could work their own distinctive magic while performing a multiplicity of roles' (Harvey, 1990, p. 5). This space, like the textual space of hypertext, can optimistically be celebrated as a space of possibility, an arena wherein a proliferation of possible

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[50] The postmodernist notion of *choice* has also come in line for criticism, as will be discussed in Part Two.

combinations may be usefully worked or acted out. The textual network of possibility offered by hypertext provides the basis for the next chapter.

Chapter 2.
The Scene of Hypertext

Where print technology has been seen to reinforce the linear arrangement of narrative, digital technology can conversely be considered to support the notion of the narrative network. Since digital text is stored purely as binary data in the computer's memory and displayed only temporarily onscreen, as already outlined, it contains the potential to be retrieved from memory and displayed in any number of possible combinations (unlike printed text which is fixed permanently on the page). This potential gained from the digital storage of text makes it an easy and indeed natural process to organise hypertext in a variety of ways (as opposed to in a singular linear hierarchy) and so to offer the reader multiple paths through the text; achieving this in print involved a resistance – on the part of the author or reader, or both - to the given and physically linear form of the book. This stress upon digital text's *potential* is an important one, for not all hypertexts exploit this potential: hypertexts are not nonlinear (or non-hierarchical) *per se*. Some in fact mimic the properties of traditional printed text, just as some printed texts like *Glas* or *The Unfortunates* attempt to take on some of the attributes of a hypertextual network. In practice hypertext has been

employed, for example, to create digital versions of printed texts which are not set out in a particularly different way from their traditional printed counterparts; that is to say, they are set out on an axial basis, centring round a primary and linear textual axis, rather than actually being structured as a textual network. The BookWorm series of digital texts operate in such a fashion, as do the more recent TK3 format 'eBooks';[51] in both cases the presentation of texts as 'digital books', even to the extent of displaying the text onscreen in an image resembling a printed page, complete with dog-eared corners, gestures back to the conventions of print and to the traditional comfort zone of the reader, rather than forwards to the possibilities of the digital form. Of course, the convenience of the hypertext *link*, which facilitates the direct connection either from one point in the 'primary' text to another or to other related material 'outside' the primary text (other fictional, reference or critical texts, or diagrams, for example), has implications for the way axial-based texts like these can be read, despite the linearity of their main text.

Hypertext linking can, for example, allow the 'main' text to be accompanied by a large amount of other data (data that would be difficult to collect and consult within the medium of print and given the physical limitations of reading a printed book). The issue here is partly one of access: related materials may not always be possible to obtain in print and their availability depends upon the facilities at the reader's disposal when reading the primary text. Unless s/he is located within a particularly well-equipped library, it is unlikely s/he will be able to access the same comprehensive amount of material that may be appended in a hypertext system.[52] There is another side to this coin, however: in

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[51] Some of which are available for free download from the NightKitchen website (www.nightkitchen.com).
[52] Although in the case of the TK3 digital texts, appending too much additional information, particularly non-textual data, would result in files becoming too large to be easily downloadable, especially by readers with only a basic modem connection (and the theoretical implications of the concept and practice of 'downloading' text will be returned to a bit later in the chapter). Landow has argued that unobstructed access to linked material in general makes it easier for the reader to orient him or herself with regard to the referential context of hypertext as opposed to that of print: 'Scholarly articles situate themselves within a field of relations, most of which the print medium keeps out of sight and relatively difficult to follow, because in print technology the referenced (or linked) materials lie spatially distant from the references to them. Electronic hypertext, in contrast, makes individual references easy to follow and the entire field of interconnections obvious and easy to navigate' (Landow, 1992, p. 5). This

making vast amounts of data more accessible there is the danger that data *not* explicitly linked to and included within the hypertext system becomes devalued. If a hypertext already includes links to a large amount of referenced information, the reader of the hypertext will be perhaps less likely to follow up other, implicit, textual references or to seek out sources of his or her own. Silvio Gaggi writes:

> For a *text* to be excluded from hypertext is likely to be even more crippling than its being excluded from the "canon" as presently constituted. The ease and speed of navigating among texts embedded in hypertextual networks has as its flip side a tendency to ignore texts that are not included, as if they did not exist at all.
>
> (Gaggi, 1997, p. 117)

Landow, ever the optimist when it comes to propounding and defending the possibilities of hypertext, argues against such a criticism, believing that hypertext systems should be considered positively, as offering readers the chance to view more linked data than ever before rather than as negatively, restricting the material that can be viewed, and he stresses that hypertext systems should include 'a multiplicity of viewpoints and kinds of information' in order to defend themselves against any such charge of totalitarianism (Landow, 1992, p. 177). Nevertheless, this remains a valid criticism of hypertext, for no hypertext system will or can ever be exhaustive; some information will always find itself excluded. The reader, therefore, should be aware that although hypertext links can lead to many relevant references and sources, they will not lead to *all* references and sources; though the role of the reader is modified by hypertext, by the ease and speed with which hypertext enables linked data to be consulted, the traditional role of the scholarly reader who would pursue both explicit and implicit references from the printed text - to other books and material - is still a valid one within the hypertextual context.

The more data that is linked to the main textual axis, the more opportunities there are for the reader to diverge from a straightforwardly linear reading of the text, to become sidetracked by reading accompanying material which may itself contain further links 'away' from the main text. Although the reader of a printed

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view of the hypertextual space can usefully be contrasted with Fredric Jameson's view regarding postmodern spaces in general. For Jameson, the abolition of distance between objects is a disorienting spatial feature, rather than a helpful one, as will be discussed again in Chapter 3.

text may be similarly sidetracked from a strictly linear reading by, for example, paratextual devices like footnotes and marginal commentary as described in the preceding chapter, or by references or allusions to other texts, the tangibility and discreteness of the book - the object held in the hand - along with its inherently linear, page-by-page form, will always serve to reinforce the sense of a single dominant textual axis. A reference to a book on a shelf in another room is unlikely to challenge the reader's notion that the book s/he is currently holding is the dominant text; a hypertext link from one text to another may do precisely that, making the linked text the current text 'held' or displayed on the reader's screen. Since material within a hypertext system is not separated in space and since boundaries between texts are virtual rather than physical, the notion of textual discreteness or autonomy that the book form supported is consequently weakened. Virtual boundaries are easier to breach than concrete ones: Delany and Landow point out how,

> the individual hypertext ... bonds with whatever text links to it, thereby
> dissolving notions of the intellectual separation of one text from others
> as some chemicals destroy the cell membrane of an organism. Destroying
> the cell membrane will kill the cell; but destroying our conventional
> notions of textual separation has no fatal consequences.
> (Delany and Landow, 1991, p. 10)

The process of textual osmosis that Delany and Landow describe creates hypertexts that Landow has elsewhere termed 'open-bordered', with no clear points of demarcation between where one text stops and another starts (Landow, 1992, p. 61).[53] Hypertext, then, lacks both the solidity of the book and the singularity that the solid form upholds.

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[53] Landow links this aspect of hypertext to the type of textual seepage that Derrida has argued occurs in any type of text, even in print (see Landow, 1992, p. 60-61); hypertext, Landow suggests, simply makes the process explicit. As will be argued shortly, however, with reference to Kristeva's notion of intertextuality (closely related to the problem and indeed impossibility of differentiating between what lies inside and what outside a text, as indicated by Derrida in the by now immortal line: '*Il n'y a pas de hors-texte*'), advancing hypertext as the perfect embodiment of poststructuralist textual theory is not the straightforward transaction Landow often implies. (Of particular relevance to the analogy of the textual border and the cell membrane is Derrida's 'The Double Session' (in Derrida, 1981, pp. 173-286), which talks of the 'hymen' between texts of Mallarmé and Plato. The latin phrase used is: 'Hymen: INTER Platonum et Mallurmatum,' which plays on the translation of 'hymen' as both 'marriage' and as 'membrane', signifying simultaneously linkage and separation (see Derrida, 1981, p. 181-182)).

This will also result in an erosion of textual authority if we consider the book, as Bolter suggests and Derrida implies, as a written monument. The monument is fixed and permanent, it stands by itself and thus imposes itself upon the textual landscape as an independent and authoritative object and landmark. In a large hypertext system, a text may contain links to other complete texts, texts that are themselves axial-based 'main' texts, in which case the axial-based hypertexts will in fact have become part of a larger hypertext network (though they are not themselves network-*structured*). In this case the so-called 'main' text will abdicate its position of authority by allowing other texts to dominate, to 'move into' its virtual space and assume its role when the reader follows a link. Such a digital text is not detached from outside challenge in the same obvious way that the printed text is. Delany and Landow ask:

> [I]f hypertext fosters integration rather than self-containment, always situating texts in a field of other texts, can any individual work that has been addressed by another still speak so forcefully? One can imagine hypertext versions of books in which the reader could call up all the reviews and comments on that book; the "main" text would then inevitably exist as part of a complex dialogue rather than as the embodiment of a voice or thought that speaks it unceasingly. Hypertext, by linking one block of text to myriad others, destroys that physical isolation of the text, just as it also destroys the attitudes created by that isolation. Because hypertext systems permit a reader both to annotate an individual text and also to link it to other, perhaps contradictory texts, it destroys one of the most basic characteristics of the printed text: its separation and univocal voice.
>
> (Delany and Landow, 1991, p. 13)

It should be noted, though, that not all hypertext systems permit the reader to annotate the text in the way that Delany and Landow describe. The reader may add notes and 'dog-ear' or mark pages of TK3 format texts from within the environment of the TK3 Reader, the software required to view the TK3 texts (and free to download from the NightKitchen website), but is precluded from creating links unless s/he purchases the TK3 authoring software. Storyspace, the leading hypertext authoring and publishing software and vehicle for most currently available non web-based hyperfiction (as well as for non-fictional and seminal hypertext networks like the *In Memoriam Web* created by Landow and

Jon Lanestedt at Brown University),[54] similarly allows the reader to create his or her own notes or to add new links only if they have the full version of the Storyspace software. The lay reader, purchasing a Storyspace hypertext CD-ROM without owning the fully functional version of the software may only view (and not modify) the hypertext with the stand-alone Storyspace Reader which is provided along with the hypertext and which lacks the functionality of its relatively expensive parent software. This raises once again the entwined issues of accessibility and élitism already touched upon: for writing in the digital age to be as democratising as Landow hopes it must be accessible to all, not just to those who can afford it or who are lucky enough to work or study within the academic cloisters where such software may be networked or freely accessible. Currently, full participation in the hypertext systems offered by TK3 and Storyspace is available to the reader only at a price. The Storyspace hypertexts themselves are also relatively expensive, costing around three times the price of a paperback book.[55] Democracy, then, is a seemingly costly business (as Arnold Schwarzenegger, now governor of California, would doubtless confirm), and the danger of informational disenfranchisement being exacerbated rather than alleviated by hypertext remains very real.

The sprawling space of the World Wide Web offers a venue for hypertexts that would at least make them available to all with access to a computer and an internet connection, but high quality web-based hypertexts available beyond the university campus can be difficult to find among the Web's more general proliferation of 'interactive' cyberspace sci-fi (see for example www.darklethe.net). The saturation of cyberspace with textual junk is one reason why some hypertext authors have been keen to distance themselves from this aspect of the World Wide Web: Michael Joyce, the 'godfather' of hyperfiction - author of the pioneering *afternoon: a story* and co-developer,

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[54] The *In Memoriam Web* was originally conceived and created with the now defunct Intermedia software, and has since been transferred into Storyspace format, as has Landow's other major hypertext network, *The Dickens Web*.
[55] At the time of writing the cost of the full Storyspace software is $295, while individual hypertexts (which come with the Storyspace Reader) cost $20-$25 on average. The TK3 authoring software is less expensive - $149, or $59 for a yearly subscription – but it lacks the functionality of Storyspace. TK3 is really only suitable for the creation of the type of axial-based hypertexts mentioned so far – digital 'books', in effect - whereas Storyspace facilitates the creation of sophisticated network-structured hypertexts, to be discussed shortly.

along with Jay David Bolter and John B. Smith, of the Storyspace software - has retracted his online public presence from the Web,[56] while Eastgate, the publishing company behind Storyspace, declare themselves on their website purveyors of only 'serious hypertext' (see www.eastgate.com). The Eastgate Reading Room (www.eastgate.com/ReadingRoom.html) hosts some original and 'serious' (mainly network-structured and innovative) Web hypertexts, including Joyce's *Twelve Blue*, but the section of the website dedicated to 'Hypertext on the Web' is less well furnished: acknowledging 'While the web as a whole is a hypertext, most Web sites are not especially hypertextual. This page collects links to Web sites which use hypertext in interesting and instructive ways' (www.eastgate.com/Hypertext.html), the page contains a large number of outdated links to texts that have either been moved or removed, perhaps suggesting how 'interesting and instructive' these hypertexts are really deemed to be (see www.eastgate.com/hypertext/WebHypertext.html). Rather more cynically, it could also be pointed out that these web-based hypertexts do not make Eastgate any money, and the financial factor is surely significant when questioning the relatively exiguous amount of hypertextual quality on the Web, affecting publishers and authors alike. A career as a hypertext author is unlikely to be very lucrative if the author's work is always to be offered for free online rather than sold on CD-ROM, and authors must be wary of finding themselves in the situation currently experienced by music artists, with music frequently downloaded royalty-free from the Web rather than bought from a bona fide source like a record store wherefrom royalties will eventually find their way back to the artist. In future, 'pay-per-view' type hypertexts may become available online, just as the iTunes music store is presently attempting to claw back the digital music market by offering high quality digital music files for download at a cost, some of which feeds back to the artist.[57] In the meantime, however, would-

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[56] Joyce's webspace now displays a photograph of a cairn of stones, though his online work can still be viewed (see http://faculty.vassar.edu/mijoyce/).
[57] This line of argument also touches upon the question of the text being the intellectual 'property' of an author, a philosophical can of worms in itself, and upon the notion of text as commodity, a persistent problem for text within the ideology and market system of capitalism and one that hypertext alone does not escape or solve (as will be discussed again later in the chapter). Although Landow and others emphasise the potential of hypertext as a collaborative writing medium (moving away from such a proprietary notion) and some useful collaborative hypertext projects are available to view online – see, for example, *The Victorian Web* (www.victorianweb.org), *The PostColonial Web*

be readers of 'serious hypertext' must be satisfied with either trawling through the dross of the Web in the hope of finding something hypertextually worthwhile or, less frustrating but more costly, purchasing their hypertexts on CD-ROM.

For those less financially-challenged hypertext readers with the fully functional Storyspace or TK3 software, there is another issue relating to the hypertextual notes and links that may be created: these will only be available to themselves, within their own version of the software on a single machine, unless the software and hypertext is networked within an academic environment, as are for example the *In Memoriam Web* and *The Dickens Web*.[58] Academic campuses aside, some web-based hypertexts created with Storyspace, such as *Twelve Blue*, are generally available to view online (www.eastgate.com/TwelveBlue), but the reader may not modify them. The question of the degree to which readers should be able to intervene in changing a hypertext is not a straightforward one and must be weighed up on the merits of both private and public intervention. Providing a publicly available web-based hypertext that would be capable of adapting to the needs of every single reader would be fraught with difficulty, not just technically but in terms of content too. Allowing each reader full access privileges to alter online hypertexts by adding, modifying or removing links and notes could quickly result in a network of texts and links so large and diverse as to be unwieldy; once again the 'serious' reader may be faced with the daunting prospect of sifting through unhelpful links and material in an attempt to separate the wheat from the type of chaff that has resulted in Joyce's withdrawal from the public sphere of the Web. The issue really is one of quality control: other readers' comments do not always provide insightful information about a text, as anyone who has been distracted by banal, facile or even puerile marginalia when

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(www.postcolonialweb.org) or the *Noon Quilt* project, (http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/quilt/info.htm) - these are frequently academic projects contributed to by students (who are fulfilling course obligations) or their tutors (who earn an independent wage). Freely available collaborative writing projects are a nice ideal but are unlikely to pay the bills of a budding hypertext writer; it is perhaps understandable, then, that writers by and large are keen to protect at least some of their work (Michael Joyce, for example, has some of his work freely available online, but some that may only be purchased on CD-ROM, and, despite being probably the most widely-known writer of hyperfiction to date, he is not sustained financially by his writing alone but also earns an academic wage).
[58] Though these may also be purchased as stand-alone hypertexts on CD-ROM from Eastgate.

reading a printed book will be aware. Robert Arellano's (a.k.a. Bobby Rabyd's) online, network-structured hypertext *Sunshine '69* (www.sunshine69.com), while inviting participating readers to sign a guestbook and enter their own related stories into the *Sunshine'69* web, presents these reader entries on a separate page entitled *'69 Stories* rather than fully enmeshing them in the web of its own story and displays an awareness that inviting free comment risks the posting of useless as well as useful information: 'Rub here to see the smut' it self-consciously suggests (www.sunshine69.com/guestbook.html). On the other hand, other readers' links and notes may provide welcome textual suggestions that would not be available for public perusal if restricted to a single machine or software copy; some of the contributions on *'69 Stories* are serious attempts to offer alternative views on *Sunshine '69*'s textual premise (the end of a decade of promise with the murder of a concert-goer, Meredith Hunter, at the Rolling Stones' concert at Altamont in 1969) and they succeed at least in conjuring up different ideas of what it meant to be around at the time. Academia does provide a sheltered arena wherein networked hypertexts may be manipulated by only certain groups of students and their tutors, thus facilitating (but by no means guaranteeing) the inclusion of what should be only relevant and valuable material, perhaps bridging some of the gap currently existing between public, relatively protected hypertexts and private ones, which can be annotated and expanded to suit each reader. Navigating a hypertext using the full version of Storyspace enables the reader to create his or her own path through the text, to take notes, make links and to save this particular reading experience to a disk on the machine being used, preserving it for another time. Although such digital note-taking and linking remains a private activity and does not alter the hypertext as it exists to be viewed by other readers - akin to scribbling notes in the margins of personal copies of a printed text - it at least alters the text, and the nature of the text, in a way useful to the individual reader.

As already described, links between texts can reduce the sense of textual autonomy that the book form engendered, though theorists (mainly poststructuralist) have suggested that it was only ever the *form* of the book and not the text it 'contains' that was autonomous in the first place (indeed, to follow the poststructuralist argument, this text simply cannot *be* contained).

While Bolter stresses that 'The printed book or written codex encourages the notion of the text as an organic whole - a unit of meaning that is physically separate from and therefore independent of all other texts' (Bolter, 1991, p. 163), Michel Foucault, in a frequently quoted passage from *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, challenges this same notion, stating that the book, 'beyond its internal configuration and its autonomous form ... is caught up in a system of references to other books, other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network' (Foucault, 1982, p. 23). Foucault does not here make the explicit distinction, as does Roland Barthes, between the book as object - tantamount to what he calls the 'work' - and the book's text. Barthes writes: 'The text must not be confused with the work. A work is a finished object, something computable, which can occupy a physical space (take its place for, for example, on the shelves of a library); the text is a methodological field' (Barthes, 1981, p. 39). Barthes goes on to quote himself from 'From Work to Text', stating that, 'The work is held in the hand, the text in language' (*ibid.*, and Barthes, 1977, p. 157) and continues in that essay: 'It follows that the Text cannot stop (for example on a library shelf); its constitutive movement is that of cutting across (in particular, it can cut across the work, several works) ... the metaphor of the Text is that of the *network*' (Barthes, 1977, pp. 157 and 161). Although axial-based hypertexts are not *themselves* network-structured (since they are still structured around a linear textual axis) they can, by virtue of their links 'away' from the main axis to other texts (and perhaps to other textual axes), situate themselves within a larger textual network - they are part of a macro-network, rather than being themselves micro-networks, one might say - and this makes them relevant to the metaphor of the text that Barthes suggests.

The idea of the text as network, as unstable entity impossible to confine between the covers of the book - that 'little parallelipiped that contains it' or, rather, fails to contain it (Foucault, 1982, p. 23) - has been well documented by poststructuralist theory, especially by those, including Barthes, involved with the *Tel Quel* journal in France in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Derrida's concept of the trace and of *différance* - a term carrying the two senses of the French verb *différer* (to differ and to defer) and signalling language's combined dependence upon both difference (language as a system of signs with no positive values as

outlined by Saussure) and infinite deferral (language's referential nature ensuring that meaning is constantly postponed, dispersed through an endless chain of signifiers)[59] - as well as Julia Kristeva's writings on intertextuality, point towards the text as an entity that will always disseminate meaning along an inexhaustible number of possible trajectories, rather than containing it within the words on the printed page. The meaning of these words can never be stable but will always be subject to textual 'play' or undecidability (since the two elements of the linguistic sign, the signifier and signified, exist in a one:many relationship ratio, rather than a one:one ratio. The resultant textual process, Barthes maintains, cannot be reduced to the term 'signification'; he prefers instead Kristeva's term *signifiance*. See Barthes, 1981, p. 37-38). Such indeterminacy can be clearly apprehended in a text like *Glas*, where 'meaning' can only be pursued through the intertextual play of the text's columns - the 'text-between', to borrow Barthes's term, of Hegel's and Genet's texts - and never finally grasped (Barthes, 1977, p. 160).

When Kristeva writes of intertextuality, she is referring to intertextuality as it occurs and functions naturally in language - through the co-implication, inscription and disruption of words with other words or elements from other signifying systems - rather than to the more simplistic, though popular, notion of textual reference to other texts (literary allusion in other words).[60] Although this form of 'literary' intertextuality can be interesting and challenging (and indeed fun) enough for the reader who chooses to take up the gauntlet of exploring literary references and allusions to influential sources within a text - and Alasdair Gray's texts offer plenty fodder in this respect, not least in *Lanark*'s Index of Plagiarisms - it both oversimplifies and misstates the concept as outlined by Kristeva. Unfortunately it is largely in this reduced sense that the term has been picked up by those perhaps a little too eager to depict hypertext as the technological embodiment of some of the ideas explored by

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[59] As Judith Butler puts it: 'linguistic signification is a series of substitutions that can never reclaim an original meaning. In effect, to be in language means to be infinitely displaced from original meaning' (Butler, 1987, p. 198).
[60] Derrida's 'trace' is again a useful concept to bear in mind here (though it by no means sums up intertextuality as Kristeva describes it): each word or signifier in language is not self-sufficient but accrues meaning only through its relationship to other signifiers and the traces or intertextual imprint (to and from these) it bears.

poststructuralist theory. Landow writes of the *In Memoriam Web*: '[it] uses electronic links to map and hence reify a text's internal and external allusions and references - its inter- and *intra*textuality' (Landow, 1992, p. 36) and with Delany describes how:

> Milton's various descriptions of himself as prophet or inspired poet in *Paradise Lost* and his citations of Genesis 3:15 create *intertextual* links. Similarly, his citations of the biblical text about the heel of a man crushing the serpent's head and being in turn bruised by the serpent link to the biblical passage and its traditional interpretations as well as to other literary allusions and scholarly comment upon all these subjects.
>
> (Delany and Landow, 1991, p. 11)

Bolter, in a similar vein, enthuses over the potential of a hypertext version of James Joyce's *Ulysses* which would enable its many literary sources to be gathered together and linked (see Bolter, 1991, p. 137). Whilst Bolter recognises that intertextuality 'occurs everywhere', discusses the possibilities for viewing hypertext in a manner akin to the process involved in reading *Glas* and is in general more measured in his appreciation of hypertext than Landow, he still at times seems to consider intertextuality reductively, privileging the qualities of textual reference and allusion:

> Stressing connections rather than textual independence, the electronic space rewrites the possibilities of reference and allusion. Not only can one passage in an electronic text refer to another, but the text can bend so that any two passages touch, displaying themselves contiguously to the reader. Not only can one text allude to another, but the one text can penetrate the other and become a visual intertext before the reader's eyes. The intertextual relationship occurs everywhere in print - in novels, gothic romances, popular magazines, encyclopedias, grammars, and dictionaries - yet the electronic space permits us to visualize intertextuality as no previous medium has done.
>
> (Bolter, 1991, p. 163-164)

There are obviously merits in the ability to explicitly link from one text to other referenced texts: the factor of being able to easily view linked texts (that might not have been accessible otherwise) has already been mentioned and as Delany and Landow earlier pointed out, links between texts will encourage the reader to consider texts as existing as 'part of a complex dialogue' rather than as discrete and 'univocal' as the printed form might suggest (see Delany and Landow, 1991, p. 13, quoted above). It could also be argued that such linking

demystifies the process of literary allusion, making texts less élitist.[61] Literary snobbery of this type is the subject of the lofty - and tongue-in-cheek - statement by Flann O'Brien's narrator of *At Swim-Two-Birds* that:

> The modern novel should be largely a work of reference. Most authors spend their time saying what has been said before - usually said much better. A wealth of references to existing works would acquaint the reader instantaneously with the nature of each character, would obviate tiresome explanations and would effectively preclude mountebanks, upstarts, thimbleriggers and persons of inferior education from an understanding of contemporary literature.
>
> (*At Swim-Two-Birds*, p. 25)

Comically, Brinsley - the narrator's friend and audience - gives this statement the response it probably deserves: 'That is all my bum' (*At Swim-Two-Birds*, p. 25). Despite the obvious comedy of this exchange, and its suggestion of the difficulty or indeed impossibility of writing anything that is not in some way derivative, it also makes the point that literary texts can be rather exclusive; few would argue that even the most competent reader will find him or herself a little intimidated by, for example, the wealth of textual references in Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake*, or even *Ulysses* for that matter. *Lanark*'s Index of Plagiarisms, though seemingly encouraging the 'exclusive' allusive game, actually functions more subversively than at first it might seem. As Stephen Baker suggested in a talk given as part of the 'Beyond Scotland' lecture series,[62] *Lanark* plays on and indeed provokes the reader's desire to follow up allusions in the text, but effectually frustrates this provoked desire by giving the reader all the interpretative answers towards the end in its Index, which lists all occurrences of 'literary plagiarisms', tacit and explicit. The Index declares:

> There are three kinds of literary theft in this book:
> BLOCK PLAGIARISM, where someone else's work is printed as a distinct typographical unit, IMBEDDED PLAGIARISM, where stolen words are concealed within the body of the narrative, and DIFFUSE PLAGIARISM, where scenery, characters, actions or novel ideas have been stolen

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[61] The élitism of the written word in general has already been discussed in the Introduction. With regard to the claims for hypertext as a tool of literary demystification Bolter comments, 'it is true that the computer takes the mystery out of intertextuality and makes it instead a well-defined process of interconnection, the collective act of reading one text in the light of others. Any sense of mystery that remains is the residue of the age of writing or printing, when the technology provided no good way to embody the movement from one text to another' (Bolter, 1991, p. 203). Again, Bolter uses the term intertextuality in only its narrow 'literary' sense.

[62] Held in the University of Strathclyde, Glasgow on 3rd November 2000.

> without the original words describing them. To save space these will be
> referred to hereafter as Blockplag, Implag, and Difplag.
>
> <div align="right">(Lanark, p. 485)</div>

The Index is seemingly exhaustive and incredibly thorough, even pedantic; the entry for 'POE, EDGAR ALLAN', to give an example, reads:

> Chap. 8, para. 7. The "large and lofty apartment" is an Implag from the
> story *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Chap. 38, para. 16. The three long
> first sentences are Implag from *The Domain of Arnheim*. The substitution
> of "pearly" pebbles for "alabaster" pebbles comes from Poe's other
> description of water with a pebbly bottom in *Eleonora*.
>
> <div align="right">(Lanark, p. 495)</div>

Such a painstakingly detailed reference of references undoubtedly errs on the side of inclusiveness rather than exclusiveness (thankfully for all the 'mountebanks, upstarts, thimbleriggers and persons of inferior education' who might be thinking of reading *Lanark*), and while this perhaps 'democratises' the text to an extent to which even Landow may be impressed, it could also be argued that by giving away the 'answers' to the text's interpretation, the Index in some way cheats the reader, robbing him or her of the pleasure that may be obtained through the independent pursuit of textual allusion. The Index, in other words, does the reader's traditional work. The reader is not left altogether idle, however. On the contrary, *Lanark* can be considered - in a way very similar to that in which Calvino's *If on a winter's night a traveller* manipulates and frustrates the reader's desire for a traditional story (one with a beginning, a middle and an end), causing the reader (implied and real) to question his or her own assumptions about what it means to read for such a 'unified' story - as redirecting the reader's focus onto the ways in which texts normally draw us in and make us willing participants in the textual transaction, part of which relies on our collusion in such seemingly cosy, seemingly satisfactory allusive games. Baker draws the analogy between the simultaneous provocation and frustration of the reader's desire that occurs in *Lanark* (and elsewhere in Gray's fiction) and the manipulation of desire that underpins capitalism, constituting it and upon which it wholly depends (see also Baker, 1995). Following Theodor Adorno, Baker argues that capitalism requires that subjects be kept in a state of perpetual longing (more on this in Chapter 3), desiring things that can theoretically be achieved - through working and striving harder, of course - but in practice never are. Capitalism, he argues, dangles the carrot of possibility temptingly in front of

our noses, but agonisingly always just slightly beyond the reach of our mouths. The culture industry, too, plays its own part in this process, and books, like other art forms, have not escaped the cultural dominant of capitalism but have themselves assumed the status of commodity, have themselves become caught up in the same systems of labour, exchange, and tantalising desire as are commodities within the social and economic spheres.[63] The point here is that the would-be satisfactory 'intertextual' game of the literary text could be construed as just another dangling carrot, inviting the reader to take part in a tacit textual transaction that, if intertextuality is considered in Kristeva's sense of the term, can never be completed. Gray, changing the rules of the 'intertextual' game with his Index of Plagiarisms, in effect subverts the whole premise of the transaction by simulating its premature foreclosure.

Following the same intertextual logic, Gray's Index of Plagiarisms must, however, be a counterfeit gesture: in attempting to transcribe the text's intertextual references it pretends to exhaust the inexhaustible. The Index entries for Robert Burns and Ralph Waldo Emerson suggest as much:

> **BURNS, ROBERT**
> Robert Burns' humane and lyrical rationalism has had no impact upon the formation of this book, a fact more sinister than any exposed by mere attribution of sources. See also Emerson.
>
> ...
> **EMERSON, RALPH WALDO**
> Ralph Waldo Emerson has not been plagiarized.
>
> > (*Lanark*, pp. 486 and 488)

'Mere attribution of sources' may be the function of Gray's Index, but it is not the function of intertextuality, which would suggest that Burns, Emerson and many other unmentioned authors will indeed be inscribed more deeply in *Lanark* than the Index obliquely admits. Barthes writes of 'the Text' that it is:

> woven entirely with citations, references, echoes, cultural languages
> (what language is not?), antecedent or contemporary, which cut across it
> through and through in a vast stereophony. The intertextual in which

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[63] Baker quotes from Adorno and Horkheimer's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*: 'The culture industry perpetually cheats its consumers of what it perpetually promises. The promissory note which, with its plots and staging, it draws on pleasure is endlessly prolonged; the promise, which is actually all the spectacle consists of, is illusory: all it actually confirms is that the real point will never be reached, that the diner must be satisfied with the menu. In front of the appetite stimulated by all those brilliant names and images there is finally sat no more than a commendation of the depressing everyday world it sought to escape' (Baker, 1995, p. 11).

> every text is held, it itself being the text-between of another text, is not
> to be confused with some origin of the text: to try to find the 'sources',
> the 'influences' of a work, is to fall in with the myth of filiation; the
> citations which go to make up a text are anonymous, untraceable, and
> yet *already read*: they are quotations without inverted commas.
> (Barthes, 1977, p. 160)

This is entirely in line with Kristeva's position on intertextuality. Distancing herself from the common misappropriation of the term, she explains:

> The term *intertextuality* denotes [the] transposition of one (or several)
> sign-system(s) into another; but since this term has often been
> understood in the banal sense of 'study of sources', we prefer the term
> *transposition* because it specifies that the passage from one signifying
> system to another demands a new articulation of the thetic – of
> enunciative and denotative positionality. If one grants that every
> signifying practice is a field of transpositions of various signifying systems
> (an intertextuality), one then understands that its 'place' of enunciation
> and its denoted 'object' are never single, complete and identical to
> themselves, but always plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated. In
> this way polysemy can also be seen as the result of a semiotic
> polyvalence – an adherence to different sign-systems.
> (Kristeva, 1986, p. 111)

Kristeva's ideas on intertextuality stem from her work on Mikhail Bakhtin and are really transformative restatements – thus explicitly embodying intertextuality as they describe it – of Bakhtin's notions of dialogism and heteroglossia. For Bakhtin, discourse is always dialogic (having more than a single meaning) or double-voiced (speaking with more than a single voice) rather than monologic and stable. No discourse, therefore, can make claims on 'truth', since every discourse will be shot through with alternative meanings (the trace of other discourses) and, specifically, will mean different things (and speak in different voices) to different people within different social contexts (thus applying Saussure's concept of linguistic difference beyond the abstract systemic level of *langue* and the restricted contextual level of utterance or *parole* and emphasising the social function of language; language as discourse, in other words). Bakhtin's term 'heteroglossia', like the Derridean trace, likewise signifies the openness of language and the inevitability of polysemy. As described in the preceding chapter's discussion of *The Book of Prefaces*, the word 'gloss' already displays language's doubleness; prefixing 'gloss' with 'hetero' also stresses its otherness: language, as has been outlined, signifies as much through the traces of what it *does not* say as what it (superficially) does. Graham Allen in his book *Intertextuality* writes: 'If we call an utterance 'heteroglot' we refer to

the presence within it of other utterances, past utterances and future responses or redeployments' (Allen, 2000, p. 213). Kristeva's concept of intertextuality or transposition relies on the same notions of textual dependence: language is not self-contained, self-identical, self-sufficient; rather it is a network or fabric of crossed and infinite codes. These codes, for Kristeva as for Bakhtin, are also context-dependent, as Allen has pointed out: 'Bakhtin and Kristeva share ... an insistence that texts cannot be separated from the larger cultural or social textuality out of which they are constructed. All texts, therefore, contain within them the ideological structures and struggles expressed in society through discourse' (Allen, 2000, p. 36).[64] Kristeva's mention of transposition as requiring 'a new articulation of the thetic' refers to her division of language into two phases, the pre-linguistic 'semiotic phase' (of early childhood) and the linguistic or 'thetic phase' wherein the subject must enter into discourse within the accepted rules of the dominant social order (corresponding directly to Jacques Lacan's psychoanalytic statement of the subject's movement from the Imaginary experience of the senses to the Symbolic order of language). Since entering into the 'thetic phase' will necessitate the repression of the semiotic subject at many levels (in order that s/he will conform to the 'rules' of the thetic discourse), Kristeva argues that the unconscious impulse of the semiotic will seek to manifest itself subversively in the very discourse that functions to repress it (i.e. the semiotic will make itself known through the thetic).[65] For Kristeva, then, transposition demands the re-articulation of the thetic precisely because the thetic (which pretends to rationalise and so unify discourse and is thus 'Other' or estranged) is persistently being ruptured by the attempts of the demanding semiotic to signify (alluded to in the section entitled 'Hiding' in Tim McLaughlin's hyperfiction *Notes Toward Absolute Zero*: 'Someone is hiding in the

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[64] And the codes need not always be textual. Kristeva writes: 'the *passage from one sign system to another* ... involves an altering of the thetic *position* – the destruction of the old position and the formation of a new one. The new signifying system may be produced with the same signifying material; in language, for example, the passage may be made from narrative to text. Or it may be borrowed from different signifying materials: the transposition from a carnival scene to the written text, for instance' (Kristeva, 1986, p. 111).
[65] Kristeva refers to the drives of the semiotic within a text as being the text's 'genotext', whereas the conventional operation of the thetic is termed the 'phenotext', thus the genotext works to disrupt the phenotext and to illustrate the inadequacy of its authority.

back of this literary machine with inappropriate words and rejected phrases. A small voice that occasionally demands the first person'). The thetic - or linguistic discourse - is thus inevitably polysemous, inevitably and unavoidably intertextual.

Intertextuality, then, is much more than 'mere attribution of sources' and as such can never be fully or explicitly mapped, either by the type of exercise Gray undertakes in *Lanark*'s Index of Plagiarisms or by the process of hypertextual linking. Indeed, as Barthes has already pointed out, many of the signifying forces at play within a text are not even identifiable - they are rather 'anonymous, untraceable' - so could not possibly be pinned down. He stresses:

> The Text is plural. Which is not simply to say that it has several meanings, but that it accomplishes the very plural of meaning: an *irreducible* (and not merely an acceptable) plural. The Text is not a co-existence of meanings but a passage, an overcrossing; thus it answers not to an interpretation, even a liberal one, but to an explosion, a dissemination. The plural of the Text depends, that is, not on the ambiguity of its contents but on what might be called the *stereographic plurality* of its weave of signifiers (etymologically, the text is a tissue, a woven fabric).
>
> (Barthes, 1977, p. 159)

(And the threads constituting the fabric of the text are endless.)

Acknowledging that hypertext cannot be the complete embodiment of intertextuality should not make it entirely redundant, however, and the separate - and of course intertextual - realms of poststructuralist theory and hypertext can still usefully inform one another. Bolter, writing of intertextuality in more than the narrow literary sense he has adopted at other times - 'Intertextuality is more than the references within a text and allusions between texts that are common in literature; it is the interrelation of all texts in the same subject, language, or culture' (Bolter, 1991, p. 202)[66] - recognises that a text's intertextuality may never be completely laid bare by hypertext, but still argues for hypertext's relevance. He writes that:

> there is a great difference between the infinite and the inaccessible. Electronic writing with its graphical representations of structure encourages us to think that intertextual relations can indeed be mapped

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[66] Though, to be pedantic perhaps, this is not yet an accurate description since intertextuality transcends the boundaries of signifying system (being not exclusively restricted to text) as well as those of 'subject, language, or culture'.

out, made explicit - never fully, but with growing accuracy and completeness.

(Ibid.)

The point is that immediate access from one text to another that relates to it is still a useful textual feature: infinite access via the hypertext link may be an impossibility but that does not negate the benefits of access *per se*.[67] As well as

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[67] And Bolter has shown his frustration with what he sees as the unhelpful poststructuralist preoccupation with notions of infinity. He argues that it is pointless in a way to continually argue the infinite nature of a text's reference and the impossibility of ever representing it; since no written medium in practice can ever be infinite this is really a superfluous observation, he contends. 'Semiotics regards representation and interpretation as a process without end. ... In fact any practical system is limited. ... The electronic space is subject to the same limitation. An electronic text may grow and grow as it comes to include the work of many hands, but no electronic text can be infinite - not only because it is the work of finite human beings, but also because the computer itself, as a technology of writing, is finite. All computers must operate with a limited memory and a finite speed of computation. The machine is always stymied when it confronts infinity, in symbolic applications as in numerical ones. So in electronic writing, the network of elements must always be limited, and the act of interpretation must reconcile itself to this limitation. ... Students of semiotics and of deconstruction must ultimately address the finite character of the textual world. They understand that all texts are finite, and yet they seem to be looking back to that Faustian culture in which the infinite is the highest, if unsatisfied, aspiration' (Bolter, 1991, p. 203-204). This so far misses the point of much poststructuralist theory, which is concerned more with highlighting the inadequacy of any textual form to deal in objective truths than with aspiring towards a simultaneously infinite and impossible textuality. Bolter does go on to address this theoretical aspect, but while he recognises poststructuralism's anxiety regarding truths, yet he seems also to underestimate the implications of the poststructuralist argument, which will of course extend to hypertext as a mode of written signification. He writes: 'All of deconstruction's work is to show that the transcendental signified cannot be achieved. But even to worry about such an achievement shows that deconstruction is only half way toward a new view of signs. The old view of transcendence and infinity still matter enough to the deconstructionist that he or she feels the need to refute them.

The new view of signs is embodied unambiguously in electronic hypertext. Here the writer and reader know that there is no transcendence, because they know that the topical elements they create are arbitrary sequences of bits made meaningful only by their interconnecting links. They feel no need to refute the old view, the product of the printed and written book, which are both closer to the spoken language. In the computer meaning is always deferral, the pointing from one place to another. The fact that electronic signs only refer to other signs is the fundamental characteristic of the medium, made apparent in every act of electronic writing. In an electronic space there is no infinite regression, not because the reader eventually reaches the transcendental signified, but rather for the mundane reason that the resources of the machine, though vast, are always finite. All this suggests again that the computer takes us beyond deconstruction, which for all its ambivalence, is still incapable of acquiescing in the arbitrary and limited character of writing. Electronic readers and writers have finally arrived at the land promised (or threatened) by post-modern theory for two decades: the world of pure signs. While traditional humanists and deconstructionists have been battling over the arbitrary, self-referential character of writing, computer specialists, oblivious to this struggle, have been building a world of electronic signs in which the

enabling texts to be linked to other literary texts, hypertext facilitates the linking of texts to historical or contextual material, as is the case with the *In Memoriam* and *Dickens* webs – which would constitute part of a text's intertext in Kristeva's terms – or to related non-textual material, such as images, audio and video (which again can be construed intertextually). Hypertext, if not viewed reductively as a written mode that tries (and fails) to demonstrate fully the condition of the text as described by poststructuralist theory (reductively since such a mode must necessarily reduce or totalise that which theory has indicated is irreducible), may instead be viewed simply as a mode that enables

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battle is over' (p. 203-204). This rather lengthy quotation from Bolter reveals (certainly in poststructuralist terms) a theory as dangerous as it is self-contradictory: the theory that hypertext operates in a realm of 'pure signs' that both displays and resolves the inadequacy of signification and in so doing finds itself impervious to critique. Bolter is right to point out that poststructuralism 'worries', as he puts it, about the logocentric tendencies of the written word and the end – theoretically held by the transcendental signified – of interpretation; poststructuralism also, however, worries about the consequences of ceasing to worry, the consequences, that is to say, of too readily 'acquiescing in the arbitrary and limited character of writing', of colluding with the practical limitations of written signification, which would indeed signify the end of interpretation, the unwelcome end of the 'battle' with text . (Forestalling the endless work of critique in this way would result in a form of critical stasis like that envisioned by Richard Rorty and discussed briefly in a later footnote (see footnote 76). Such stasis would also be comparable to the political stasis observed in Alasdair Gray's *A History Maker* and discussed in the preceding chapter, the allegedly Utopian political society of *A History Maker* being analogous to the type of textual Utopia Bolter seems to anticipate in hypertext. For Bolter, hypertext functions to demystify language by laying bare its referential dependencies. He writes that: 'the computer makes the act of reference explicit, and in doing so it makes apparent the purely conventional nature of writing. A hypertext system spells out the process of interpretation in an algorithm and embodies that process in a programming language: there is nothing mysterious about a program that follows pointers from one symbolic unit to another' (Bolter, 1991, p. 200). This would seem to bring Bolter's position into line with the notion of technology as being part of a rational and scientific 'project' of enlightenment and mastery discussed in the Introduction, the technology of hypertext enabling the mystery of linguistic reference to be 'cleared away'). Bolter, by arguing that the 'new view of signs' is 'embodied unambiguously' in hypertext, is surely arguing that hypertextual discourse is beyond interpretation, that it need no longer be questioned since it transparently and unequivocally demonstrates the condition of language: to 'unambiguously' embody the 'new view of signs' - which is really just a replication of the 'old' view of signs that operate on the infinite bases of difference and deferral but within the finite medium of practical application, whether it be the spoken word, the printed word or the electronic word - is surely finally to marry the signifier and signified, identifying the one unambiguously with the other (one:one), the result of which would be of course the elusive transcendental signified, or 'truth' itself. Bolter, in arguing against theoretical notions of infinity, inadvertently finds himself in the dangerous position of advocating hypertext as a transparent and thus entirely closed discourse; a contradictory discourse wherein 'there is no transcendence,' yet which itself assumes transcendental status. His argument, one might say, self-deconstructs.

some of poststructuralism's concerns to be worked or played out - without tending towards completion, such as Bolter seems to be suggesting in the quotation above - more explicitly than is possible with print (though never wholly explicitly). It should also be borne in mind that while hypertext is a relatively new form of writing, it is still a written form and as such will not escape the more general problems and conditions of textuality indicated by poststructuralist theory; it will also be as open to critique as any other form of writing. Rather than being a textual form with all the answers (as Landow would often have it), hypertext simply offers another vehicle for asking questions.

The idea of the text as ongoing - and as questioning - process (rather than simply as product or 'answer') as well as being relevant to hypertext as a dynamic form also circulates in the theories of poststructuralism, particularly in the writings of Barthes and Kristeva. Kristeva's response to the challenges set by Modernist texts such as those by Joyce and Mallarmé, which she believes explicitly invite the (endless) process of interpretation and critique (involving the reader at the level of production rather than simply 'consumption' of textual meaning or textual goods), is a case in point. She writes:

> Any 'literary' text may be envisaged as productivity. Literary history since the end of the nineteenth century has given us modern texts which, even structurally, perceive themselves as a production that cannot be reduced to representation (Joyce, Mallarmé, Lautréamont, Roussel). Therefore, a semiotics of production must tackle these texts precisely in order to join a scriptural practice concerned with its own production to a scientific thought in search of production. And it must do so in order to bring out all the consequences of such a confrontation, that is, the reciprocal upheavals which the two practices inflict on one another.
>   Developed from and in relation to these modern texts the new semiotic models then turn to the social text, to those social practices of which 'literature' is only one unvalorized variant, in order to conceive of them as so many ongoing transformations and/or productions.
>   (Kristeva, 1986, p. 86-87)

This theory of text as process or productivity is enmeshed with the role of the reader inasmuch as the reader 'works' to construct the text (this will be discussed again later, particularly in Chapter 4). It likewise corresponds with the poststructuralist theory of text not as the container for some pre-existent meaning or 'message' (writing as *écrivant*) but as the conveyance of multiple and not-yet-existent meanings (writing as *ecrivain*). Barthes writes:

> The text is a productivity. This does not mean that it is the product of a
> labour (such as could be required by a technique of narration and the
> mastery of style), but the very theatre of a production where the
> producer and reader of the text meet: the text 'works', at each moment
> and from whatever side one takes it. Even when written (fixed), it does
> not stop working, maintaining a process of production. The text works
> what? Language. It deconstructs the language of communication,
> representation, or expression (where the individual or collective subject
> may have the illusion that he is imitating something or expressing
> himself) and reconstructs another language, voluminous, having neither
> bottom nor surface, for its space is not that of the figure, the painting,
> the frame, but the stereographic space of the combinative play, which is
> infinite once one has gone outside the limits of current communication
> (subjected to the opinion, to the 'doxa') and of narrative or discursive
> verisimilitude.
>
> (Barthes, 1981, p. 36-37)[68]

The metaphor of the text as theatre has already been used by Sollers and discussed in the preceding chapter, and the hypertextual mode can usefully offer an alternative theatrical space - or scene - for the 'combinative play' of language (particularly when a hypertext is network-structured, as will be discussed shortly). Hypertext can also explicitly open the stage to textual performance and contribution from authors and readers alike. Bolter describes how:

> Mapping in the electronic space can be a collective process: the writer
> creates some connections, which pass to the first reader, who may add
> new connections and pass the results on to another reader, and so on.
> This tradition, this passing on of the text from writer to reader, who then
> becomes a writer for other readers, is nothing new; it is the literal
> meaning of the word "tradition."
>
> (Bolter, 1991, p. 202)

In this manner, then, the process of textual interrogation and interpretation – the theatrical 'tradition' of the text - may carry on dynamically, and this dynamic aspect of hypertext, the fact that the text is not fixed as with print but changeable, is one of its great strengths as has already been observed (though as

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[68] The term *signifiance*, mentioned earlier, is also highly relevant to any discussion of textual productivity and works to contradict any comfortable notion of 'signification' (based on writing as *écrivant*) where the text is treated as mere 'repository' and 'this signification appears as embalmed in the work-as-product' (Barthes, 1981, p. 37). Barthes argues: 'A fortiori, when the text is read (or written) as a mobile play of signifiers, with no possible reference to one or several fixed signifieds, it becomes necessary to distinguish carefully between signification, which belongs to the level of the product, of the statement, of communication, and the signifying work, which belongs to the level of production, enunciation, symbolisation: it is this work that we call 'signifiance'. 'Signifiance' is a process ... 'Signifiance' is 'the without-endness of the possible operations in a given field of language'' (*ibid.*, p. 37-38).

Barthes points out, textual fixity does not in itself preclude productivity, for the text will always be in process). Again, hypertext can just demonstrate some of text's attributes more explicitly than the printed form allows: the openness of hypertext, the fact that it can so easily be modified, undermines any notion of the text as 'product' and instead offers it up continually for change and critique. The problem with this textual 'tradition' as described by Bolter is that it of course depends once more upon each reader – each link in the traditional and productive chain – having full access privileges to modify the text before passing it on and, as has already been outlined, though this may be the case within an academic context, the potential of hypertext in terms of dynamic and collaborative textual interpretation has yet to filter through to the general public in any serious way. Readers of hypertexts without the necessary access privileges are thus only offered a restricted insight into the process of hypertextual interpretation and indeed into the potential of the hypertextual form: they may view a dynamic and interrogative text but may not themselves contribute to it. Once again the twin bugbears of textual access and élitism return to upset the hypertextual applecart and once again they cannot be adequately seen off.

Allen offers the following cautionary advice regarding the perceived affinity between hypertext and elements of poststructuralism:

> Despite these clear connections between intertextuality and new computer systems, it remains difficult to imagine that technological changes by themselves will produce more active and productive 'author-readers' and an increased 'democratization' of language, reading and the communication and possession of information. At times Landow and others seem rather too easily to take the basic theories of poststructuralism without considering the deeper motivations which produced those theories. We might, for instance, wonder whether systems which are said to increase the capacity of readers to 'download', process and then utilize 'information', or systems which immensely speed up and facilitate 'communication', actually fit as well as they appear to do with the kind of arguments against notions of 'information', the 'consumption' of literature, and the 'clear' and 'transparent' conveyance of meaning we have seen at the heart of *Tel Quel* theory. When we remember that in Kristeva and Barthes 'text' and 'intertextuality' are terms meant to highlight a resistance to notions of reading, direct and full communication, and the capitalist exchange or consumption of texts, then 'hypertextuality' can seem less obviously connected to poststructural theory.
>
> (Allen, 2000, p.206)

Whilst this moots an interesting point, and whilst Allen's scepticism is not without foundation - use of the term 'democratization' in relation to knowledge and hypertext has, for example, up to now been rather over-optimistic given the hypertext accessibility issues that have raised themselves so frequently thus far, and poststructuralist theory *has* been a little too zealously plundered and stitched to hypertext by Landow in particular - I would argue that it seems in places based upon some of the popular terminology surrounding computer technology as a whole as well as upon the more general problem of textual 'exchange' within a market economy rather than on a precise consideration of hypertext as a textual medium. It is easy to take a computer-related term like 'download' and argue that the concept of downloading information - of retrieving complete digital 'files' - is entirely alien to poststructuralist notions of the text, which as an irreducible productivity can as little be contained or retrieved from within a downloadable file as a printed book: this much is obvious. Just as alien to the poststructuralist concept of text, and just as obvious for that matter, is reference to the act of 'purchasing' text in the form of a book from a bookshop. The issue really centres around the perceived commodification of the text within a capitalist system rather than on the particular textual medium; 'download' is just another term that spuriously suggests complete textual exchange, like the notion of 'buying' a printed book or, it should be added, a hypertext on CD-ROM. Other soundbites Allen uses, such as clear communication or utilization of information could as easily be applied to text in any medium, though they have become more prevalent in the digital age. They are not, though, solely applicable to hypertext. The point is that the problems Allen connects with hypertext are problems of terminology and economic ideology rather than of textual functionality (and equivalent problematic terminology may be found for and applied to any textual medium that is subject to the rules of the market economy). Again it seems pertinent to make the point that hypertext, as medium, will still be both liable to the general conditions and problems of textuality and, importantly, as open to critique as any other textual medium.

While hypertext does not resolve the problems inherent in treating text as a marketable commodity (and Allen is right to draw attention to this), it can - in

the same way as other forms of text - subvert the capitalist exchange system to some extent through its tendency towards textual productivity (the text no longer being a stable product to be consumed under the normal rules of exchange). Indeed, as has already been pointed out, hypertext as a dynamic textual form can make its productivity - and instability - more explicit than can text in the fixed medium of print. Allen's negative use of the word 'process' with relation to hypertext can in this context be shown to be terminologically dubious: he argues that processing information, which he ties exclusively to encounters of the subject with digital text and seems also to identify with notions of consumption and completion, is another act that is theoretically out of sync with poststructuralism. When we consider the term without such accompanying notions and think instead of Barthes and Kristeva's emphasis on productivity and textual process, however, it can be argued that 'processing' is positively integral to the text's *signifiance* and the 'performance' of both text *and* subject. '[S]ignifiance puts the subject in process/on trial [*en procès*]', Kristeva points out (Kristeva, 1986, p. 91), and Barthes writes:

> 'Signifiance' is a process, in the course of which the 'subject' of the
> text, escaping the logic of the ego-cogito and engaging other logics (that
> of the signifier and that of contradiction), struggles with meaning and is
> deconstructed ('is lost'). 'Signifiance' ... is thus work, not the work by
> which the subject (intact and external) might try to master the language
> (for example the work of style), but that radical work (which leaves
> nothing intact) through which the subject explores how language works
> him and undoes him as soon as he stops observing it and enters it.
> (Barthes, 1981, p. 38)

Text and subject, then, are always (already) 'in process' (the process of the subject will be returned to in Part Two); 'process' is therefore a positive - and poststructuralist - term relevant to text in the media of both print and hypertext. Poststructuralism and hypertext, I would suggest, still have much to offer one another, despite Allen's concerns.

If the text is to be viewed, as Barthes has indicated, as *textured,* as 'a tissue, a woven fabric' (Barthes, 1977, p. 159), its threads may be imagined as reaching out beyond an 'individual' text to all the other texts and signifying codes that constitute it (or are at least at play among it), thus undermining any clear sense of the 'inside' or 'outside' of the text. Although hypertext links cannot reach out to all of these codes, they can still reach from many different points or textual

nodes and - more explicitly than is possible with the printed text - they can illustrate (or fabricate) the condition of the 'voluminous', creeping text, the text that must always exceed or overspill its borders, creeping outwards from the node. Foucault has already described the book as 'a node within a network' (Foucault, 1982, p. 23), and hypertext can go some way to situating the individual text (if we can still refer to such a thing) within a network of linked and intertextual material. This network, though not infinite, is potentially vast: even non-web-based hypertexts may have a facility for the inclusion and creation of links to digital files located either on the user's machine or on a local or remote network or the World Wide Web.

Hypertexts of the axial-based type discussed so far, when linked to other texts of the same type will become part of such a hypertext network, as already observed, but although there may be many possible linked axes to choose from, each axial structure in itself still suggests a dominant line of reading (from beginning to end of that particular textual axis). Although such a linear reading will be disrupted by the presence of links to other material and even to other complete texts this could similarly be argued of a reading in print given an active reader who wishes to pursue some of the text's suggested references or allusions to other books.[69] Axial-based hypertexts, though encouraging and making it easier for the reader to follow up linked references in and from the text, still rely on a basic model of linearity and do not, therefore, take full advantage of hypertext's potential for the spatial or structurally nonlinear organisation of text; the text conceived of and explicitly structured as network.[70] So while axial-

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[69] For a general discussion of differing types of textual nonlinearity, including hypertextual nonlinearity, see Aarseth, 1994.

[70] For a discussion of axial versus network-structured hypertexts, see Landow, 1994, p. 23ff. At their worst, axial-based hypertexts can offer little more than badly annotated versions of traditional texts that do not use hypertext technology in an innovative way and are of scant academic interest, as Joyce has pointed out with reference to the number of axial-based hypertexts that were created with the Hypercard software (a basic application that essentially enabled texts to be annotated with digital reference 'cards'). He writes: 'the ready adaptability of [hypertext] tools to more traditional uses is especially compelling given the technological frosting they so easily spread on stale cake. This disincentive to change is in no way novel, either in the long history of cardinal technologies or, especially, in the short history of microcomputers in education. The adaptability of Hypercard, for instance, makes it easy to "author" educational software that merely redistributes the command lines of the worst kinds of supposedly interactive, "drills and skills," CAI software into gaily embossed buttons and peekaboo card fields. Like the Applesoft Basic revolution in educational software that preceded it and that it

structured hypertexts are interesting enough in that they can be seen to provide a workspace (or playground) for text that is relevant to poststructuralism, it is network-structured hypertexts that have most to offer in terms of narrative theory.

With network-structured hypertexts, text is separated into discrete and fragmentary units known in hypertext parlance and following Roland Barthes's use of the term in *S/Z*, as *lexias*. Barthes writes:

> The lexia will include sometimes a few words, sometimes several sentences ... The lexia is only the wrapping of a semantic volume, the crest line of the plural text, arranged like a berm of possible (but controlled, attested to by a systematic reading) meanings under the flux of discourse: the lexia and its units will thereby form a kind of polyhedron faceted by the word, the group of words, the sentence or the paragraph, i.e., with the language which is its "natural" excipient.
>   (Barthes, 1990, p. 13-14)

These lexias, or many-faceted polyhedrons, may then be arranged or conjoined by the reader of the hypertext in a multiplicity of ways, in a similar manner to the reader's organising of the textual 'fragments' of *The Unfortunates*. It is this possibility for textual manipulation - for the text to be arranged differently with each reading - which, hand in hand with the hypertext link, make hypertext a truly dynamic form and constitute its difference from the fixed form of print. Hypertext does not - as some seem to fear - displace (replace or usurp) writing as we know it, writing as it has been *manifested* in print (since print is only a manifestation of Derrida's broad definition of writing), it simply permits hypertextual writing, a form of writing that can be based around the model of the network rather than that of the line. Barthes's idea of the word as facet can be easily apprehended in hypertext where words are themselves links to other lexias or material, offering multiple nodes or points of textual contact. In Storyspace hypertexts, for example, any word or phrase within a given lexia may 'yield', giving way to another lexia or textual space when the mouse is clicked or dragged over that word. A single lexia may contain many words that yield,

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so clearly resembles, the Hypercard revolution requires us to rely upon skeptical eyes, keep a shrewd ear open to word-of-mouth (or word-of-network) advice, and exercise a cool hand (and quick delete finger) in choosing among a burgeoning list of titles' (Joyce, 1996a, p. 40-41). Such technological 'over-promising,' Joyce argues, 'threatens the credibility and creativity of innovators, who find themselves having to disaffiliate and differentiate before they can discover' (*ibid.*, p. 41).

enabling the reader to read the linked lexias in many different combinations; conversely, a lexia may contain no yielding words in which case the reader must press the return key to view the next lexia. Although this may suggest that the hypertext could be read linearly, simply by pressing return all the way through the text to 'the end', most hypertexts in practice will bring readers to some sort of textual impasse if they press return more than a few times - either leading the reader back to a start page or leading them in a textual circle - necessitating the reader's active pursuit of alternative textual paths. The reading of a network-structured hypertext, then, can never be a singularly linear activity.

Just as with the sections of *The Unfortunates*, though, each lexia will have its own internal linearity: since language itself is an inherently linear vehicle of signification, subject to 'the celebrated *linearity* of the linguistic signifier' as observed by Genette (1980, p. 34, quoted in the preceding chapter) and bemoaned by Borges's narrator in 'The Aleph', it can represent ideas only by stringing them out, word by word, in a line. In order then for a text to be totally nonlinear, words would need to be able to be arranged completely randomly (tantamount to the picking of words out of a hat), most likely resulting in an accompanying loss of semantic relevance. Unlike images, which signify independently, words depend on their contiguous relationship to other words in order to garner significance. While lexias with multiple yielding words or nodes may subvert their own internal linearity by offering escape routes via the link, following links from yielding words without fully reading the sentences or paragraphs that contain them would result in a fairly meaningless reading experience. For this reason it is useful to consider hypertext not as a textual form permitting complete nonlinearity but as one facilitating multi-linearity (a term preferred by Landow), a multiplicity of possible textual combinations, with each textual component or lexia being subject to its own internal and linear logic.[71] Hypertext, like all other forms of text, will also rely upon the time it

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[71] This consideration is by now fairly commonplace. Liestøl confirms Landow's adoption of the term 'multi-linearity' and comments: 'Multilinearity or -sequentiality are not pure negations of line and sequence but designate complex structures of various kinds and occurrences of linearities or, rather, multiplication of linearities. *Nonlinear*, on the other hand, is an empty term in the discourse on hypermedia that only shows how preoccupied writers on the subject have been with defining hypermedia in opposition to traditional media' (Liestøl, 1994, p. 110). This seems to me an overstatement of the case: the term

takes to traverse the lexia that constitute it: this traversal time or what Liestøl

calls the time of the 'discourse-as-discoursed' is also temporally linear as noted

in the previous chapter (Liestøl, 1994, p. 96).[72] Nevertheless, the possibilities for

arranging and rearranging hypertextual lexias will of course enable hypertexts to

manipulate story-time in ways more intricate than is possible with print, leading

Bolter to comment that: 'The traditional printed novel molds time as a

traditional sculpture molds the space it occupies, creating a complex but

unchanging effect. The electronic text manipulates time as a piece of kinetic

sculpture manipulates space' (Bolter, 1991, p. 161). The linear traversal time of

the discourse-as-discoursed may also itself be arrested by the inclusion in the

hypertext of other forms of digital signs: hypermedia elements like image, video

or audio data, or even kinetic text.[73] Though the image may function similarly to

disrupt linearity within conventional text as discussed in Chapter 1, images have

been largely marginalised by the limitations of print technology (Alasdair Gray's

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nonlinear, when applied to narrative, does not necessarily invoke thoughts of a random
assemblage of words. I would suggest that it simply implies a narrative that does not
proceed in a single or chronological sequence, and is not therefore the empty or
redundant term Liestøl supposes.

[72] The term 'discourse-as-discoursed' is specific to hypertext, a further addition to the
levels of story-time and discourse (or narrative)-time as explained by Genette. Liestøl
writes: 'With hypertext and hypermedia something new is added to the story-discourse
dichotomy. A third level, or a third line is introduced that may be called the discoursed
text or *discourse-as-discoursed* – the actual use and reading of the digitally stored text.
It is, in other words, the creation of a path based on the selection and combination of
elements existing in a spatial and nonlinear arrangement of nodes [lexias] and links. The
chronology of the story line may remain intact depending to a certain extent on
fictiveness in the text. The discourse line, however, divides into two levels: the
discourse as a nonlinear text stored in space and the discourse as discoursed, as actually
read' (Liestøl, 1994, p. 96-97).

[73] While both video and audio would seem, on the face of it, to be temporally linear
media, Liestøl has pointed out that this need not always be the case, drawing attention
to, for instance, the type of bidirectional video often used to digitally represent objects
or panoramic landscapes onscreen (QTVR movies where the user can 'pan' around the
object or landscape, for example). See Liestøl, 1994, p. 109ff. for further discussion.
Regarding the inclusion of sound in hypertexts, he writes: 'Along the syntagmatic
message or discourse line, melody is linear because displayed over time. Harmony
appears when several voices (polyphony) at the same time make up parallel lines. In
hypermedia the simultaneity found in harmony appears when sound is displayed parallel
to text, video, or both. These elements form constellations of parallel linearity' (*ibid.*,
p. 110). This fugal quality of hypertext will be discussed again shortly with relation to
different layers of text. Such parallel lines of text and sound as Liestøl describes may be
experienced in the *Sunshine '69* web, where readers may choose a 'soundtrack' to
coincide with their reading (see www.sunshine69.com/69_8_track.html). Rob Swigart's
hyperfiction *Down Time* also accompanies the text with sound data, while Donna
Leishman's work (see www.6amhoover.com for examples) merges music and audio data
with still and moving images, creating narrative structures that are largely non-verbal.

profusely illustrated texts standing out as exceptions to the general rule). With hypertext, however, it is as easy to include images as text since both are to the computer simply binary arrangements of information; they are, as Richard Lanham has pointed out, digitally equivalent (see Lanham, 1988, p. 273).[74] Hypertextual writing, rather than being a written form admitting writing in only its narrow sense of verbal inscription (as is so often the case with writing in print), readily incorporates other, non-verbal forms of writing.

It should by now be apparent that hypertexts based on a network model provide an apt ground or textual space wherein to explore some of the theoretical concerns relating to narrative that have been expressed in print and debated in the preceding chapter. Since the lexias in a networked hypertext can be combined to create a number of textual variations, the narratives they engender will be discontinuous and fragmentary rather than continuous and unified and so will undermine any notion of a single and authoritative text or version of events. No single narrative account or path will then be privileged, allowed to dominate at the expense of others. Landow writes, 'hypertext does not permit a tyrannical, univocal voice. Rather the voice is always that distilled from the combined experience of the momentary focus, the lexia one presently reads, and the continually forming narrative of one's reading path' (Landow, 1992, p. 11). In terms of historical narratives, a hypertext may include many versions of events, many dissenting voices, organised into different narrative strands or lexias; a hypertext is not a structure of exclusion in the way that a singular linear narrative is, as Bolter explains:

> Instead of one linear argument, the hypertext can present many, possibly
> conflicting arguments. A hypertext on the fall of the Roman empire
> might include several explanations without seeking either to combine or
> to reconcile them. Instead of confronting a single narrative, the reader
> would then move back and forth among several narratives, each
> embodying one of the explanations.
>   (Bolter, 1991, p. 117)

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[74] Although inclusion of such hypermedia elements is not without practical limit since non-textual data takes up a larger amount of disk space than does text. Hypertexts on CD-ROM will therefore be restricted in terms of how much non-textual data they can include, while hypertexts available either to download from the Web or to view online must be sized accordingly, to avoid lengthy download or display times for the reader (though this may be less of a problem in future as internet bandwidths increase).

As already discussed in terms of linked data, however, it could be argued that explanations or arguments *not* included or given voice within the hypertextual network might become even more marginalised than they would be from a linear, printed text, since the hypertext may present itself and may be viewed as all-inclusive, incorporating all forms of discourse (and thus being completely democratic). This charge (of exclusiveness in the guise of inclusiveness) does have some validity, as already pointed out (and see Landow, 1992, pp. 177 and 182ff for his defence). Landow raises the question, 'Does hypertext, in a manner analogous to critical pluralism in literary theory, appropriate threatening political positions? Does it, in particular, enforce dialogue (on its own terms) and thereby exclude extremist positions?' (Landow, 1992, p. 182). His refutation of the charge rests with what he calls 'the presence of the (politically) responsible, active reader: because the reader chooses his or her own reading paths, the responsibility lies with the reader. In linking and following links lie responsibility - political responsibility - since each reader establishes his or her own line of reading' (*ibid.*, p. 184). Landow is responding in particular to the critique of critical pluralism in Ellen Rooney's book *Seductive Reasoning* and continues:

> This conception of the reader's political responsibility matches Rooney's description of an active, constructionist reader who takes responsibility for what she reads. Rooney herself credits Althusser with recognizing that "Marx founds a radical theory and practice of reading by refusing the ideology of 'innocent' *reading* which makes a written discourse the immediate transparency of the true, and the real discourse of a voice" (44). So, one may add, do hypertext systems.
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> (Landow, 1992, p. 184-185)

This is, in my opinion, something of a fudged response on Landow's part (leaving the reader holding the hot potato of 'responsibility'), for the degree of responsibility that may come to rest with the reader depends entirely upon the degree of freedom the reader has in 'linking and following links.' In some hypertext systems, certainly (such as Storyspace, if the full version of the software is accessible), the reader has the power to create new sets of links, and in these cases the reader may responsibly choose to link to a previously excluded discourse. The reader may, however, be using software (such as the Storyspace Reader) that does not afford him or her this privilege, and many hypertexts simply do not allow the reader to modify the text at all. In these cases the reader's responsibility may extend only as far as the pre-determined set of links

contained within the hypertext system s/he is traversing. Landow's argument, then, tends towards the most Utopian vision and application of hypertext - a hypertext where the reader has complete control over what is being read and linked to - and not necessarily to most practical instances of the technology. I do think he is on to something, however, with his appreciation of Rooney's Marxist argument of refusing an 'innocent' reading; this is simply the task of the reader in any medium, to be alert to the opacity of language and discourse and to guard against what Catherine Belsey refers to as 'the tyranny of lucidity': those forms of discourse that purport to be transparent, a clear window through which the 'truth' may be viewed (Belsey, 1980, p. 4). Landow is also right to point out that hypertext is particularly resistant to 'innocent' reading: hypertext, because it can admit many different arguments or explanations that can be arranged and rearranged by the reader (even augmented or deleted by a reader with the requisite access privileges), naturally highlights the insufficiency of any single line of reasoning; the suggestion of alternatives in itself perhaps suggests the existence of further arguments. I would argue, then, that the notion of reader responsibility must be extended beyond the responsibility of choosing between the number of given alternatives within a particular hypertext network to involve a recognition that further, equally valid alternative arguments, also deserving of attention, can exist outwith that network, even if they cannot be explicitly linked to from it. Once again it would seem that the reader is left with the potato. Except that I would also suggest that there exists a responsibility on the part of the hypertext network - that is to say on the part of the creators or authors of the hypertext network - not to present the network as all-inclusive, as entirely self-contained and self-sufficient. Hypertexts can still include references and allusions to arguments and information that are not explicitly linked to, to information that lies 'outside' or beyond the network, in the real world arena of books, libraries and other media that would encourage an interested and active reader to engage in further research. The responsibility, therefore, for hypertext readers and writers alike, lies in recognising that although the network can represent difference (and may be a more suitable medium for doing so than is printbound text) it can never contain it.[75]

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[75] This notion of shared responsibility is one that has also been put forward by Allen. He

Singular accounts of history, as described in Chapter 1, are arguably in danger of arresting discourse, of resulting in a stasis like that experienced in *A History Maker,* since they attempt to deny difference (or at least to contain or homogenise it, to explain it away within a singular linear argument). Multiple narratives on the other hand, such as hypertext networks permit, fall into line with the postmodern assertion of variety and multiplicity, of dynamic discourse, this variety and dynamism (which is also relevant to the poststructuralist concept of textual productivity) being positively vital: necessary as well as life-sustaining and enriching.[76] The hypertext can then be viewed as a texture of possibility, what Michael Joyce has described as 'a present tense palimpsest where what shines through are not past versions but potential, alternate views' (Joyce, 1996a, p. 3). The notion of the hypertextual space as palimpsest can also be compared with the metaphor of the textual theatre put forward by Sollers: hypertext creates a spatial matrix or stage – a *mise en scène* in the theatrical as well as spatial sense – wherein differing texts, created through the varying arrangements of lexias can be seen to perform, and where each performance necessarily bears the palimpsestic trace of simultaneous but presently absent others. Derrida's comments on Sollers's *Numbers* in *Dissemination* seem particularly potent:

> The thickness of the text thus opens upon the beyond of a whole, the
> nothing or the absolute outside, through which its depth is at once null
> and infinite – infinite in that each of its layers harbors another layer. The
> act of reading is thus analogous to those X rays that uncover, concealed

asks: 'Can hypertext incorporate the differences between gendered or nationally or racially specific languages, or between other social classes or other minority dialects and points of view? Can it produce the kind of double-voiced discourse described within feminist and postcolonial criticism? or the kind of resistance to dominant discourse described within poststructuralist theory?,' and suggests that, 'If the answers hypertextuality provides prove to be negative, it will not be the fault of the new digitalized computing technology itself. Rather, the fault will lie in the producers, designers, programmers, authors and readers of that new medium' (Allen, 2000, p.206-208).

[76] Landow usefully points to Richard Rorty's concept of 'edifying discourse' as outlined in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature,* a philosophy that 'aims at continuing a conversation rather than at discovering truth,' thereby avoiding stasis (Rorty, 1980, p. 373). Landow argues that, 'Hypertext ... embodies the approach to philosophy that Rorty urges,' for it does not attempt to 'close off conversation' by confining it to a single explanatory narrative (Landow, 1992, p. 70). Such arresting of discourse would, in Rorty's view, result in the 'freezing-over of culture' and 'the dehumanization of human beings' (Rorty, 1980, p. 377). See Landow, 1992, p. 70 and Rorty, 1980, especially p. 357ff for further discussion.

> beneath the epidermis of one painting, a second painting: painted by the
> same painter or by another, it makes little difference, who would
> himself, for lack of materials or in search of some new effect, have used
> the substance of an old canvas or preserved the fragment of a first
> sketch. And beneath *that* etc. ... All this requires that you take into
> account the fact that, in scratching upon this textual matter, which here
> seems to be made of spoken or written words, you often recognize the
> description of a painting removed from its frame, framed differently,
> broken into, remounted in another quadrilateral which is in turn, on one
> of its sides, fractured.
> The entire verbal tissue is caught in this, and you along with it. You
> are painting, you are writing while reading, you are inside the painting.
> <div align="right">(Derrida, 1981, p. 357)</div>

While Derrida is here specifically referring to the four square arrangement of the text of *Numbers* and its resistance to or subversion of the conventional format of print, the fragmentary lexias of hypertext may similarly be considered to remove the text from the rigid frame that the book form traditionally provides.[77] The textual space has been renegotiated - redrawn - by such writing as matrix or network, and the reader, too, is always implicated in the creative or performative process.

As already observed, rather than there being an absence of sequential narrative in the digital medium, hypertext will instead give rise to many small narrative sequences: 'little narratives' representing difference in discourse. Jonathan Coe referred to B.S. Johnson's novel *House Mother Normal* as being

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[77] Derrida's analogy of the text that tries to free itself from or 'fractures' the rigid framework of the book and the painting removed from its frame returns to his preoccupations with *parerga* - the elements that are neither clearly inside nor outside the text but which serve to 'frame' and support it - and to the observations made earlier about the conventional role of a book's paratext. The paratext traditionally 'enframes' the text, presenting and constituting it as a book; a book without paratext or *parergon* is like a painting without a frame (see footnote 33). While Sollers's text cannot altogether dispense with its framing devices - it still after all takes the form of a printed book, in spite of the proclamations on its cover to the contrary - it can nevertheless fret against them and bring their ambiguous position into relief; the shifting text requires that its 'frame', as part of the textual space (inside and outside at the same time), is consistently being remade. Derrida writes: 'Thanks to the incessant movement of this substitution of contents, it appears that the painting's border is not that through which something will have been shown, represented, described, displayed. A frame *was*, and assembles and dismantles itself, that's all. Without even showing itself, as it is, in the con-sequence of those substitutions, it forms itself and transforms itself' (Derrida, 1981, p. 357). Hypertext can highlight the ambivalence of the paratext further: to begin with, in hypertext the text cannot be objectified or made present by the paratext in the same tangible way as with print since the hypertext has only a virtual presence onscreen. This virtuality, along with the constantly shifting and yielding text in the hypertextual reading and writing space, will resist any attempt to 'frame', confine or stabilise the text. The function of hypertextual paratexts will be looked at again a little later in the chapter.

'richly polyphonic, fugal' on account of its paralleling of discourses on a spatial as well as temporal level (Coe, 2004, p. 24; see also footnote 17) and the same term has been used by Lanham with reference to the capabilities of hypertext, where it seems signally appropriate: 'Hypertexts are, in more than a manner of speaking, three-dimensional. Fuguelike, they can carry on an argument at several levels simultaneously. And if we cannot read them exactly simultaneously, we can switch back and forth with great rapidity' (Lanham, 1988, p. 283). In a similar way to *House Mother Normal*, Arellano's hyperfiction *Sunshine '69* also presents its story from the perspectives of several (fictional and 'non-fictional') characters involved with the events at Altamont, only the alternative perspectives in *Sunshine '69* exist simultaneously and are complexly linked together rather than being divulged one after the other in a linear sequence. Their spatial relationship to one another is thus made explicit: it is performed in the network rather than represented on the page. 'Jump into Norm's head,' the reader is urged. 'Take a spin with Orange Sunshine. Hang with the Glimmer Twins. If, as Tim occasionally prescribes, you ever need a change of set, don't panic, just rub the people button at the bottom of the page' (www.sunshine69.com/69_Suits.html). *Sunshine '69* is a network-structured hypertext, so its narrative is fragmented, but readers can choose to follow story fragments based around the contents of each character's pockets. Every character carries a pocket watch so that their actions may be mapped to a particular time and to the actions surrounding the other characters. Like the musical fugue, the narrative structure though fragmentary is intricately patterned; it is not random, and it still manages to tell the story, though not in a conventionally linear way.[78]

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[78] Diane Greco comments of *Sunshine '69* that: 'The story's greatest appeal lies in how it works, not by a driving plot, but by accretion. As the timeline and the calendar show, history itself - not the Big History of the historians, really, but the little-h history of quotidian accretion, the accumulated detritus of ordinary events - carries the burden of moving the story forward, replacing a mechanism of plot with an ordering that simulates "real time," "lived time," one day at a time. So the reader filters and sorts, organizes and backtracks, and eventually comes away with an understanding of the complexity involved in any project, historical or otherwise, of telling the truth by telling a story' (Greco, 1999, www.virtualwriter.net/technology.php). The concern that narrative representations – stories – be as 'truthful' to life as they can be has already been expressed by B.S. Johnson and discussed in the previous chapter; Greco does not here suggest that hypertextual stories will tell the truth instead of 'telling lies', as Johnson

Lanham, talking of the hypertextual fugue, goes on to ask whether we 'mustn't ... avail ourselves of the nomenclature of musical arrangement to find terms adequate to this fugal, but at the same time totally literary, occasion?' (Lanham, 1988, p. 283): Barthes's term 'stereophony' as well as the descriptions 'polyphonic' and 'multivocal' that Bakhtin has used to refer to the type of dialogic discourse he advocates would seem to offer some such terminological possibilities,[79] although again Graham Allen wisely urges caution, warning (with justification) against the type of over-optimism Landow displays in harnessing Bakhtinian terminology to hypertext.

> Landow's references to Bakhtin are ... at times more questionable than they might appear. We can see this most clearly when we remind ourselves, as Landow does near the conclusion of his *Hypertext*, that not all members of society are currently able to deploy the new computer technology. ... In discussing the issue of access Landow makes two central points. Using historical examples, he argues that it is never possible to determine whether a new technology will be a force for democratization or will merely shore up existing power groups, or even create new dominant classes and groups. He then argues, contradicting his first point, that the new 'information technology' will necessarily produce an increase in 'democratization' (*ibid.*: 174). ... Democracy, for Bakhtin and the theories of intertextuality he helped to inspire, stems from the release of plurality and multivocality, the dialogic and hybrid play of different languages, dialects, registers and/or speech genres. It remains open to question whether hypertextuality will incorporate such a dialogic play of voices and languages or will in fact be a medium through which monologism exerts its centripetal force in society.
>
> (Allen, 2000, p. 206-207)

Open to question certainly, though it might be observed that hypertext in facilitating *multiple and simultaneous* levels or lines of discourse can more easily represent (or perform) the fugue than can printed text, which remains bound to the linear form. If linear histories are structures of exclusion it has also been argued that simply narrating the history of the excluded - in the way that some of the texts considered in Chapter 1, including *Poor Things*, offer double narratives to give voice to those conventionally silenced by singular written

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remarked of narrative (quoted in Coe, 2004, p. 5), but rather that they can illustrate, through their own structural complexity and fragmentation, the difficulties inherent in attempting to relate any form of lived experience through words and narrative.
[79] See for example Barthes, 1977, p. 160 and Bakhtin, 1973, pp.4, 226 (and elsewhere) where he writes of the 'polyphony,' 'multivoicedness' and 'varivoicedness' of Dostoevsky's novels.

'histories' - merely replicates such an exclusive structure. Mark Currie comments that:

> For Derrida, Foucault's New Historical writing is a sample of the structure of exclusion from which it seeks to distinguish itself both in the appeal to a historical moment which is the origin of exclusion and in the way that the history of madness merely reproduces the metaphysics of a linear history for the excluded: it gives the privilege of representation to the deprived and therefore upturns the power relation without changing the way that history is written. ... Here again it is the pragmatic contradiction that if one opposes a particular strategy one cannot continue to use it oneself. To do so is like taking money from the rich and giving it to the poor without addressing the principle of inequality. This dichotomy can be expressed in historiographic terms: that it is not enough to oppose the positivistic assumptions of history by writing a positivist history of the oppressed - it is the traditional practices of historical writing themselves which operate as ideological containment.
>
> (Currie, 1998, p. 86)

The problem that Currie draws attention to is, as we have seen, partly one of linguistic representation itself, which must to some extent always be linear in that it can only represent ideas by stringing them out word by word. Language is not inherently singular, however, and the play of words may tell more than one story, which is Derrida's point in critiquing New Historicism, which simply attempts to tell 'other' stories without employing writing in a different way from that which rendered them 'other' in the first place. New Historicist writing, in Derrida's opinion, fails to recognise that language, or the text, is already inevitably plural, inevitably 'other'. Hypertextual writing on the other hand potentially resists New Historicism's dependence on both singularity (by offering multiple stories fragmentarily, with many possible combinations) and linearity (by offering them simultaneously). Hypertext, it can be argued, with its dynamic and impermanent structure provides an ideal medium for the type of storytelling encouraged by Kristeva in her 'Toccata and Fugue for the Foreigner', a storytelling that may preserve the semiotic 'otherness' of discourse in the discourse of the thetic 'Other' without forcing or reducing it into a single, unified narrative. Associating this sense of linguistic estrangement with the estrangement of the foreigner, she writes:

> Let us not seek to solidify, to turn the otherness of the foreigner into a thing. Let us merely touch it, brush by it, without giving it a permanent structure. Simply sketching out its perpetual motion through some of its variegated aspects spread out before our eyes today, through some of its former, changing representations scattered through history. Let us also

> lighten that otherness by constantly coming back to it – but more and
> more swiftly. Let us escape its hatred, its burden, fleeing them not
> through leveling [sic] and forgetting, but through the *harmonious*
> repetition of the differences it implies and spreads. *Toccatas and Fugues*:
> Bach's compositions evoke to my ears the meaning of an acknowledged
> and harrowing otherness that I should like to be contemporary, *because*
> it has been brought up, relieved, disseminated, inscribed in an original
> play being developed, without goal, without boundary, without end. An
> otherness barely touched upon and that already moves away.
>
> (Kristeva, 1981, p. 3)

In addition to its fugal disposition, Lanham also refers to the three-dimensional quality of hypertext, which arises from the capacity to structure information spatially as well as temporally in the digital medium; a network is of course a three-dimensional concept. The network can only be represented two-dimensionally, however, by the textual lexias on the flat computer screen; the reader cannot 'move around' the lexias as s/he could by walking around a three-dimensional object like a sculpture, for example. The reader can, though, 'move around' the lexias in the sense that the lexias can be moved and arranged onscreen; the onscreen representation of the network therefore allows a far greater degree of spatial fragmentation - Derrida's 'spatial *mise en scène*' - and requires a higher degree of spatial awareness and engagement on the part of the reader than does conventional printed text. Bolter comments:

> The electronic reader is encouraged to think of the text as a collection of
> interrelated units floating in a space of at least two dimensions. The
> reader's movement among units does not require flipping pages or
> consulting the table of contents: instead the reader passes instantly and
> effortlessly from one place to another.
>
> (Bolter, 1991, p. 160)

With many hypertexts in practice, however (and certainly with all Storyspace hypertexts), only one lexia may be viewed at a time. In the case of most web-based hypertexts the text of a linked lexia simply replaces that of the original or linking lexia within the current browser window, while in Storyspace clicking a link to another lexia closes the current window before opening the new one rather than keeping each window open, which would enable lexias to be arranged side by side and compared in a way similar to the textual columns in *Glas* (though opening new windows for every single lexia is obviously hugely impractical in terms of the demands it would place on the computer's operating system: opening new windows is a memory intensive process). To circumvent this

Storyspace offers a separate overview or map window (this forming part of the hypertextual paratext) wherein the spatial and semantic relations between lexias may be viewed (see Fig. 2.1).
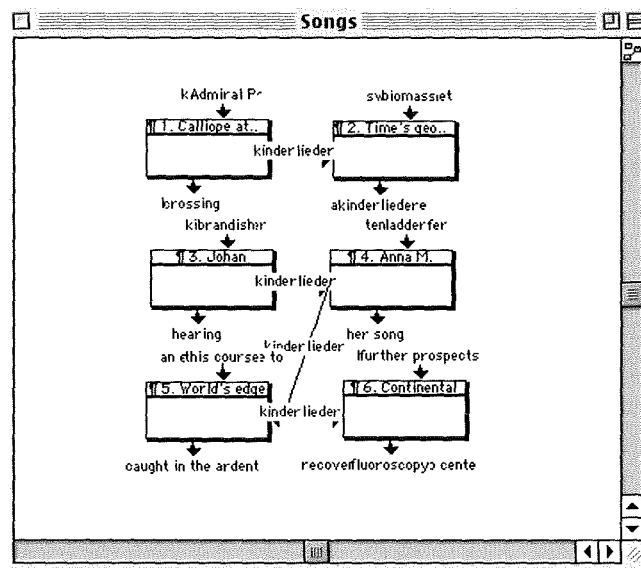

Fig. 2.1. Storyspace map view from Michael Joyce's hyperfiction *Twilight: A Symphony*

Correspondences between different lexias in the network can thus still be fairly easily compared and connected and textual patterns may be seen to emerge through such a spatial appreciation of the text, leading Robert Coover in his article 'Literary Hypertext: The Passing Of The Golden Age' to suggest that 'the most radical and distinctive literary contribution of the computer has been the multilinear hypertextual webwork of text spaces, or, as one might say, the intimate layering and fusion of imagined spatiality and temporality' (Coover, 1999). The visible structure of such hypertexts, Bolter has argued, encourages writing that is 'topographic' (Bolter, 1991, p. 25): spatially rather than simply temporally envisaged and with emphasis on a text's architecture as well as its content. The writer must therefore come to think of his or her text in new ways:

> The elements of the text are no longer fragments of a prior whole, but instead form a space of shifting possibilities. In this shifting electronic space, writers will need a new concept of structure. In place of a closed and unitary structure, they must learn to conceive of their text as a structure of possible structures.
>
> (Bolter, 1991, p. 144)

The attention that the visible network structure of a hypertext brings to bear upon the constructedness or artifice of the text has implications too for the reader who engages with it (a point that will be expanded upon in the following chapter).

The spatial organisation of material in a network-structured hypertext also brings us back to the notion of the hypertext network as analogous to the human mind as observed in Chapter 1. That the processes of the human brain in storing, retrieving and associating information are poorly represented by the two-dimensional practice of writing and reading text in the linear-hierarchical form of print has long been suspected. Vannevar Bush in his seminal article *As We May Think*, first published in 1945, wrote that 'The human mind does not work that way. It operates by association. With one item in its grasp, it snaps instantly to the next that is suggested by the association of thoughts, in accordance with some intricate web of trails carried by the cells of the brain' (Bush, 1945, p. 40-41).[80] While Proust's narrative in *Á la recherche du temps perdu* attempts to articulate the convolutions of memory, it can do so only temporally within the restrictions of the printbound form, and not spatially, 'as we may think' or as we retrieve or recollect information from our neural networks (though, it should be added, the temporal unfolding of memories provides the very essence of Proust's novel, conceived as it was particularly *for* the printed form: it manipulates the limitations of print to achieve its complex temporal effect).[81] Coover writes of hypertext that it offers 'the tantalizing new possibility of laying out a story spatially instead of linearly, inviting the reader to explore it as one might explore one's memory or wander a many-pathed geographical terrain' (Coover, 1999). Readers and writers in the electronic medium, he suggests, are now able 'to read and write in the way that we think, creating and/or accessing the various elements of a narrative the way one accesses the fragments of one's life

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[80] Bush also anticipated a means of storing information in a linked network – the 'memex' machine - long before the digital computer made the process a ready possibility.
[81] Bolter maintains that the printed form means writers have to 'force' their thoughts into a linear narrative, which is not the way the mind works, and so although hypertext may seem to be a technologically 'difficult' writing form, he argues that it is actually *conceptually* easier to work with than print. See Bolter, 1991, p. 146.

story held in memory' (*ibid.*).[82] Whether or not digital networks really do implement the structure of the human brain is a matter for scientific debate; hypertext can in any case enable some of our preoccupations about how we as humans read, learn and use information to be explored among the textual structure and space of the network.[83]

Again the term Random Access Memory is called to mind (a fitting phrase) and seems especially appropriate, applicable to both mind and medium. Luca Toschi alludes to this when he comments that:

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[82] William Paulson, in an interesting article 'Computers, Minds, and Texts: Preliminary Reflections', suggests that rather than the digital computer being considered as replicating the network structure of the mind, our very notions of the way the mind works are instead more likely to be constructed on the basis of the computer model, just as in the past the mind has been metaphorically associated with other writing media and technologies. He points out that: 'For Plato and Aristotle, memory and mind could be compared to a wax tablet, a medium of writing. The *tabula rasa* was to be a standard figure of philosophy until at least Locke, who compared the mind prior to experience to "white paper, void of all characters." ... The digital computer is now our privileged model of organization ... [it] has given new force and legitimacy to La Mettrie's program of describing mind as a strictly physical system of processes. The modern discipline of artificial intelligence (AI) works to construct such a system, and neuroscientists are beginning to use computer analogies as they try to understand the brain as a system of neurons. In place of the mind as text or machine, we theorize the mind as supercomputer' (Paulson, 1988, pp. 291-293). Berkeley cognitive scientist George Lakoff, in an interview with John Brockman to discuss his book *Philosophy in the Flesh* (coauthored with Mark Johnson) agrees that: 'When you start to study the brain and body scientifically, you inevitably wind up using metaphors. Metaphors for the mind, as you say, have evolved over time - from machines to switchboards to computers. There's no avoiding metaphor in science' (www.edge.org/3rd_culture/lakoff/lakoff_p2.html). Lakoff also provides a sound warning: 'But no matter how ubiquitous a metaphor may be, it is important to keep track of what it hides and what it introduces. If you don't, the body does disappear. We're careful about our metaphors, as most scientists should be' (*ibid.*). The metaphor of the mind as network then, and the seemingly direct and analogous relationship between the neural and the digital network, should also be considered with some caution and with an awareness that the mind may be being conceptually inscribed and constructed as network rather than vice versa.

[83] Though I do not wish to implicate hypertext as a purely expressionist form, mirroring thoughts with words, as Bolter seems to suggest. He writes: 'The computer speeds the writing process itself, as the writer moves quickly between verbal ideas and their visual expression on the computer screen. The network of ideas in the author's mind merges with their expression in the computer, and this structure in turn merges with the network of all texts stored in this or other connected machines. It is as if the computer could dissolve Plato's distinction between internal and external memory - the distinction that is fundamental to all writing' (Bolter, 1991, p. 216). Although the structure of the hypertext network may seem to more accurately represent the structure of the mind than does the printed page, the contents of the mind - its thoughts - are still (always already) being mediated and transformed by the written word, which will consistently scuttle any expressionist attempt.

> the computer ... is attempting, and succeeding, in a way which simply has not been possible with the tools at our disposal until today, to reproduce physically the virtuality of the human mind. The computer can therefore ... force us to materialize the network of relationships that we are accustomed to holding in the privacy of our imaginations. To make explicit, through simulation, a possible text, without necessarily eliminating the possibility of the survival of large areas which for the moment we do not feel it is correct to restore, and which therefore can in the future perhaps be dealt with differently, and to read this simulation without starting each time from scratch, will provide a new and valuable way of analyzing a text.
>
> (Toschi, 1996, p.202-203)

Such postponement in the restoration of areas of the textual network as described by Toschi is akin to Jock McLeish's postponement of aspects of his memory in *1982 Janine*; the boxes in his mind labelled 'Never to be thought about; Useless to go into further; Contents unexamined' and suchlike (*1982 Janine*, epigraph). On the other hand, the 'delicious fragments' of information that Jock hoped would 'float to the surface' of his mind could equally easily be imagined floating to the screen surface of a hypertextual network (*1982 Janine*, p. 69). This is emphatically not to suggest that *1982 Janine*, or indeed any other of Gray's texts, would be better as a hypertext than as a printed book: *1982 Janine*, like *Á la recherche du temps perdu* was written for the printed medium and works well *as a book*, and as pointed out in the preceding chapter Gray goes out of his way to ensure that his texts endure as books, as tangible artistic objects. The point here is simply that hypertext can be seen to provide a relevant textual space wherein ideas such as those dealt with by Gray in his printed fiction may be usefully addressed; the ideas migrate easily to the electronic medium. Hypertext as a naturally fragmentary textual form is particularly suited to representing the fragmented, certainly non-chronological nature of memory as dealt with in texts like *1982 Janine*, *Á la recherche du temps perdu* and *The Unfortunates*; memory which, as Genette writes, 'reduces (diachronic) periods to (synchronic) epochs and events to pictures - epochs and pictures that memory arranges in an order not theirs, but its own' (Genette, 1980, p. 156). Barthes, in 'The Theory of the Text,' writes of the 'safe-guarding functions' of written text, of 'the stability and permanence of inscription, designed to correct the fragility and imprecision of the memory' (Barthes, 1981,

p. 32). Hypertext, rather than offering a stable 'corrective' for the memory's fragility and imprecision, works instead to preserve it textually.[84]

Memories in the neural network, like narrative paths in the hypertext network and like the *imago mundi* offered by the Aleph, are simultaneously co-present: they exist *at once* within the mind, though they may only be narrated sequentially in words, as they are by Jock McLeish, by the narrator of *The Unfortunates* and by Proust's Marcel.[85] Similarly, as Lanham has recognised above, although differing narratives or levels of discourse exist simultaneously as possibilities within the hypertextual network, they can never actually be read simultaneously: only one may be followed at a time due to the inherently sequential nature of text already described. Nonetheless, the reader's choosing of one particular narrative path will only privilege that path temporarily: it assumes the status of primary or central path by chance and only for as long as the reader chooses. Rather than the textual hierarchy being determined as in print either by the status relationships between different parts of the text (between the 'main' text and footnote or marginal text, for example) or simply by the hierarchy of succession that the linear form of a printbound text imposes,

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[84] Joel Weishaus's web hypertext *Inside the Skull House* is explicitly concerned with attempting to plot (topographically) the geography and some of the contents of the human brain through the temporal and spatial arrangement of narrative, suggesting the suitability of the hypertextual form for representing textually what B.S. Johnson attempted to depict in *House Mother Normal*: 'a diagram of certain aspects of the inside of [a] skull' (*House Mother Normal*, p. 204). Weishaus's hypertext tells us: 'Inside the Skull-House is a journey cast in the epic mode. Brain, its hero(ine), is perhaps the most complex and elegant achievement of this universe. Brain's quest to unravel the chemistry of its circuits and the mystery of their projections, including the "hard problem" of consciousness, adds humor to the science, and relief that my path is not pathology, but metaphor, mythology, etymology, hierology, and devices of electracy.

Because it draws upon the singular experiences that cause its topography to be unique, Brain is outfitted in the first person, while its journey is both modular and interdependent. ... In its quest to understand itself, Brain is set adrift on a stormy vocabulary. There are promising landfalls, numinous adventures, and a beckoning horizon that serves as a learning curve, "linking acts and footsteps," conjuring a mind that describes a journey while unpacking a life' (*Inside the Skull House*, www.cddc.vt.edu/host/weishaus/skull/intro.htm).

[85] Genette writes: 'The importance of "anachronic" narrative in the *Recherche du temps perdu* is obviously connected to the retrospectively synthetic character of Proustian narrative, which is totally present in the narrator's mind at every moment. Ever since the day when the narrator in a trance perceived the unifying significance of his story, he never ceases to hold all of its threads simultaneously, to apprehend simultaneously all of its places and all of its moments, to be capable of establishing a multitude of "telescopic" relationships amongst them: a ubiquity that is spatial but also temporal, an "omnitemporality"' (Genette, 1980, p. 78).

in network-structured hypertexts there is potentially no textual hierarchy other than the constantly shifting one determined by the reader. Delany and Landow write:

> Hypertext linking situates the current or "on-screen" textual unit at the center of the textual universe, thus creating a new kind of hierarchy in which the power of the center dominates that of the infinite periphery. But because in hypertext that center is always a transient, decenterable virtual center - one created, in other words, only by one's act of calling up that particular text - it never tyrannizes other aspects of the network in the way a printed text does.
>
> (Delany and Landow, 1991, p. 11)

This is not to say, though, that textual hierarchies simply do not exist within hypertext systems; the possibility of dispensing with narrative hierarchy is just another aspect of hypertext's potential. As already pointed out, axial-based hypertexts are designed with a primary textual axis and this in itself must impose some form of hierarchy, even if it is a simple process to link from this axis to other material, which may then become the reader's central focus. Unless this linked material can itself link to another textual axis - if the axial-based hypertext is part of a larger network - the reader will have to return to the original textual axis. The structure of an axial-based hypertext will be like that of a tree, and the tree structure will always privilege the 'main' trunk of the tree over its branches; the linked material in axial-based hypertexts, then, will be subordinate to the text around which they are arranged. Network-structured hypertexts, too, can be subject to textual hierarchies, as Bolter points out with reference to the controls that an author may impose on his or her hypertext:

> The electronic writer still has available all the techniques of hierarchical organization from the technology of print. He or she may still establish subordination and may still seek to define cause and effect. The electronic writer may embed hierarchical structures inside of larger networks, or networks inside of hierarchies. The line, the tree, and the network all become visible structures at the writer's and reader's disposal.
>
> (Bolter, 1991, p. 113-114)

The author of the hypertext, for example, may organise it in such a way that some lexias only become available to readers after others have been read, or may make some links in the text unidirectional rather than bidirectional, forcing the reader along a particular narrative path that cannot be traced backwards. This is really a matter of the level of control the author of a hypertext may have

over the reader. For the purpose of the current argument it will suffice to say that such possibilities for authorial intervention in the path through the hypertext that the reader 'chooses' provide an indication of how certain arrangements of lexia, or narrative paths, can be privileged above others, even within a network-structured text. This said, it should again be stressed that the model of the network is one far more amenable to representing difference - and so resisting singular or authoritative readings - than is the linear-hierarchical model because of its wider structural *potential* (the potential for lexias to be combined in a number of ways and indeed in every possible way, rather than along the line of a single dominant principle). Supporting this statement is the fact that a hypertext network does not exist as a final text, an entity that will 'remain and explain,' as Wimsatt and Beardsley famously declared of the poem (Wimsatt, 1960, p. 39). Instead, a hypertext exists as a collection of textual possibilities and this textual indeterminacy, brought into play by the volatility and manipulability of the hypertext stored as network of lexia, undermines any notion of obtaining an authoritative reading of the text. Again the emphasis is upon hypertext's potential, this time upon the text it can *become*, rather than the text it *is*, for it is not a determinate text. Lanham comments on this with regard to the difficulty of pinning down hypertext to bring it into line with copyright laws (laws based on the premise of 'intellectual property' in the fixed medium of print):

> To litigate a copyright case you must have a "final cut," a fixed version, upon which to base your arguments. What if there isn't any? The dilemma goes to a yet deeper distinction. Intellectual property in words may never have been rooted in a substance, an essence, but we could fool ourselves most of the time that it was. Words there on the page. Look at them. Compare them. That book there with the splendid red binding, that's mine. I wrote it. The Great American Novel. The definitive edition of The Great American Novel. The greatest critical discussion of The Great American Novel. The electronic word has no essence, no quiddity, no substance of this sort. It exists *in potentu*, as what it can become, in the genetic structures it can build. It is volatile not only in how it is projected onto an electronic screen but in how it works in the world. In both places, its essence is dynamic rather than static.
>
> (Lanham, 1988, p. 281)

With hypertext, then, there is no privileged 'final cut'.[86]

This difficulty in pointing to the final hypertext raises some interesting theoretical questions. Firstly, it draws attention to the insubstantiality and high degree of abstraction of this type of text. If the hypertext exists only as a possibility, only as what it can become, then can it be described as having any textual substance at all? Certainly, one may point to the hypertext as it exists for example on the tangible object of a CD-ROM, but this object in itself does not carry any textual significance, unlike the object of the book. The CD may be stamped with the title of the hypertext it carries, the author's name, even an image - elements normally considered as paratextual, but these paratexts do not occupy quite the same zone as their counterparts in print, as previously touched upon: they are physical and tangible while the text they 'present' is virtual and intangible[87] - but the CD is otherwise textually meaningless until inserted into the CD drive of the computer and 'read' or decoded by the machine. This

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[86] This aspect of hypertext is mirrored in other creative genres as a result of their transition to digital technology; DVD technology, for example, now means that films can be presented along with elements like deleted scenes, scenes that the film's director may have preferred to keep in, but was forced to cut for commercial reasons (film length – as in the case of Peter Jackson's *Lord of the Rings* films, already lengthy for modern cinema audiences even without his preferred scenes which are included in the 'extended' DVD versions of the films - or studio interference, for instance). DVD technology means that films are now stored on the basis of discrete scenes – the cinematic equivalent of textual lexias. They can certainly be viewed in the conventional way, as a single unbroken sequence (by choosing the 'Play Movie' option on the DVD) but the digital storage of single scenes means they may also be viewed in any other order the viewer chooses. With Christopher Nolan's film *Memento*, a film based around the amnesia of its central character and his anachronistic piecing together of fragmentary memories of events in his life, there is an option in the DVD to play the film as a sequence of scenes based on the chronological order of events; this option exists alongside the conventional 'Play Movie' option and in effect offers the viewer an alternative film. In the case of film in the digital medium, as with text, the 'final cut' is no longer clear-cut.
[87] As already mentioned, structural elements like overviews and maps (or 'search' features such as that included in Swigart's *Down Time* wherein the reader can search for all linked stories by typing keywords into a 'Storyline' search space), hypermedia elements like images, audio and video as already outlined, as well as the usual titles, accompanying blurb and suchlike elements will all constitute part of the hypertextual paratext and, like the paratexts of traditional print, they can function to disrupt linearity in the text. In large hypertext networks, the notion of the paratext as occupying an ambiguous zone on the borders of the text, neither inside nor out (*hors-texte*) is particularly well illustrated by, for example, explanatory or annotative materials that may themselves be linked to 'other' hypertexts. The condition of the paratext is thus made explicit by such hypertextual paratexts: they are at once boundaries and transitions, part of the text and not part of the text (or part of the 'other' text). With hypertext, this notion of 'other' or *hors-texte* becomes increasingly difficult to define.

problem becomes even more apparent when considering a hypertext stored on the hard disk drive of a computer or remotely on a networked disk: most people, even if they were to open up the plastic casement of their computers and peer inside, would have no idea where the hard drive was or what it looked like, far less be able to point to the elusive 'substance' of the hypertext that resides there; in the case of hypertexts on the Web stored remotely from the user, the user will only ever have the possibility of viewing the virtual instantiation of the text onscreen and never of seeing where the 'real' text is located.

The hypertext, as textual object, has been digitally dematerialised, as Lanham has pointed out. He writes:

> Digitization both desubstantiates a work of art and subjects it to
> perpetual immanent metamorphosis from one sense-dimension to
> another. ... Such desubstantiation volatilizes our whole sense of artistic
> quiddity, of the existence of art objects. They live finally in the digital
> code, the sensuous manifestation only a temporary "printout."
> (Lanham, 1988, p. 273)

The fact that the reader of digital text only ever encounters a temporary and intangible onscreen simulation of a text, a 'virtual' text, also calls into question that text's authenticity: the 'real' or substantial instance of the text exists only on disk and cannot actually be 'read' by anyone. The twin issues of authenticity and simulation are central concerns of postmodern theory, as indicated in Chapter 1, but are not new to critical theory, dating back to Plato's notion of the simulacrum, an imperfect copy for which no original exists. Contemporary theorists (most notably Jean Baudrillard) have, however, argued for the particular relevance of the simulacrum in our current society of late consumer capitalism. Baudrillard develops the Marxist theory of the commodity that has become so ubiquitous that any relation to direct use value has been severed, leading to an obscene proliferation of commodities without use and thus without substance. 'The obscenity of the commodity,' he writes, 'stems from the fact that it is abstract, formal and light in opposition to the weight, opacity and substance of the object' (Baudrillard, 1985, p. 131); such abstraction and insubstantiality is what Oedipa Maas finds herself struggling against throughout Thomas Pynchon's *The Crying of Lot 49*, before eventually resigning herself to the impossibility of encountering anything that she can *really* be sure of, anything she can finally prove is other than superficial, other than simulacra.

The only logic she can eventually believe in - in place of the Western logical and metaphysical quest for 'truth' - is the binary and computational logic of either/or: *either* something is substantial, 'real', meaningful, *or* it is just another simulation, a hollow, shifting surface. Oedipa can never finally tell,

> For it was now like walking among matrices of a great digital computer,
> the zeroes and ones twinned above, hanging like balanced mobiles right
> and left, ahead, thick, maybe endless. Behind the hieroglyphic streets
> there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth. In the
> songs Miles, Dean, Serge and Leonard sang was either some fraction of
> the truth's numinous beauty (as Mucho now believed) or only a power
> spectrum. Tremaine the Swastika Salesman's reprieve from holocaust
> was either an injustice, or an absence of wind; the bones of the GIs at
> the bottom of Lake Inverarity were there either for a reason that
> mattered to the world, or for skin divers and cigarette smokers. Ones and
> zeroes. So did the couples arrange themselves.
>
> (*The Crying of Lot 49*, either p. 125-126 or elsewhere)

The presence of the computer, the digital storage device that must reduce all that is tangible - including tangible textuality - to its basic binary logic of either one or zero, to a virtual, shifting surface, is here metaphorically linked to the process of desubstantiation and 'inauthentication' that Oedipa sees happening all around her. Just as Kittock in Alasdair Gray's *A History Maker* suggested the complicity of technology with businessmen who used it 'to destroy the power of labour unions' and thus to control production and capital (*A History Maker*, p. 202), technology once again finds itself partnered with what has been seen by Baudrillard, Jameson and others as a negative consequence of postmodernism or 'the cultural logic of late capitalism' (Jameson, 1991): the proliferation of simulated representations and resultant loss of the 'real'.[88]

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[88] This is where the theories of poststructuralism and postmodernism converge: in their assertion that the 'real' can never be found or ascertained, if it was ever indeed 'really' - finally or unequivocally - there to be lost in the first place. While this has been taken by many to be a nihilist approach, dangerous even (as in the controversial debate on holocaust denial, for example), it should be considered that the consequences of *not* adopting such strategies of infinite doubt are, in poststructuralist terms, themselves dangerous: reaching the 'transcendental signified', as has already been argued, would herald the end of interpretation, closing discourse and effecting the sort of critical atrophy warned against by Rorty. Poststructuralism, it seems to me, does not in fact argue that the 'real' does not exist at all (or that events might never really have happened, the sort of dangerous ground Baudrillard treads when suggesting that the Gulf war was mainly a media event, see Baudrillard, 1995), just that the 'real' or 'truth' is not a structure of pure presence that can ever be finally reached (grasped and held) by linguistic or other forms of discourse, which are themselves always subject to the slippages that occur in the gap between signifier and signified (and indeed also in the

The question of authenticity in relation to the written word is not exclusively linked to digital text: mass production and distribution of printed texts - the commodification of the book in other words - has meant that readers never actually engage with the original text written by the author, leading writers like Calvino and Borges self-consciously to question the possibility of *ever* getting to

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gap between intention and utterance or inscription. Colin McCabe writes that, 'This separation [between what was said and the act of saying] bears witness to the real as articulated. The thing represented does not appear in a moment of pure identity as it tears itself out of the world and presents itself, but rather is caught in an articulation in which each object is defined in a set of difference and oppositions' (McCabe, 1992, p. 136)). The 'real', then, can only exist linguistically or through other signifying media (news broadcasts and televised images, to give examples relevant to postmodernism and to Baudrillard's notion of the 'hyperreal' media event) inasmuch as it is constructed by them and through their slippages; thus it must itself be slippery and elusive: 'lost'. From a poststructuralist point of view it is more irresponsible to proclaim that truth or the real has been or can be 'found' through discourse than to respectfully suggest that it is too complexly structured (since it is a structure comprised not of pure presence but also of absence, a structure of difference) to be explained by a language that will in any case always transform it (since language is unavoidably polysemous and opaque). That poststructuralism has been taken for nihilism finds precedence in similar readings of Nietzsche, Nietzsche being arguably poststructuralism's most significant and relevant philosophical forebear. Nietzsche's philosophy too has been read as dangerous – even read dangerously as fascist - most notably with regard to his emphasis on the lack of positive values (and the famous statement of *The Gay Science* that 'God is dead' (Nietzsche, 1974, p.167)) and the so-called 'will to power'. His writings can be seen to permeate and inform much of Alasdair Gray's work. In *The Fall of Kelvin Walker*, the protagonist Kelvin displays both an awareness of Nietzschean concepts – demonstrated in his own (parodic) will to power – and an ironic lack of awareness about his own ideological negativism. Speaking of his hometown in Scotland, Glaik, he tells a new acquaintance: "culturally, it lacks scope. It was the lack of scope that made me leave it. Have you read Nietzsche? ... Your conversation has what I would call a Nietzschean flavour to it. Anyway, I can talk to you about him without embarrassment. It is no exaggeration to say that in Glaik there was *nobody, nobody* I could discuss Nietzsche with. Nobody. ... There are no thinkers or artists in Glaik" (*The Fall of Kelvin Walker*, p. 7-8). When asked if he himself is an artist, Kelvin replies incredulously: "Me? No! I have no artistic talent at all, I'm glad to say. But where there are plenty of artists people are generally open to new ideas, especially Nietzschean ideas, and it is by these that I mean to succeed" (*The Fall of Kelvin Walker*, p. 8). While this rather interesting aside illustrates the type of negative, nihilistic thinking that may come about from such (mis?)readings of Nietzsche or indeed of poststructuralist theory, engaging with Gray's work on these terms is the work of another thesis. To return briefly to the discussion of the 'lost real', it should be pointed out that psychoanalysis, too, is concerned with this concept, which has also been referred to in psychoanalytic terms as the Imaginary (Lacan) or the semiotic (Kristeva). That is to say, the 'real' here refers to the stage or condition of the subject (or organism at this point) before s/he enters into linguistic discourse (the Symbolic or the thetic) and becomes a fully-fledged subject (both a subject *in* and subject *to* discourse). For Lacan and psychoanalytic theory, although the lost real will always be unobtainable for the subject who has entered into language – Belsey writes: 'the real is that organic being outside signification, which we can't know, because it has no signifiers in the world of names the subject inhabits' (Belsey, 1980, p. 58) - it does have a prior existence outside language.

grips with the 'real' text.[89] The inclusion of the erratum slip in some editions of Alasdair Gray's books highlights the point: each copy is potentially faulty, flawed, imperfect; each is no more than a simulacrum.[90] Nevertheless, this notion of textual simulation is acutely applicable to text in the electronic medium. Lyotard writes:

> After they have been put into digital form ... items of data can be synthesized anywhere and anytime to produce identical chromatic or acoustic products (simulacra). They are thereby rendered independent of the place and time of their 'initial' reception, realizable at a spatial and temporal distance: let's say telegraphable.
>
> (Lyotard, 1991, p. 50)

The only ever 'virtual' appearance of digital text will of necessity always question its status as 'real', and if a text is perhaps not real, then does it really say what its virtual simulation says it says? This is the question asked in Alasdair Gray's short story 'Pillow Talk' regarding the text of an alleged email, the message being disputed not just in terms of its content, "Five words - *I want to leave you* - just that" (*The Ends of Our Tethers*, p. 61), but also on the basis of its ever being sent. As in 'No Bluebeard', computers are again associated with

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[89] The inscribed reader's search for the text of *If in a winter's night a traveller*, the 'book' he begins reading in Calvino's book of the same name but whose text goes no further than the first chapter, is continually foiled by his encounters with erroneous printed copies: further incomplete texts, forgeries and apocrypha. As with Oedipa Maas, his attempts to work through the textual copies, to penetrate the faulty surfaces and find the 'true meanings' within, are destined to lead only to further frustration. He may as well be searching amongst Borges's 'Library of Babel', a postmodern labyrinthine space composed of 'an indefinite, perhaps infinite number of hexagonal galleries' and containing all possible combinations of all possible books: '*All* – the detailed history of the future, the autobiographies of the archangels, the faithful catalog of the Library, thousands and thousands of false catalogs, the proof of the falsity of those false catalogs, a proof of the falsity of the *true* catalog' and more (*Collected Fictions*, pp. 112 and 115). To complicate matters further, each book in the library is identically formed in terms of page, line and letter numbers, and the titles printed on the books' covers do not correspond to what is inside. Another of Borges's stories, 'Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius', also centres around this notion of the authenticity of printed books, in this case the authenticity of those printed 'monuments', encyclopaedias. Differing copies of the same volume of *The Anglo-American Cyclopaedia* are found not to be identical: one contains interpolated material about the unknown region of Uqbar. Summarising Uqbar's 'Language and Literature', the interpolated section records 'that the literature of Uqbar was a literature of fantasy, and that its epics and legends never referred to reality but rather to the two imaginary realms of Mle'khnas and Tlön' (*Collected Fictions*, p. 70). The attempt to find out about Uqbar, then, leads only to a process of continual referral away from 'reality' into further levels of fantasy and simulation.

[90] Bolter is not altogether accurate, then, in his assertion that 'The conceptual space of a printed book is ... defined by perfect printed volumes that exist in thousands of identical copies' (Bolter, 1991, p. 11).

impersonality – inhumanity even – and coldness: email is seen to be a convenient way to end a relationship, a way that shifts the responsibility for what the message says away from its human writer or sender, since its words are so abstracted from them as to be doubtable. The message's 'author', an unhappy wife, denies having written the contentious words and accuses her husband of using them as an excuse to raise an issue he is too cowardly to address otherwise. The digital message, whether real or not, gives him the grounds to ask a difficult question.

> "Do you want to leave me?"
> "Yes, but I never told you so. I've never told anyone that – they think ours is such a *solid* marriage. You must have noticed it's a farce and this is your bloody cunning way of blaming me for something I never said and was never going to say."
> "Blethers!" he cried, "I am *never* cunning, *never* cruel. I remember those words coming up very clear and distinct on the computer screen: *I want to leave you.*"
>
> <div align="right">(The Ends of our Tethers, p. 61)</div>

The ethereality of the email message is here juxtaposed with the alleged, and only apparent solidity of the marriage, which it would seem is itself only a 'virtual' simulation, a sham. The digital message, since its authenticity is controvertible, enables its words to be relayed without the same risk as in real life: their consequences may always be undone since they can never be finally proven. The consequences can, like the text of the electronic message, be dismissed in the end as virtual, not 'real'. While the email has only an illusory substance ("You're right. I must have dreamed it," the husband concedes (*The Ends of our Tethers*, p. 62)), the chances of the wife acting upon her desire to leave as a result have little more firm grounding in reality:

> After a while he said, "But you want to leave me."
> She sighed and said nothing.
> "When will you do it?"
> "I don't suppose I'll ever do it," she murmured, still appearing to read, "I haven't the courage to live alone. You're an alcoholic bore but not violent and I'm too old to find anyone better."
>
> <div align="right">(The Ends of Our Tethers, p. 62)</div>

Paralleling an inadequate, superficial marriage in 'Pillow Talk' with an inadequate or certainly dubious digital message implicates the digital text in the story's general conveyance of loss or lack: both marriage and text, it is suggested, are little more than convenient surfaces, lacking the depth and

substance that would make them meaningful and worthwhile. While the digital form being criticised here is an email message and not a hypertext it has been argued that digital textual environments in general encourage a less serious, certainly less contemplative approach to text than that fostered by quiet reading in print (and such an increasingly hasty attitude towards - and degradation of - text can certainly be witnessed in the successor of the email in terms of fast and direct digital communication, the mobile phone text message). The hypertext link, in facilitating the rapid and easy movement from one text or lexia to another or indeed to other media like images or video, may also be viewed as creating a reading environment where the compulsion is always to keep moving, to keep following links (emphasising the 'hyper' in hypertext) rather than to read patiently and focus on the import of the current lexia or textual 'moment'. The World Wide Web in particular, as has already been observed, contains a large amount of hypertextual trash that may in itself be partly responsible for the type of short attention span so commonly associated with modern audiences, whether audiences of text or of other media: something potentially more interesting is only of course a mouse-click away. Coover comments:

> In terms of new serious literature, the Web has not been very hospitable. It tends to be a noisy, restless, opportunistic, superficial, e-commerce-driven, chaotic realm, dominated by hacks, pitchmen, and pretenders, in which the quiet voice of literature cannot easily be heard or, if heard by chance, attended to for more than a moment or two. Literature is meditative and the Net is riven by ceaseless hype and chatter. Literature has a shape, and the Net is shapeless. The discrete object is gone, there's only this vast disorderly sprawl, about as appealing as a scatter of old magazines on a table in the dentist's lounge. Literature is traditionally slow and low-tech and thoughtful, the Net is fast and high-tech and actional.
>
> (Coover,1999)

Such notions of 'fast' and 'actional' reading - akin to the *One-Minute Bedtime Stories* despairingly addressed by Gleick in the preceding chapter - are surely at odds with the type of slow, serious reading so valued by scholars and encouraged by written texts like those of Joyce, Proust and Gray. Gray in *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland 1997* writes of his boyhood local public library that 'It was a source of wonder and gratitude to me that anybody could enter and browse through this warm quiet treasury of alternative worlds' (*Why Scots Should Rule Scotland 1997*, p. 96) and the sensory emphasis regarding this inviting and hospitable

environment for reading books is explicit. The thought of reading texts on a computer screen, especially on the Web, evokes a rather less cosy picture.

Nostalgia for the comfortable and known realm of the printed book is understandable: new technologies are rarely greeted with unreserved enthusiasm and seldom do they appear comfortable. Nostalgia is a natural by-product of any move to a new 'type', whether of text or anything else and worries about the impact of 'modern' lifestyles upon the practice of serious reading and thought have been voiced for a long time. Wordsworth, in his Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* of 1805 wrote in dismay that:

> a multitude of causes unknown to former times are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies. To this tendency of life and manners the literature and theatrical exhibitions of the country have conformed themselves. The invaluable works of our elder writers, I had almost said the works of Shakespeare and Milton, are driven into neglect by frantic novels, sickly and stupid German tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse. When I think upon this degrading thirst after outrageous stimulation, I am almost ashamed to have spoken of the feeble effort with which I have endeavoured to counteract it.
>
> (*Lyrical Ballads*, p. 25)

One wonders what Wordsworth would have made of today's lifestyles and modes of communication - the ubiquitous email or text message - or indeed of hypertext and hypermedia. But as Wordsworth's Preface indicates, the digital revolution and the environments of digital text and of the Web, though certainly enabling rapid textual communication, cannot be held solely responsible for our allegedly diminished attention spans and desire for speedy textual gratification. Wordsworth suggests there existed plenty trashy text of the printed kind to both provoke and attempt to quench such a 'degrading thirst for outrageous stimulation,' even two centuries ago, and the same can be said today. Walking into all but the most independent or highbrow of bookshops one is faced with a preponderance of 'easy-reading', 'fast' and 'actional' books: disposable, airport-type novels; lifestyle books telling us how to cook gourmet dinners with minimal time and effort or how to cram 'meditative' yoga sessions into our frenetic day; countless books with titles like 'Quantum Physics in a Nutshell' or the mini-sized

'Little Books' of Whatever, which suggest that we don't in fact have time to read a 'Big Book' of anything anymore. Diary-like travel books, too, are increasingly popular, perhaps since they provide the type of bite-sized information that is suitable for travelling readers, only on their commute to and from work, and between dips into their Little Books of Calm. Travel writer Bill Bryson's recent book *A Short History of Nearly Everything*, in attempting to sum up knowledge about the world in a slim volume probably better sums up how much time we now feel we can devote to the serious business of learning. The 'warm quiet treasury of alternative worlds' that so awed Gray is a notion of reading that seems as outdated and unlikely in the current circulatory realm of print as it does to the mode of hypertext, though it should still be possible - with some effort - to attain a peaceful reading space for both.

Undoubtedly the current technologies available for reading hypertexts onscreen do not conjure up thoughts of comfort, of a 'warm, quiet' reading experience; the glare of the computer screen and whirr of the processor or fan is hardly relaxing and seems far less appealing than the thought of curling up on the sofa with a book. While in the future it is likely that technological improvements will create possibilities for hypertext that are not as sore on the eyes as are current screen technologies and that would enable a variety of reading positions (digitally projected text, for example, which would enable text to be projected onto any plain surface), at the moment the convenience of reading hypertext is limited, a factor that has so far ensured the survival of the book.[91] But this argument cuts both ways: although one of the most common complaints against hypertext is that it cannot be read 'comfortably' (in bed or in the bath for example), it could also be pointed out that neither can hypertext encourage the type of on-the-hoof reading so prevalent with print. Hypertext first requires the dedicated effort of sitting down in front of the computer screen, whether it be that of a laptop or a desktop machine. Serious learning most of all requires effort, for it cannot be done quickly; nor can it be done lazily, and perhaps the endeavour of thoughtful reading should not be *too* warm

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[91] Though Landow stresses the importance of distinguishing between the mode and the medium of hypertextuality - 'between electronic textuality and its display on changing technology' (Landow, 1994, p. 4) – it is difficult to discuss hypertext usefully without reference to its practical means of conveyance.

and comfortable, lest we fall asleep in the process, metaphorically as well as literally. Perhaps an element of discomfort can be a good thing (and may even be a necessity), a notion that will be returned to in Part Two.

Thus much for the comfortable warmth of the reading experience, but what about hypertext and the possibilities for 'quiet' reading? A sense of stillness, away from the 'noise' of life (and especially modern life) is unarguably prerequisite for any serious engagement with and contemplation of text. From this point of view the Web is perhaps not the most suitable home for serious text, especially if the reader is concerned that the time spent online reading will be reflected in the phone bill. That said, many internet users now have broadband or dial-up connections that are paid for at a flat-rate premium, so that the amount of time spent online is inconsequential, and if an online hypertext is good enough to engage the reader in the first place and shelter them through this engagement from the distractions of the Web, there is no reason why it shouldn't hold their attention and provide a space interesting enough to provoke thought. The same may be said of hypertexts on CD-ROM. Although reading a hypertext would seem to offer a radically different type of reading experience to reading a book, especially in the case of network-structured hypertexts where the reader is consistently forced to click the mouse and make choices regarding their path through the text, once readers get used to the initial sense of unfamiliarity within the hypertext environment they can concentrate upon the content of the text in much the same way as they would with print (though they will probably be made more aware of the *structure* of the text than with print, a thought that I will come back to in the next chapter). Coover writes of the early experiences of reading hypertexts that, 'once we got used to it, there was no reason [why] we could not achieve that sort of focused, deeply imagined 'lost' reading experience we so treasured in books' (Coover, 1999), and whilst the notion of a 'lost' reading experience is one that I would suggest should not be too enthusiastically pursued (as will be explained further in Chapter 3), Coover nevertheless maintains that hypertext does not preclude the type of thoughtful, directed 'serious' reading that can be described as

valuable unreservedly.[92] Bolter too sees no reason why the computer cannot offer the same sort of quiet refuge as that described by Gray with reference to the library, commenting that:

> The computer can in fact provide a quiet place for readers and writers to pursue [their own] interests, relatively secure from the noise of what remains of shared cultural elements. The computer as a writing space can also be a place to hide from the sensory overload of the daily world of work and leisure and the other electronic media.
>
> (Bolter, 1991, p. 238)

Other electronic media may pervade the space of the hypertext, however. When hypertext contains audio-visual hypermedia elements – elements that could themselves provide 'sensory overload' – it has been argued that the text becomes marginalised, crowded out by the other media.[93] Certainly many hypertexts now attempt to fuse alternative signifying methods with text, layering music and image data, for example, or manipulating the aesthetic and durative appearance of text onscreen. Donna Leishman's *The Bloody Chamber* (www.6amhoover.com/chamber/index_flash.htm) is an example of a hypermedia narrative structure that deliberately uses visual elements rather than text. While Leishman's website claims that her hybrid structures are 'creating screen-based multiple state environments: reacting against systems of clarity and coherence' (www.6amhoover.com) they do so specifically by reacting against the written word. In this sense it is perhaps arguable whether such environments should still in fact be called hypertexts. At the same time as they would seem to marginalise text, however, they draw attention to the existence and signifying potential of nonverbal, non-phonocentric forms, which have themselves been marginalised historically by the written word but which are just

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[92] It could also be added, with reference to texts that are situated within a network of referenced material, that the work and time of the scholar may be made more efficient, or more intellectually valuable anyway, by being directed more quickly into the task of analytic thought, with less time needing to be spent on the prosaic donkey-work of unearthing resources. (This should quickly be tempered with the observation that this feature of hypertext may of course also encourage the lazy scholar, who does not wish to seek out his or her own resources beyond the hypertextual network.)

[93] The idea of the text being devalued by superfluous media comes close to the concern we have already seen for the 'lost real', the notion that meaning has been lost among a ubiquitous, over-abundant proliferation of signifiers. Coover muses: 'this, of course, is the constant threat of hypermedia: to suck the substance out of a work of lettered art, reduce it to surface spectacle. But, then, nothing is ever mere surface, mere spectacle, is it?' (Coover, 1999).

as susceptible to the effects of *writing* in its broad Derridean sense (and so also of *textuality*; they will also invariably be intertextual), as are words in 'the phonetic-alphabetical script of Western culture' (Norris, 1991, p. 29). They have more relevance and relation to text, then, than at first it might seem.[94] (Derrida would certainly connect phonocentric forms with the 'systems of clarity and coherence' Leishman's work reacts against, since phonocentrism, for Derrida, is irrevocably implicated in the larger problem and project of logocentrism: the Western metaphysical impulse to rationalise and to posit complete presence.) Such hypermedia environments also highlight some significant and now generally prevalent cultural practices, particularly the techniques of collage and montage, and the mixing of communicative modes. Paulson, in his book *Literary Culture in a World Transformed* points out that, 'The technological turn away from print and toward electronic textuality, hypermedia, and the audiovisual both complements and radicalizes the academic moves away from canonical literature and towards recent, popular, and non-print cultural productions' (Paulson, 2001, p. 9); the process of looking beyond the strictly textual form is thus not without precedent, even within academia. In terms of serious engagement with writing, though, we should be aware that all that glitters may not be textual gold: there is a real danger that hypermedia environments may privilege style over content, slickly offering up little of intellectual value and turning the text into something of a spectator sport. Delany and Landow suggest that:

> *Hypermedia* takes us even closer to the complex interrelatedness of everyday consciousness; it extends hypertext by re-integrating our visual and auditory faculties into textual experience, linking graphic images, sound and video to verbal signs. Hypermedia seeks to approximate the way our waking minds always make a synthesis of information received from all five senses. Integrating or (re-integrating) touch, taste and smell seems the inevitable consummation of the hypermedia concept.
> (Delany and Landow, 1991, p. 7)

Such a consummation would I think, in terms of any earnest and self-conscious encounter with text, be highly dissatisfactory: integrating sensory information with text to this extent comes perilously close to the creation of complete

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[94] And Gregory Ulmer has argued that Derrida's concept of grammatology may only be fully put into practice by admitting non-verbal forms of writing. 'Applied grammatology,' he writes, 'will be characterized by a picto-ideo-phonographic Writing that puts speech back in its place while taking into account the entire scene of writing' (Ulmer, 1985, p. 157).

virtual environments or 'virtual reality', and such sensory environments are, as will be argued in the next chapter, hostile to the process of active critical engagement with text.

Mixing media will not by itself create such virtual environments though and there is much hypertextual evidence to suggest that non-verbal media and techniques of collage have been used constructively, in interesting and engaging ways. In McLaughlin's hyperfiction *Notes Toward Absolute Zero*, the reader first of all encounters a 'Frontispiece', consisting of a collection of images representing postage stamps. Clicking on any one image shows first of all an enlarged image of the stamp, which contains visual and verbal information about its origin. From this image, which also carries temporal and cultural significance (through date or price information or visual iconography: one stamp, for example, shows Elvis Presley), the reader can explore a narrative trajectory related to the information on the stamp, thus the visual data carries significance for the text (in the same way that the visual components of Alasdair Gray's fiction are always more than just textual adornment) and indeed helps readers gain their bearings (an issue that will be discussed again the next chapter). *Sunshine '69*'s use of audio is similarly relevant, apposite to the atmosphere the text attempts to create of San Francisco and the music scene in the 1960s. Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* probably provides to date the best example of hyperfictional collage, based on the textual premise of patching together both a narrative (from the disparate parts of text or lexia) and a body (from images and text of 'body parts'). Jackson's text is influenced by and explicitly draws upon the notion of grafting together a corpse from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* while engaging the reader in the process of textual graft, such as preoccupied Derrida in *Glas* and Gray in both *Poor Things* and *The Book of Prefaces*: 'grafting together', with the textual materials at their disposal, reader and writer can construct both corpse and textual corpus. The reader can choose to construct the text from several angles: 'a graveyard'; 'a journal'; 'a quilt'; 'a story' and 'broken accents'. The 'graveyard' tells us: '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' (*Patchwork Girl*). So while in *Frankenstein* the 'monstrous' female is created by Victor Frankenstein, manipulated by his first monstrous

creation and ultimately by his author Mary Shelley, and in *Poor Things* Bella Baxter (another monstrous female) is created - grafted together - from the remnants of Mary Shelley's text and the mythology accompanying it by Godwin Baxter as manipulated by Gray, in *Patchwork Girl* the reader is explicitly implicated - along with 'Shelley' Jackson - in the process of forming the 'monster' or hybrid (both female and text). The reader must, by this logic, bear some responsibility for that which they have helped create. This process of textual graft will be returned to once more in Chapter 4.

The metaphor of the network-structured hypertext as patchwork quilt may be an obvious one - exploited also by the *Noon Quilt* writer's project (see http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/quilt/info.htm)[95] - but is interesting nevertheless, emphasising once again the notion of the text as texture, as fabric, already put forth by Barthes, as well as the combinatory possibilities of the hypertext. One of *Patchwork Girl*'s 'quilt' lexia entitled 'Research' reads:

> At first I couldn't think what to make her of. I collected bones from charnel houses, paragraphs from Heart of Darkness, and disturbed, with profane fingers, the tremendous secrets of the human frame, but finally in searching through a chest in a solitary chamber, or rather cell, at the top of the house, I came across a fabric of relations, an old patchwork quilt, which my grandmother once made when she was young.
> *(Patchwork Girl)*

Clicking on this lexia opens another containing the notes to this particular part of the text, which indicate that the lexia itself - as with all the other 'quilt' lexias - is in fact formed like Gray's *Book of Prefaces* 'by grafting together pieces cut from the corpus of other writers' (*The Book of Prefaces*, dust jacket); in this specific instance various textual parts from L. Frank Baum's *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Jay David Bolter, Michael Joyce, John B. Smith and Mark Bernstein's guide to 'Getting Started with Storyspace' and Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition*.

Factual and fictional sources are all fair game for the patchwork text (mixing genre as well as media), and the process of textual construction necessary to invent or literally fabricate the text is indicative of hypertext's self-reflexive

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[95] The website explains: 'N_o_o_n Q_u_i_l_t is an assemblage of patches submitted by writers from around the world. Together they form a fabric of noon-time impressions. The quilts were stitched over a period of approximately five months during 1998-1999' (http://trace.ntu.ac.uk/quilt/info.htm).

structure, since it focuses attention on the work involved in, and the artificial process of creating narrative – 'telling stories' - of any kind. Poststructuralist and postmodernist-influenced writing frequently uses 'factual' historical and metafictional material in an endeavour to break down the boundaries between fact and fiction, or indeed to show that such boundaries never really existed in the first place. 'Facts' can only be 'known' insofar as they are mediated or, rather, constructed by signifying systems. As Currie puts it: 'historical sources are always textual, ... historical representations are always constrained by the conventions of representation in which they operate' (Currie, 1998, p. 68). Metafictions or apocrypha can offer textual 'truths' that are as believable as 'real' ones and the status accorded the 'factual', explanatory and apparently rational text is consequently questioned and undermined; language necessarily transforms all it touches. *Notes Toward Absolute Zero* is full of such apocrypha: the images of postage stamps; scraps from journals and notebooks; dictionary entries; lists of various items and phenomena ('Six Failures of Love', relics from 'the Franklin expedition' and items retrieved from a boat, to give a few examples). Patricia Waugh writes of the list device in fiction that: 'the reader ... comes to realize that an 'inventory' - a list of items which 'fixes' 'reality' – is also an 'inventory': a set of lies, a place where fictions are produced, a creation/description paradox' (Waugh, 1984, p. 145). Again, then, attention is being brought to bear on the constructedness of the text's 'factual' evidence. The fabrication or 'inventory' of facts in the fictional environment merely reflects the real-life status of the fact. Allen confirms Currie's earlier point and once again brings into play the problematic position of the textual 'paratext':

> Historical events themselves, we might also remember, only come to the historian through what [Linda] Hutcheon, following Genette, calls 'paratexts'. Whether it be newspaper accounts, diaries, military reports, parliamentary documents, private letters, or any of the vast array of historical documents the historian must depend upon, history is only available to the contemporary historian through a network of prior texts, all infused with the traces of prior authors with their own ideological agendas, presuppositions and prejudices. History exists as a vast web of subjective texts, the new historical account being one more author's struggle to negotiate a way through an intertextual network of previous forms and representations.
>
> (Allen, 2000, p.191-192)

The forms of paratext Allen here refers to – documentation surrounding and informing the text such as reports and reviews – Genette describes as 'epitextual' paratexts, rather than the 'peritextual' elements directly attached to the text and considered so far (titles, indices, illustrations and the like). Fictional techniques of collage, in collecting such materials and offering them up explicitly as part of the fictive work-in-progress, work to assimilate them into the text proper. The peritextual 'notes' of *Patchwork Girl*, too, are as much part of the fictional text as the lexias they comment on, as is the case with Gray's notes to *Lanark*, *Poor Things* and *A History Maker*. These allegedly factual paratextual commentaries are thus doubly ambivalent: they are factual fictions, simultaneously inside and outside – beside or in 'para' to – the text, but never clearly one or the other (and no longer viably 'objective').[96] As Waugh points out: 'the incorporation of *any* discourse into the literary frame assimilates it to the alternative world of fiction and detaches it from normal referential functions in the everyday context' (Waugh, 1984, p. 143).

With network-structured hypertexts such as *Notes Toward Absolute Zero* and *Patchwork Girl* the art of collage is taken a step further than is possible with print since the reader of the text, as with the patchwork girl, if they 'want to see the whole ... have to sew [it] together' themselves; they are responsible for assembling the parts. The fact that all media, to the computer, are digitally 'equivalent' also makes it an easy process to collect and display differing media types in one place; although images and varied textual genres could be incorporated into the printed text, this was not simple to achieve (as Gray's consistently expressed gratitude to his printers and typesetters confirms[97]) and sound and video could not be included at all. Liestøl writes:

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[96] Weishaus's *Inside the Skull House* similarly highlights the ambiguous role of the paratext, each segment of the Brain's narrative being accompanied by an explicit and explanatory paratext that stands at once inside and outside the text. The introduction to the text is likewise accompanied by its own paratext, thus providing a self-reflexive paratext of a paratext (a paratextual structure *en-abyme*).

[97] In his acknowledgements to *Unlikely Stories Mostly*, a particularly demanding text in terms of typographical and illustrative content, for example, Gray recognises the intransigence of the printed form in adapting to his needs: 'The complicated parts of the book were made possible by the exact typing of Donald Goodbrand Saunders and Scott Pearson, by the free use of John McInespie's photocopying machine, by the bibliographic skill of Jim Hutcheson, and the patience of John Hewer, the typesetter' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, 'Acknowledgements'). The type of time and labour-consuming process

> Since readers of hypermedia to some extent take up the position of
> authors, the contextual change of the informational elements and the
> types of media becomes of central importance. The computer's digital
> coding of information makes it possible for the traditional media to
> combine in discourse that integrates numbers, words, drawings, graphics,
> photo, audio, and video. The computer has become an inclusive
> supermedium capable of connecting various media independent of the
> institutions in which they usually appear: written language, graphics and
> photography from book and print culture; audio from radio and
> telephone; and video from cinema and television. Various media
> institutions have shaped different forms of expressions but have also
> protected these forms from each other. Hypermedia separates individual
> information technologies from their comprehensive social, technological,
> and economic apparatuses and mixes them in a manner previously
> impossible. This recontextualisation combines older information media
> independent of their previously protecting environments. The direct
> juxtaposition of verbal text and video, for example, makes one
> immediately experience similarities and differences between the two
> types of information. ... By changing the relationship between language
> and figurative representation, between text and pictures, hypermedia
> creates new conditions for experiencing information and meaning.
>
> (Liestøl, 1994, p. 115-116)

Liestøl also points to an argument by Gregory Ulmer that the reflexive structure
of such hypertexts – the emphasis on textual constructedness and collage – may
provide the basis of 'a discourse of immanent critique ... for an electronic
rhetoric' (Ulmer, 1991, section 4). Such a critical discourse, Ulmer suggests, may
be built 'by combining the mise en abyme with the two compositional modes
that have dominated audio-visual texts – montage and mise en scene. The result
would be a deconstructive writing, deconstruction as an *inventio* (rather than as
a style of book criticism)' (*ibid.*). This of course raises some extremely
interesting questions that have only been partly addressed by this thesis so far:
how does electronic writing offer itself up for critique? In what ways can the
critical methods developed to interrogate print be applied to the electronic text
(to what extent are they still relevant and where may they be insufficient)? I
have so far argued that digital text will still be subject to the general conditions
of textuality or writing as demonstrated by poststructuralist criticism since it is a
new form of writing. As Ulmer points out, however, hypertextual critique may
assume reflexive modes largely unavailable to print (montage and *mise en scène*)
that will simultaneously create a hybrid textual form unaddressed by a critique
of print and enable the print-determined critical toolbox to be augmented in

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Gray describes would be made considerably easier in the malleable digital context of
hypertext.

unforeseen ways. The critical methods needed to apply to the dynamic digital word may thus be formed or may evolve, like their hypertextual 'objects' of study and like the patchwork girl, through a 'piecemeal' constructive process: they too will be hybrid. The form and place of hypertextual critique will be returned to again in the remaining chapters, as attention is directed towards the implications of hypertext for the subject that engages with it.

PART TWO

The Subject

Chapter 3.

Confronting Vitruvius: Or, The Technological Subject Against its Limits

The idea that singular and continuous, or unified versions of history will posit similarly stable subjects has already been put forward in Chapter 1, Foucault arguing that, 'Continuous history is the indispensable correlative of the founding function of the subject' (Foucault, 1982, p. 12). The purpose of such a correlation, Foucault writes, is 'to preserve, against all decentrings, the sovereignty of the subject, and the twin figures of anthropology and humanism' (*ibid.*). If continuous histories are accepted as positing unified, sovereign subjects, then it may also be argued that multiple and discontinuous histories, such as hypertextual writing can permit, will confirm subjects that are themselves multiple and discontinuous; that are not sovereign but fragmentary like the texts they engage with. Sven Birkerts has been one of hypertext's harshest critics and is avowedly disaffected with what he sees to be the negative implications for the subject of electronic media in general, claiming that: 'Every acquiescence to the circuitry is marked by a shrinkage of the sphere of

autonomous selfhood' (Birkerts, 1995, p. 28). To consider the position of the subject in these terms, however, as though individual autonomy has been lost or diminished through the subject's engagement with digital rather than tangible, printed text is to place (or misplace) faith in the humanist notion that the subject really was sovereign and stable in the first place, a notion that has been undermined by critical theory, most notably by poststructuralism and psychoanalysis.

Humanism is founded on the premise that human consciousness provides the basis for all our thoughts and actions: our internal consciousness - under our own sway - confirms our own existence, our own sense of 'self' and determines also how we act in the external world. This 'self'-centred philosophy is based largely on the *Cogito* of Descartes' *Meditations*: the Cartesian *Cogito* - the thought that confirms the existence of the thinker - as the only principle Descartes can accept beyond doubt, is taken to be the sole source of existential and epistemological proof; human consciousness is thus the logical and final centre of discrimination. Allen writes:

> In that phrase ['I think, therefore I am'] the subject combines the signifier (thought, speech) with the signified (the existence of the thinker) and by so doing proves its ability to produce meaning, and thus proves the uniqueness and the presence in the world of its meaning-making consciousness. Notions of unity, presence, autonomy, originality and Being, notions which can apply to the work, the sign and to the human speaker/thinker, all depend upon this hierarchy.
> (Allen, 2000, p.64)[98]

Psychoanalytic theory, as advanced most compellingly by Freud and Lacan, disturbs this stable centring of the 'self' by arguing that the self is not a unified or self-present consciousness but is split between consciousness (the 'controlled' self) and unconsciousness (the 'uncontrolled' self), though such an idea of control is also quickly undermined. Freud used the concepts of the id and the ego to distinguish between the unconscious and conscious 'selves' while Lacan,

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[98] Nigel Warburton points out that Descartes did not in fact use the phrase '*Cogito ergo sum*' in his *Meditations*, though it does sum up his point concisely. Warburton attributes Descartes with the following exposition: '*I am, I exist*, is necessarily true, every time I express it or conceive of it in my mind' (Warburton, 1998, p. 50); this I think gives a clearer sense that the notion of selfhood is being consistently reaffirmed, every time the thinker has a thought.

as has already been outlined, described the splitting of the subject in terms of the subject's necessary entrance into language and the fissure between the Imaginary (or pre-linguistic) phase of the organism (child or *infans*) and the Symbolic order of adulthood (dependent on linguistic communication). For Lacan, the organism or *'hommelette'* can only become a 'full' or adult subject by entering into linguistic discourse, which, as we have seen, necessitates the acquiescence in an order of signification that is not our own but Other (since it is comprised of rules that we do not ourselves set out). The subject is forced to consciously adopt - or wear - the subject positions available to him or her through language (the position of 'I', 'me', 'she', for example) and similarly may only express him or herself through recognisable arrangements of pre-existent words. Even the way the subject thinks privately about him or herself will be linguistically determined. Considering the subject to be in control of the 'conscious self' is therefore to labour under a misapprehension, both because language is not the subject's own and, as Kristeva has already pointed out, because the unconscious (Imaginary or semiotic pre-linguistic experience) will make itself known through ruptures in the Symbolic or thetic order of discourse. The subject can no longer be considered as the unique origin or centre of all it thinks, says and does but instead is subject to - as well as a subject in - language. Andrew Bowie writes:

> The fundamental move in the decentring of the subject takes place,
> then, when the Cartesian 'I', which is supposed to be transparent to
> itself in the immediate act of reflecting upon itself in the *cogito*, gives
> way to an 'I' that is subjected to its dependence on the language through
> which it speaks. Nietzsche suggested in this connection that the 'subject'
> is really a function of the subject-predicate structure of language itself.
> From Nietzsche to Wittgenstein, Heidegger, Habermas, Derrida, Lacan
> and many others the 'I' is no longer seen as 'present to itself' in relation
> to an opposed world of objects which it attempts to represent, because
> its very status as 'I' depends upon a language which originates in the
> world, not in the interiority of consciousness.
> <div align="right">(Bowie's introduction to Frank, 1997, p. xix)</div>

Human encounters with technology, as observed in the Introduction, have been frequently associated with a process of dehumanisation, with the individual becoming less human and more machine-like through both an engagement with repetitive work and through living life according to technological rather than 'natural' or 'human' principles. The consequences of such a shift in principles

results, it is suggested, in a loss; in a life deprived of both warmth and compassion, governed instead by techno-logic, as in the cases of Gray's narrator of 'No Bluebeard' or of the machine-shop workers described as robots by Thaw's friend Coulter in *Lanark* (see *Lanark*, p. 216 and footnote 41). Digital technologies of text are also implicated in this general depiction of impoverishment as illustrated by the disputed email message of 'Pillow Talk', and what comes across in this story too is the notion that the digital message is so abstracted from its sender that the sending subject can no longer be considered in any clear way to be its origin. Digital text, it is being suggested, is no longer the subject's own. As the consideration of the implications of psychoanalytic theory for the subject has indicated, however, this situation is not a unique consequence of the subject's engagement with digital text: language, such theory argues, was never the subject's own in the first place. That digital text may engender feelings in the subject of alienation from their words it can be argued simply draws attention to this fact. Bolter in the Introduction links this sense of estrangement in particular to the written word, to the 'the act of visual representation,' arguing that speech does not 'call forth the same sense of estrangement' (Bolter, 1991, p. 212).[99] Speech, however, since it too consists of words not our own but Other will also be an alien discursive form (and although the subject may not experience the sense of visual estrangement that the written word creates, a comparable auditory estrangement can be experienced by the subject who hears a recording of their 'own' speech). Lacan describes the child's entering into language as being 'the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity' (Lacan, 1977, p. 4). What constitutes the identity of the 'human' is just this alien armour; the 'human' can only become a full, linguistically recognisable subject by assuming this armour, by becoming themselves 'alien' (Other or, it could be argued, inhuman). The process of 'dehumanisation' so often connected to the subject's encounter with mechanical or digital technology can thus be argued to have begun as soon as the

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[99] Nietzsche, in *The Gay Science*, describes the failure and estrangement of his 'own' written words in a '*Sigh*': 'I caught this insight on the way and quickly seized the rather poor words that were closest to hand to pin it down lest it fly away again. And now it has died of these arid words and shakes and flaps in them - and I hardly know any more when I look at it how I could ever have felt so happy when I caught this bird' (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 239).

subject enters language. Psychoanalysis, in arguing that the identity of the subject is no more than a linguistic construct, both undermines the idea that humans have a unified 'self' and suggests the artificiality or Otherness of the linguistic identities that we must rather assume.

Poststructuralism, by demonstrating the indeterminacy of language and the lack of direct and complete correspondence between signifier and signified, further complicates matters for the subject. If, as psychoanalysis suggests, the subject is constructed by language (which is in the first place alien or Other), and if that language is both inevitably polysemous and conditioned by *différance*, then the notion of the subject as being located in a unified and stable centre that can be referred to as a 'self' becomes increasingly untenable. 'Any effort to posit an identity,' as Judith Butler points out, 'whether the identity of the linguistic signified or the identity of some historical epoch,' - or indeed the identity of the human subject - 'is necessarily undermined by the difference that conditions such positing' (Butler, 1987, p. 183). Butler writes that the subject in fact:

> is itself the fiction of a linguistic practice that seeks to deny the absolute difference between sign and signified. Hence, the theory of the efficacious sign ... creates the conditions of necessary self-deception. ... [T]he subject only exists as a user of the referential sign, and the critique of referentiality implies that the subject, as a figure of autonomy, is itself no longer possible. In effect, the subject becomes that conceit of referentiality which language bears, but which is dissolved or, rather, deconstructed through a rhetorical analysis that reveals the ironic reversals intrinsic to any pursuit of referentiality. The subject is a subject to the extent that it effects a relationship to exteriority, but once that nonrelationship becomes recognized as the constitutive "difference" of all signification, then the subject is revealed as a fiction language gives itself in an effort to conceal its own ineradicable structure: it is the myth of reference itself.
> (Butler, 1987, p. 179)

The subject, then, can be considered as neither unified (because of the necessary splitting described by psychoanalytic theory and because the linguistic signs that construct it are themselves split and indeterminate) nor autonomous (because it is subject to language). The subject, in Butler's terms, is merely 'a fictive unity projected in words' (Butler, 1987, p. 185). Any unity that the subject may claim lies only in a unity that language might (deceptively) construct: language, that is to say, can operate ideologically to create the

illusion of unity and stability, as it does through continuous and unified narratives. Silvio Gaggi, echoing Foucault, writes:

> Texts that are closed, coherent, and focused, whether visual or verbal, tend to elicit mirroring subjects that recognize - or misrecognize - themselves as separate, unified, and centered. Autonomous texts reflect and are reflected by subjects that conceive of themselves as autonomous.
>
> (Gaggi, 1997, p. 101)

So whilst hypertext might 'tend to elicit' subjects that are decentred or even fragmentary - a subject that could well 'conceive of themselves' as less autonomous - it is important to recognise that the subject only ever imagined or conceived of themselves as centred and autonomous in the first place by virtue of linguistic trickery, of linguistic conceit and deceit; considering hypertext as diminishing and devaluing the autonomy of the subject, as Birkerts does, either wilfully ignores this point or otherwise blissfully swallows the ruse.

This is not to suggest that the subject as a linguistic construct is completely powerless however, lacking any form of agency whatsoever. By exposing the constructedness of the subject, it has been argued, psychoanalysis and particularly poststructuralism indicate that the subject is not fixed (given or predetermined), but is capable of change and transformation; this in itself is an empowering thought. Catherine Belsey writes that:

> One common misreading of poststructuralist theory claims that it deprives us of the power to choose or to take action as agents in our own lives. This is binary thinking again: if the subject is an effect of meaning, if we are not the free, unconstrained origin of our own beliefs and values, so the story goes, we must be no better than artificial intelligences, programmed outside ourselves to act according to patterns determined elsewhere.
>
> This is not how most poststructuralist thinkers have argued, however. Deconstruction implies, on the contrary, that meanings are not given unalterably in advance, but can be changed. ... Values not only have a history, they also differ *from themselves*. They can therefore be changed in the future, if not in the light of a fixed idea (or Idea) of the good, at least in the hope that the trace of an alternative inscribed in them might one day be realized. Derrida calls this way of thinking 'messianicity': not the promise of a specific messiah, who would fulfil an individual scripture, Christian, say, or Islamic, but the hope of a different future 'to come' (*avenir, à venir*). ... Deconstruction, then, is not incompatible with moral or political choice.
>
> (Belsey, 2002, p. 89-91)

Subjects will also be able to exert themselves linguistically in that they may choose which words to use and in which arrangements (though of course these must be choices from among the available and recognisable alternatives which as Nietzsche pointed out may often seem insufficient or unsatisfactory). Nevertheless, the words a subject chooses to use in differing circumstances will obviously affect their lives (and similarly, the choices that the subject makes regarding paths through a hypertextual network will also direct and inform their reading experience, affecting the construction and outcome of the text); to say that the subject is entirely passive or at the mercy of external forces is therefore to overstate the case. This said, it should still be recognised that the degree of the subject's freedom in using language will itself be liable to manipulation from external sources, for the way that subjects relate to language will very much depend on the way that language is related to them. As Belsey has elsewhere pointed out:

> It is because subjectivity is perpetually in process that literary texts can have an important function. ... [I]f we accept Lacan's analysis of the importance of language in the construction of the subject it becomes apparent that literature as one of the most persuasive uses of language may have an important influence on the ways in which people grasp themselves and their relation to the real relations in which they live.
>
> (Belsey, 1980, p. 66)

The question regarding the type of subject that will be constructed by hypertext is therefore still a valid and extremely pertinent one, only it is a question that should be asked on the basis of a recognition of the necessary construction of the subject through any discursive form, rather than on that of a ready-made subject liable to dispersal and loss through an encounter with a digital text or network. It should also be pointed out by token of this same recognition that different types of hypertexts will construct different types of subjects; as observed in the preceding chapter, hypertexts are not by definition discontinuous and fragmentary, the digital medium just gives them the potential to be so. Some axial-based hypertexts that are structured on the premise of the 'digital book' may then operate ideologically in ways very similar to texts of the linear printed kind (texts that by pretending autonomy and unity through linearity and singularity are likely to construct subjects that presume themselves autonomous). Network-structured hypertexts, however, in drawing attention to

their own constructedness cannot posit such 'stable' subjects. The subjects they will posit rather are necessarily made aware of the constructedness of narrative and thus of its capacity for change; there is no single narrative, but many possible alternatives and each alternative narrative construction will be inscribed throughout with the palimpsestic traces of the others that may be created by following different paths through the constitutive lexias. In this way they can be seen to engender Derrida's 'messianicity' as Belsey described it. Such hypertexts also explicitly implicate the subject in the process of textual construction. If narrative can posit mirroring subjects, then the subjects posited by these hypertextual narratives-in-progress are more likely to perceive themselves as being 'in progress' or under construction (an idea that has already been mooted in Chapter 2 with reference to Kristeva's concept of a text's signifiance); although this might seem a little disconcerting, at least it does not resort to the type of linguistic or narrative trickery of unified or closed narratives which deceive subjects into thinking themselves settled and 'whole'. Indeed, that the subject feels disconcerted or unsettled may be a positive effect of hypertext as already suggested, for not allowing the subject any comfortable notion of a single and stable story will promote a sense of vigilance and self-consciousness in constructing the narrative – and in donning the linguistic and alien armour of the 'self' – that can be considered an empowerment rather than a diminution.

The question or questions articulated by Foucault in 'What is an Author?' still have relevance for a consideration of hypertext – and of the implications for the subject who engages with this textual technology – and are questions that can best be addressed, as Foucault suggests, by taking a closer look at the conditions of subjectivity:

> It would seem that one could also ... re-examine the privileges of the subject. I realize that in undertaking the internal and architectonic analysis of a work (be it a literary text, philosophical system, or scientific work), in setting aside biographical and psychological references, one has already called back into question the absolute character and founding role of the subject. Still, perhaps one must return to this question, not in order to re-establish the theme of an originating subject, but to grasp the subject's points of insertion, modes of functioning, and system of dependencies. Doing so means overturning the traditional problem, no longer raising the questions "How can a free subject penetrate the substance of things and give it meaning? How can

it activate the rules of a language from within and thus give rise to the designs which are properly its own?" Instead, these questions will be raised: "How, under what conditions and in what forms can something like a subject appear in the order of discourse? What place can it occupy in each type of discourse, what functions can it assume, and by obeying what rules?" In short, it is a matter of depriving the subject (or its substitute) of its role as originator, and of analyzing the subject as a variable and complex function of discourse.

<div align="right">(Foucault, 1979, p.158)</div>

The place that the subject may occupy in discourse, as well as the functions it can assume, will of course depend to a large degree on the places and functions that language operating ideologically - and thus politically - offers or presents to the subject as available, believable and, sometimes, acceptable options; that the subject is constructed in and by language means that it is of course highly vulnerable to the consequences of linguistic manipulation. The 'subjection' of the organism to the rules or 'order' of linguistic discourse is metonymic in the sense that it is representative of the subject's subjection at yet another level: the political level of the State. In the same way as the subject entering discourse must accept the rules of the linguistic Other and thus of adult life, so too does the individual who lives in society tacitly agree to be 'bound' by societal rules. Anyone disagreeing with or breaking these rules may be subject to censure or punishment of varying degrees (depending on the permissiveness of the society), which Louis Althusser has argued is the responsibility of those bodies (Government, Army, Police, Courts, Prisons etc.) comprising what he calls the 'Repressive State Apparatus' (see Althusser, 1992, p. 55). Even in so-called representative democracies the subject, by electing someone else to represent their interests politically (from among a limited number of choices it might be added), is willingly submitting to a form of societal control by proxy. The term 'subject' - as opposed to 'self' - therefore incorporates the notions of simultaneously occupying a subject-position in language ('I', 'me' etc.), and of being subject(ed) *to* language and to the external and political systems of government in society (which in their own turn will use language as an ideological tool of manipulation and subjugation).

In order for subjects to 'behave' in society, Althusser argues, it is necessary that they believe in their own autonomy rather than be faced with the conditions of their own subjectivity and subjection. Language, then, functions ideologically

(through its use by Ideological State Apparatuses such as academic institutions or churches) to confirm or interpellate them as 'free' individuals:

> the individual *is interpellated as a (free) subject in order that he shall submit freely to the commandments of the Subject, i.e. in order that he shall (freely) accept his subjection,* i.e. in order that he shall make the gestures and actions of his subjection 'all by himself'. *There are no subjects except by and for their subjection.* That is why they 'work all by themselves'.
>
> (Althusser, 1992, p. 62)

Hence the preference for grand and explanatory narratives such as those outlined in *A History Maker* and discussed in Chapter 1 (and including the narrative of Marxism to which Althusser contributes), all of which enable subjects to believe that they 'work all by themselves' as unified individuals within a rationally structured society and historical epoch. Grand narratives function as the sort of unified art forms that Marcuse suggests enchant subjects to such a degree that they do not question the conditions of their own lives. He writes that the bourgeois epoch generated the 'affirmative character of culture', a 'culture' that interpellates and binds:

> the beauty of a work of art should appeal to everyone, relate to everyone, be binding upon everyone. Without distinction of sex or birth, regardless of their position in the process of production, individuals must subordinate themselves to cultural values. They must absorb them into their lives and let their existence be permeated and transfigured by them. "Civilization" is animated and inspired by "culture." ... Its decisive characteristic is the assertion of a universally obligatory, eternally better and more valuable world that must be unconditionally affirmed: a world essentially different from the factual world of the daily struggle for existence, yet realizable by every individual for himself "from within," without any transformation of the state of fact. ... "Civilization and culture" is not simply a translation of the ancient relation of purposeful and purposeless, necessary and beautiful. As the purposeless and beautiful were internalized and, along with the qualities of binding universal validity and sublime beauty, made into the cultural values of the bourgeoisie, a realm of apparent unity and apparent freedom was constructed within culture in which the antagonistic relations of existence were supposed to be stabilized and pacified. ... By exhibiting the beautiful as present, art pacifies rebellious desire. Together with the other cultural areas it has contributed to the great educational achievement of so disciplining the liberated individual, for whom the new freedom has brought a new form of bondage, that he tolerates the unfreedom of social existence.
>
> (Marcuse, 1968, pp. 94, 95, 95-96, 121)

The concept of the subject as 'bound' in this manner is one that is hugely relevant to any consideration of the fiction of Alasdair Gray, for the condition of

the human in bondage is one of its primary preoccupations. Gray's redrawing of the classic image from Hobbes's *Leviathan*, which appears in both *Lanark* and in *Unlikely Stories, Mostly* (and at the beginning of this chapter) appropriately illustrates the point: it depicts the State as a giant man or supreme being wielding the sword of 'Force' (the Repressive State Apparatus) and the mace of 'Persuasion' (the Ideological State Apparatus) and being constituted bodily entirely by rows upon rows of little people – subjects – all working 'by themselves' within the social formation. The title illustration for the story 'Prometheus' in *Unlikely Stories, Mostly* (which also appears on the cover of *1982 Janine*) is similarly significant, redepicting Da Vinci's famous drawing of 'Vitruvian Man', showing man encircled and thus inhibited by the perfect symmetry of the sphere surrounding him (see Figs. 3.1 and 3.2 below).
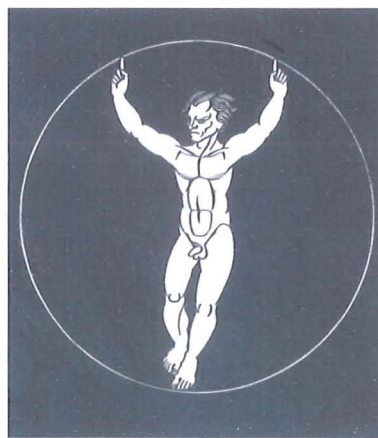

Fig. 3.1 Da Vinci's 'Vitruvian Man'   Fig. 3.2 Gray's 'Vitruvian Man'

Gray's 'Prometheus' implicitly nods both at Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex and at Lacan's theory of the *hommelette*'s progression from the Imaginary pre-linguistic realm to the Symbolic order of language:

> My infancy resembled that of God, my ancestor. I only dimly recall the dark time before I screamed into light, but I was in that dark, like all of us, and I screamed, and there was light. I may have found the light emptier than most. My mother once told me, in an amused voice, that as a baby I screamed continually until one day they sent for a doctor. He examined me minutely then said, "Madam, what you have here is a screaming baby." Clearly she had never wondered what I was screaming *for*. Herself, probably. But soon my vocal chaos acquired the rhythm and colours of articulate speech and I named and commanded a child's small universe. My command was not absolute.
>
> (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 201-202)

The need to work balanced against the desire for freedom has already been discussed briefly in Chapter 1 with reference to *Lanark* and the theme appears again in 'Prometheus' as the death of the narrator's father – satisfying the Oedipal urge in this respect – leaves him with enough of an income that he is not forced to work for money. His Imaginary or semiotic impulses, however, drive him to work creatively. 'It is the drama of infancy which makes men poets,' he states (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 202; the Imaginary therefore makes itself known through the Symbolic, or in Kristeva's terms the genotext disrupts the phenotext), and he does not fully believe he need 'conform' to societal expectations through writing:

> Paul Cezanne once said, "My father was the real genius. He left me a
> million francs." Father Pollard was not such a genius as Father Cezanne,
> but in my eighteenth year he freed me from himself and the curse of
> earning my bread by succumbing to cancer of the spleen. The consequent
> income did not permit me to marry, or support a housekeeper, or to
> frequent respectable brothels; but I silenced the desperate hunger in my
> young heart by studying it, and the world containing it, and by learning
> to read all the great sacred books in their original tongues. And I
> depressed my professors at the Sorbonne by finally submitting no thesis.
> A poet need not truck with bureaucrats.
> (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 202)[100]

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[100] The role of the father here is that of male authority figure acting as a substitute for God the Father and being responsible for guidance and, importantly, discipline, as the male Übermensch figure of Gray's Leviathan illustration indicates (the figure of the authoritative and disciplining father has already been discussed in Chapter 1 with reference to the figure of Father Time and Jock McLeish's father in *1982 Janine* (see footnotes 22 and 24)). In psychoanalytic terms, the father represents the source of prohibition against the incestual taboo, responsible for ensuring that the love of the child for its mother cannot be carried on inappropriately into adulthood (either linguistically or sexually). The prohibition of this initial desire for the mother within the Imaginary realm of the *infans* has been held by Lacan to constitute part of the indescribable 'real' that is lost when the subject enters into language and which subsequently manifests itself, as desire, through slippages and ruptures within the Symbolic order. Butler writes: 'Lacan accounts for this split [between signifier and subject] in terms of the repression of oedipal desires, a founding prohibition, which survives in desire as the Law of the Signifier and conditions the individuation of the subject. This primary repression also constitutes desire as a *lack*, a response to an originary separation which is less the separation of birth than the result of prohibited incestuous union. For Lacan, desire is a "want-to-be," a *manque-à-être* (*FFCP* [*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*] 29), which is perpetually frustrated because of its subjection to the Law of the Signifier, i.e., because it is in language but, therefore, only obliquely present; hence, desire appears together with its prohibition, and so takes the form of a necessary ambivalence' (Butler, 1987, p. 191). This concept of desire will be discussed again shortly. Barthes, in 'The Death of the Author' claims that the hypostases of God are 'reason, science, law' (Barthes, 1977, p. 147), and these must also be the bases of

His father's money enables him to work (freely) for himself instead of for others and, importantly, buys him the time that is necessary to learn about the world from a concerted and first-hand engagement with books (rather than through hasty encounters with Little books, Nutshell books or Short Histories of Nearly Everything), a privilege that most working folk don't have. They are commonly obliged, rather (through the pressures of money and time exerted by the process of holding down a job), to truck with the bureaucrats, even when engaged in the creative work of writing and research.

Despite this apparent freedom, however, the narrator is still bound by the general conditions of subjectivity; his 'freedom' is only economic (though it affords him a greater degree of autonomy in choosing his lifestyle than most). The 'desperate hunger in my young heart' that he describes corresponds to the desire that is generated upon entry into the Symbolic or thetic order, a desire that, ironically, can never be satisfied once the subject has entered into language. The desirous bind of the subject can be explained thus: once the child in the Imaginary stage sees itself in a mirror, according to Lacan, it recognises itself and wants to know its identity. The child can only find this out by entering into the Symbolic order and learning its name and linguistic subject positions, thus it initially desires to gain knowledge via entry into language, which in turn creates a new and insatiable desire.[101] This new desire - which can be articulated very basically as the desire for an identity that is unified or 'whole' (though Lacan would argue that it cannot be articulated symbolically at all) - can never be satisfied since the subject of language is both irrevocably split from the

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paternal responsibility if we take God to be the ultimate Father. The domestic Father Pollard in 'Prometheus' as well as the State Father of the Leviathan illustration must use the joint tactics of Reason (through linguistic prohibitions or language functioning ideologically as 'Persuasion') and Law (through physical prohibitions or 'Force'; Father Pollard, his son recalls, was 'hard to live with. His fits of blinding rage destroyed a great deal of furniture and did not always spare the human body' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 202)) to discipline their children or subjects; Science, as shall soon be explained, has been employed in the services of both.

[101] The experience of the so-called 'mirror stage' therefore prefigures the entry into language. Lacan writes: 'This jubilant assumption of his specular image by the child at the *infans* stage, still sunk in his motor incapacity and nursling dependence, would seem to exhibit in an exemplary situation the symbolic matrix in which the *I* is precipitated in a primordial form, before it is objectified in the dialectic of identification with the other, and before language restores to it, in the universal, its function as subject' (Lacan, 1977, p. 2).

Imaginary phase (which involved, in part, unrivalled maternal love and now becomes the 'lost real') and constructed by linguistic signs which are themselves irreconcilably split; the very condition that creates desire, therefore, simultaneously precludes its satisfaction. In light of this, the desire of subjects to believe themselves unified and autonomous ('whole') and so (consciously or unconsciously) to desire unified (hi)stories that seem to posit them as such is more than understandable, though the sense of satisfaction that such stories may bring can be no more than ideological and illusory.[102]

Desire, which must accompany subjects throughout their lives, is liable to be pinned onto objects in the world – material objects as directed by consumer capitalism, for example, but most directly human objects of romantic love – in the hope that the subject may by obtaining these objects (or at least by obtaining their affection) feel satisfied or 'whole'. Catherine Belsey writes:

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[102] And as Althusser points out, ideology relies upon illusions which seem to correspond with or which in any case allude to reality (even if we don't believe them and perceive them as illusions). He writes: 'Ideology represents the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence' (Althusser, 1992, p. 56). Describing religion, ethics, politics as different forms of ideology or 'world outlooks' which do not correspond directly to reality, he continues: 'However, while admitting that they do not correspond to reality, i.e. that they constitute an illusion, we admit that they do make allusion to reality, and that they need only be 'interpreted' to discover the reality of the world behind their imaginary representation of that world (ideology = *illusion/allusion*)' (*ibid.*). Specific ideologies will present their own singular versions of history, or illusions that are also allusions, wherein subjects may misrecognise themselves as being fulfilled, or at least as being on their way to fulfilment. The ideology of capitalism offers the subject an extremely tempting and allegedly satisfying version of reality, where the subject by participating in the capitalist 'dream' of material wealth will be willing to consume products to the extent required to sustain a booming economy. Capitalism thus posits the subject as a consumer; the subject continues to consume, to use money to buy commodities, in the belief that these commodities are both necessary and will eventually make them happy or 'whole'. This is of course the capitalist myth: that money can, in the end, buy happiness. Since accumulating commodities in this way never brings the sense of complete satisfaction that the subject is striving for, the subject simply keeps consuming in the hope and belief that satisfaction will be just around the corner (or in the next purchase). Of course it never is. The subject's desire therefore, is continually frustrated and manipulated by capitalist ideology; the subject is, as Baker argued in the preceding chapter, deliberately kept in a state of perpetual longing. In Alasdair Gray's fiction this perpetual longing – being simply the bind of the subject in desire of an alternative state of being – is often signified by the sexual desire of his fictional subjects who are literally in bondage (as is the case with so many of Jock McLeish's fantasy women in *1982 Janine* and with the S&M 'games' of Donalda, Senga, Harry and June in *Something Leather*).

> The general effect of the lost but inescapable real of our organic being is
> a dissatisfaction we cannot specify. A gap now exists between the
> organism and the signifying subject, and in that gap desire is born.
> Desire, Lacan says, is for nothing nameable, since it is unconscious, not
> part of the consciousness language gives us. But it is structural, the
> consequence of the gap that marks the loss of the real, and thus a
> perpetual condition. Although desire is unconscious, most of us find a
> succession of love-objects, and fasten our desire onto them, as if they
> could make us whole again, heal the rift between the subject and the
> lost real. In the end, they can't - though, of course, it's possible to have
> a good time in the process of finding that out.
>
> (Belsey, 2002, p. 58-59)

The narrator of 'Prometheus' is no different to the rest of us in this respect, for he too focuses his desire on a human love-object, though he recognises the substitutability of that 'object': 'Lucie, you have made me need you, or if not you, someone' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 232). He has already described his birth as 'the dark time before I screamed into light' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 201), and this 'dark time' can also be considered as the Imaginary realm of the *infans* (associated with maternal love but also with a desire to know one's own identity) before linguistic discourse brings enlightenment through symbolic knowledge. The primordial Imaginary phase is described as an existential state of darkness yearning for light:

> First, then, black void, pure and unflawed by sensations. No heat, no
> cold, no pressure, no extent. What is there to do? Be. Being is all that
> can be done. But gradually a sensation does occur, the sensation of
> duration. We perceive that we have been for a long time, that we will be
> forever in this darkness unless we do something. The more we endure of
> our dark self the less we can bear it. We move from boredom to unease
> and then to panic-horror of an eternity like this. We are in Hell. So the
> cry "Let there be light" is not an order but a desperate prayer to our own
> unknown powers. It is also a scream rejecting everything we know by
> committing us to an unimaginable opposite.
>
> (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 200)

This act of volition on the part of the organism-in-darkness - the 'scream' into light - provides an ironic reversal, for in acting to enter language the organism acts as agent of its own subjection to the 'unimaginable opposite' of the Symbolic order (i.e. we control our own decision to be constructed or 'controlled' by language).[103]

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[103] Although language does not control us entirely. As already pointed out we are not left altogether powerless: we can still make meaningful linguistic choices, though we may be

The narrator begs the love of Lucie to save him from marriage to another woman, the matronly manageress of a café he frequents who clearly represents a return to the maternal bosom, and hence to the primordial state of unenlightenment. After a night of too much wine (and an accompanying loss of 'reason') he describes waking up, 'with a bad headache, in darkness, beside a great soft cleft cliff: the bum of my manageress' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 231). He beseeches Lucie: 'Lucie, if you do not return I must fall forever into her abyss. Lucie, she makes me completely happy, but only in the dark. Oh Lucie Lucie Lucie save me from her' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 232). Lucie, as a poet and intellectual who challenges the narrator's own academic writings, represents (nominally as well as metaphorically) the notion of enlightenment through discourse, yet Lucie, as a subject in desire herself, realises that words, although initially seeming to satisfy the organism's desire for knowledge ultimately prove unfulfilling (they can neither provide unmediated and complete knowledge beyond doubt – can never reach the transcendental signified - nor satisfy the newly created and unconscious desire for unity of identity). She therefore decides to try to express herself through actions rather than words in the hope that this may prove a more fulfilling course of action (thus displacing the focus of her desire, while also attempting to remove herself from language). She writes in a letter to the narrator:

> *I no longer wish to be a poet. It requires an obsessional balancing of tiny phrases and meanings, an immersion in language which seems to me a kind of cowardice. ... it is a waste of time making signboards pointing to the good and bad things in life. If we do not personally struggle towards good and fight the bad, people will merely praise or denounce our signs and go on living as usual. I must make my own life the book where people read what I believe. I decided this years ago when I became a socialist, but I still grasped, like a cuddly toy, my wish to be a poet. That wish came from the dwarfish part of me, the frightened lonely child who hoped that a DECLARATION would bring the love of mother earth, the respect of daddy god, the admiration of the million sisters and brothers who normally do not care if I live or die. Your critical letter had an effect you did not intend. It showed me that my*

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conscious of language's role in our subjectivity. The notion of choice as being connected to autonomy is also one that is liable to manipulation, consumer 'choice' being integral to consumer capitalism which tries to posit us as free individuals capable of exercising choice in a free market (a point that will be returned to with reference to the available choices in hypertext).

declarations are futile. It has taken a while for the message to sink in. I
am grateful to you, but also very bitter. I cannot be completely logical.
<div align="right">(*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 228-229)</div>

Lucie is also aware of the sense in which her words are not her own but are

Other (estranged and alien to her); her 'inhuman' words posit her 'own' identity,

but it is an identity she does not recognise (and does not recognise as human).

She writes: '*I am a monster. The cutting words I write cut my heart too*'

(*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 230); the cutting words that feel as though they cut

her physically can be read interestingly in light of the earlier discussion of

textual and corporal surgery played with by Derrida in *Glas*, Gray in *Poor Things*

and *The Book of Prefaces* and Jackson in *Patchwork Girl*. In all cases the process

of incision (cutting) and graft - of 'human' and textual corpus - creates a new

(and monstrous) text and identity. The idea that we as subjects are both human

and yet also inhuman, involved always in the process of grafting together an

identity (or a set of alien armour) through language is one that has already been

suggested and that will be developed further in Chapter 4. Lucie does in the end

enlighten the narrator, ironically, to the inadequacy of language and the

impossibility of linguistic enlightenment: language is not self-sufficient or

transparent and as such cannot be used either to unify the subject or to grasp

the truth (despite the logocentric claims of Western metaphysical and

philosophical rationalism, based on the logic and reasoning which Lucie here

explicitly rejects).[104] The narrator, who had previously admitted, 'I am a close

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[104] Western metaphysics can be understood in terms of the Platonic 'Ideal', the ideal and
essential form of which objects in the world are mere copies or simulacra; this ideal
form – which can only be held in thought and therefore 'exists' as the signified - is held
to pre-exist its representations and can be thought of basically as 'truth' itself. This
generates the logocentric desire to 'reveal' this underlying truth and explains why Plato
privileged thought above discourse and speech above writing; thought, for Plato, gave
immediate and transparent access to truth (and speech was considered more immediate
to thought than writing in its narrow inscriptional sense). Gregory Ulmer states the case
with reference to the physical object of the book and Derrida's *Of Grammatology*: 'The
idea of a unified totality upon which the concept of the book depends is the notion that
a totality of the signified preexists the totality of the signifier, "supervises its
inscriptions and its signs, and is independent of it in its ideality" (*Grammatology*, 18). In
the metaphysical tradition, in spite of the fact that it served as a metaphor for the soul
and the divine, the book as a written space had no intrinsic value. Rather, the "Platonic"
book records a discourse that has already taken place (the voice of thought in dialogue
with itself – self-presence) and therefore is testable in terms of truth – the resemblance
to what is "engraved on the psychic surface" – intention' (Ulmer, 1985, p. 16). This
logocentrism is precisely what psychoanalysis and poststructuralism attempt to unravel,

reasoner, and love language' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 202), now despairs at its opacity and regresses from the discursive order: 'I quoted Marx to support de Gaulle and Lenin to condemn the students. The uselessness of discourse became so evident that at last I merely howled like a dog and grew unconscious' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 231).

If the narrator is to give up on language, he will give up on his 'last and greatest work,' the long-running and unfinished *Prometheus Unbound* (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 214). This is an intended textual response to Aeschylus's Classical text *Prometheus Bound*, which depicts the mythological figure of Prometheus chained to a rock for his defiance of Zeus (the Olympian patriarch who uses Force to discipline his unruly subject). *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion* states that:

> Prometheus' defiance of the gods captured the romantic imagination and
> has profoundly influenced most modern artistic and literary genres,
> notably because of the monumental nobility in the *Prometheus Bound* of
> Prometheus chained to the rock, hurling defiance at Zeus, and despising
> mere thunderbolts.
> (*The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion*, p. 453)

The figure of Prometheus (although himself a divine figure, a titan who defected to join the gods) highlights the paradox of determinism as it affects the mortal world of men: man is both determined in the sense of being controlled by external forces (in Prometheus's case the god Zeus, who is representative of paternal and State law), and determined in the sense of wishing (freely) to be free (he thereby exerts his free will); the condition of humanity in these terms is as bound yet continually striving for - or in desire of - freedom. According to Hesiod's *Theogeny* (which precedes *Prometheus Bound*), Prometheus is punished by Zeus for stealing fire and giving it to men to use in their war against the gods. He is bound to a pillar and has his liver eaten daily by an eagle (and renewed every night) until eventually being freed by Heracles (who is performing one of his Labours).[105] Hesiod associates the name Prometheus with 'foresight':

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by illustrating that conscious thought is not self-present but is linguistically determined, always already mediated.

[105] As additional punishment to all men for their defiance, Zeus orders Hephaestus the smith (and Greek god of the fire that Prometheus stole) to create a woman from clay. This first woman was Pandora, who was sent as a 'gift' to Epimetheus, Prometheus's

Prometheus may then be viewed as having the foresight to steal fire and give it to men in order that they can use it skilfully against the gods and forge weapons with it. He is therefore representative of the introduction to men of technology in its most basic forms: he lends them both the benefits of his foresight - mental craft, intellectual cunning or 'reason' - and the means (fire) to employ this craft physically.[106]

The *Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion* describes how Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* makes the figure of Prometheus 'yet more of a culture hero, responsible for man's skills and sciences. There is also a persistent tradition that Prometheus created man from clay' (p. 453).[107] This is the version of Prometheus that the narrator of Gray's tale uses. Explaining the name Prometheus to mean both 'foresight' and 'torch', he tells Lucie, 'He was a craftsman, and moulded men from the dust of his mother's body' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 214). He also attributes Prometheus with recognising through his foresight that the gods, in the earlier cataclysmic battle with their forebears the titans, would outwit them; that 'cunning would replace strength as master of the universe' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 215). Prometheus, as metaphorical 'torch' (or fire-bearer), can also then be considered to represent illumination and enlightenment: reason and science are his gifts to enlighten - and purportedly to free - mankind. The irony, however, lies in the fact that the enlightenment of reason, as Gray's narrator finds out to his distress, cannot

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brother. She opens her famous box and releases evil into the world of men in all its multifarious forms; the female is thus sent to deliver perpetual torment to the male. (Source of the foregoing: Simon Price and Emily Kearns (eds.), *The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion*.) The only thing men can use to counteract these evils is Hope, which Prometheus provides, according to the narrator of Gray's story: 'Prometheus saved us by giving us hope (which allows us to despise death) and fire (which the gods wanted to keep to themselves)' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 216). This notion of hope as a persistent quality in men may usefully be compared with the concept of desire already discussed: hope and desire, as perpetual conditions suggesting the possibility of some other state of being (though no other state may in fact be possible) are both necessary to existence yet also liable to ideological manipulation, as has already been suggested.

[106] This is in line with Bolter's earlier definition of *techne*, that 'the craftsman must develop a skill; a technical state of mind in using tools and materials' (Bolter, 1991, p. 35).

[107] The *Dictionary* also points out that this tradition might underlie Hesiod's depiction of Hephaestus's creation of woman (*The Oxford Dictionary of Classical Myth and Religion*, p.453).

finally free the human subject from the conditions of subjectivity; it will, rather, condemn the subject to a perpetual state of desire. The gift of science is likewise an ambivalent blessing. Although many advocates of science argue its particular contribution to bringing humankind nearer to a much sought-after state of 'freedom' - Vannevar Bush, for example, writes:

> Of what lasting benefit has been man's use of science and of the new instruments which his research brought into existence? First, they have increased his control of his material environment. They have improved his food, his clothing, his shelter; they have increased his security and *released him partly from the bondage of a bare existence.* [My emphasis]
> (Bush, 1945, p. 6)

- according to the Prometheus myth science is in the first place used by men to create weapons of war, setting a precedent perhaps for the misuse of technology in civilisations to come. It has also, as observed in the Introduction, been appropriated as a tool of rationalism and demystification, as part of a specific historical and technological 'project', as Marcuse put it, of human domination over nature through knowledge (as indicated by Bush's enthusiastic claim of increased 'control' over the 'material environment'); as a means of achieving freedom through enlightenment then, science - like the principles of 'reason' it serves - must also fail.

Although the *Theogeny* cites Prometheus as being set free from his bondage by Heracles, Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound* does not. According to the narrator of Gray's story, 'Prometheus prophesies that one day he will be released, and tyranny cast down, and men will see their future clear. Aeschylus wrote a sequel, *Prometheus Unbound,* describing that event. It was lost' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly,* p. 218). Prometheus, then, remains bound, but in a state of hope - or desire - that corresponds to the state of the human subject. His release, which the narrator has envisioned for the ending of his own *Prometheus Unbound,* like that of the human subject cannot come about through language, for, the narrator concedes: 'I lack the knowledge to complete it myself' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly,* p. 214); he cannot write Prometheus out of his bind. This lack of complete knowledge, or failure of enlightenment - as the narrator suggested in earlier describing his infancy he has indeed 'found the light emptier than most' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly,* p. 201) - leaves both Prometheus bound and the narrator ultimately lamenting his own subjectivity (and subjection)

which is comparable to the lonely condition of the suffering Prometheus on the rock. Indeed, the two are explicitly equated: the narrator writes at the end, 'The one word this poem exists to clarify is *lonely*. I am Prometheus. I am lonely' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 232).[108]

Prometheus, as the supplier of 'skills and science' to man gives them the tools of applied reason. As already indicated, scientific and technological skills and principles have been employed in service of the metaphysical quest for truth (through rational and scientific 'discovery' or 'revelation'), though any such quest (for complete knowledge, subjective unity or freedom) will not ultimately succeed for scientific knowledge depends itself on language, which will always undo any attempt to posit complete knowledge, presence or 'truth'. The skills that the subject must use to apply science will depend as Bolter has said upon 'a technical state of mind', a mind that is already 'written on' or mediated by writing in its broad sense (Bolter, 1991, p. 35). Writing in this broad sense, as has already been stressed, is itself *tekhne* and as such is really the first and greatest technological leap of all; subjects that are in the Symbolic order of language are thus not only in and bound by language as suggested by Lacan's psychoanalytic theory, they are also in and bound by technology. They have assumed a technological state of mind (a state which is not their 'own' but which constitutes them as subjects; they cannot be subjects without it). Considering the implications for the subject of any technology – including the digital technology of hypertext, which is especially interesting since it involves a

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[108] And there is evidence in the text to suggest that the equation between the human protagonist and the divine Prometheus is more than metaphorical. The narrator in describing his infancy has said that it 'resembled that of God, my ancestor' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 201), thus associating himself with the divine, and his predicted dissatisfaction with 'the light' exhibits the Promethean quality of foresight, the ability to 'see [his] future clear' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 218), although this foresight is not enough to free him. In this Prometheus is domestic man, who can use his intellectual powers but cannot in the end use them to free himself. The divine figure of Prometheus has manifested himself in the form of a human mortal – the narrator – in order to illustrate that their conditions of subjectivity are identical (to one another) but also irreconcilable (in themselves). Prometheus is then a general evocation of the particular condition of man. This idea is in itself bound to a notion of being able to achieve a general (or abstract) and particular (or involved) perspective on the conditions of existence and subjectivity, a notion which again permeates Gray's oeuvre and is crucial to a consideration of the subject who wishes to engage critically with text. It will be discussed again towards the end of this chapter.

redoubling, a technological mediation of the written word - must then always come back to this point. The image of 'Vitruvian Man' is particularly relevant to the concept of the subject as bound by technology. In this instance the subject is encircled by technical principles of symmetry he can neither exceed nor escape, and is himself also perfectly symmetrical: he is thus both in (a subject of) and bound by (subject to) technology.[109] The subtitle of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* - a text that has already been of considerable interest in this thesis so far - is *The Modern Prometheus*: Victor Frankenstein, too, is bound and conditioned by the technology which, as in the popular myth of Prometheus, enables him to create or fashion a man. And as Frankenstein's folly has already made clear (along with that of the risible Vague McMenamy), the employment of technology for vain or dubious ends is likely to be destructive rather than enlightening.

Such vanity is referred to in Gray's Leviathan illustration of *Unlikely Stories, Mostly*. It contains the message: 'By Arts Is Formed That Great Mechanical Man Called A State: Foremost of the Beasts of the Earth For Pride.' The implication of the illustration is that pride on a powerful scale can quickly become tyranny (for power corrupts). The State is here referred to as a 'Beast' and in *Lanark* it is known as the 'Creature'; as with Frankenstein's 'creature' (and with Bella Baxter) what has been created has the potential for unruly and unforeseen

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[109] Da Vinci drew his 'Vitruvian Man' using the principles outlined by Vitruvius, an engineer and architect who suggested that temples could be built based on the relative compositional proportions of the human body, which he considered to be perfectly proportional. Thus a process of rationalism and reason is applied even to a consideration of the human form (see www.aiwaz.net/modules.php?name=News&file=article&sid=24 for further consideration). This links Vitruvius or 'Vitruvian Man' to Prometheus (the context in which Gray uses the drawing) in that both are concerned with reason, science and metaphysical rationalism. (There may also be a further link between the two as Vitruvius was interested in the liver function of animals and recognised the importance of this organ for an animal's health; this ties in both with modern knowledge of the liver's capacity for regeneration and with Prometheus's own regenerating liver. See www.mlahanas.de/Greeks/Med.htm). Gray's redepiction of 'Vitruvian Man' sees him assume the visual position of Christ on the cross (arms outstretched, feet pointing straight downwards), thus associating him with Christ's suffering and connecting this with Zeus's 'crucifixion' of Prometheus on the rock (the narrator of 'Prometheus' relates that 'Zeus punished Prometheus by crucifying him on a granite cliff' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 216) and later describes God in his *Prometheus Unbound* as standing 'on the height with his arms flung sideways in a gesture which resembles the crucified Prometheus' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 224)): both iconographies (Christ and Prometheus) are representative of the suffering and bound condition of the human subject.

behaviour, beyond the control of the subjects who have created or who constitute it. And technology is in all cases heavily involved. What is suggested is that hand in hand with vanity, technology can create monsters.[110] The 'Great Mechanical Man' of the State as already noted has the instruments of Force and Persuasion at his disposal and may use them together to discipline his subjects and make sure they obediently 'work by themselves'. The creation of States and subjugation of subjects depends on both forcible repression and ideological persuasion; the narrator of 'Prometheus' argues that, 'states are also formed through warfare. They are managed by winners who enrich themselves at the expense of the rest and pretend their advantages are as natural as the seasons, their mismanagement as inevitable as bad weather' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 216).[111] Both forms of power consolidation or 'management' are supported by

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[110] Bernstein, writing of *Poor Things* comments: 'In choosing *Frankenstein* as the central foundation on which to construct his own text, Gray selects a formidable myth. Shelley's tale of the Swiss student who follows his curiosity and vanity into a perverse blend of science old and new haunted the Victorian era with its accelerated scientific and technological development. The key fear that Shelley's novel arouses is that of the monstrosity resulting from ethical abandonment' (Bernstein, 1999, p. 112).

[111] This persuasion of subjects regarding the inevitability of their situation (which will function to defuse any politic impetus for *change*) is reminiscent of the political manipulation of 'history' already witnessed in 'Five Letters from an Eastern Empire', where Bohu's poem is taken to justify the emperor by presenting him as 'a final, competent, all-embracing force, as unarguable as the weather, as inevitable as death' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly* p. 132). The sword of Force in that story belongs ultimately to the 'emperor', but is the responsibility of Fieldmarshal Ko, 'who commands all imperial armies and police and defeats all imperial enemies' (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 107); the mace of Persuasion falls under the auspices of the imperial headmaster of literature, as has already been exemplified in the discussion of his role in Chapter 1. The capacity for language both to construct the subject and to be used persuasively to shore up corrupt regimes is covered by Gaggi in his discussion of subjectivity in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. He writes of Kurtz's involvement in the unethical project of colonialism in Africa: 'Kurtz's voice produces an expanding aura that seems to originate in a transcendental subject - a genuinely remarkable man with immense power to do good and evil. But in fact there is no Kurtz behind the voice. His language is not the product of his subjectivity and power, but his subjectivity and power are the products of his language. Language is an instrument of politics rather than ontology. And Kurtz's language represents the power of discourse to do violence' (Gaggi, 1997, p. 36). Evidence of language being manipulated politically and used as a tool of subjection can be found in countless examples throughout the fiction of Alasdair Gray: Bohu's poem is an instance already discussed, and the advertising slogans of *Lanark*, too, have been seen to self-consciously 'overstimulate', 'misinform' and 'corrupt' (see footnote 4 and *Lanark*, p. 434). Frequently, those subjected by discourse in Gray's fiction are Scots who feel subjugated by the confident language employed by those speaking with Southern English voices (representative of the distribution of political power in the UK). These confident speakers need not necessarily come from Southern England, as Gray points out

technology: Force by repressive and military technologies (the Repressive State

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in *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland 1997*, but speaking with such an accent and speaking with authority, Gray suggests, confers power: 'In the first decades after parliamentary union many Scots lords, landed and legal, took pride in talking the speech of the commoners, which had also been the speech of the royal Stuarts before they travelled south. With every generation since then the speech difference increased until now the voices of the Scottish ruling class sound exactly like those of the English. The noise of such voices braying in parliament (for dominating accents are as liable to bray as lower-class voices to mumble) gives a majority of Scots the sensation of living under a foreign occupation; but I am sure many English feel that way too' (*Why Scots Should Rule Scotland 1997*, p. 56). The same point is made by a member of the English theatre company Jock McLeish encounters in *1982 Janine*, who makes the comment that, "Bluster has no effect on the British public when uttered with a regional accent. You've got to be damned hard and dry and incisive. Use an Anglo-Scots accent. The Scotch do change their accents when they get into positions of power" (*1982 Janine*, p. 248). Subjects who speak in a regional accent and without sufficient assertiveness, it is suggested, will be unlikely to have their voices heard. McLeish imagines lecturing to his girlfriend Denny, in a monologue that highlights her subjection and bondage at the level of work as well as language (and manipulation by the educational Ideological State Apparatus): "if you go on strike and demonstrate for better wages (you won't, you have no union, but if you do) then cabinet ministers drawing salaries of twenty-nine-thousand-nine-hundred-and-fifty-a-year (on top of interest on private investments) will appear on television to explain in brave, loud, haw-haw voices that there is not enough money to help you, that your selfish greed is the thing which has reduced Britain to its present deplorable plight. And if you are asked to say something in your own defence, Denny, your voice over the wireless waves will sound stupid and funny because you don't know how to address the public. Your school did not teach you to speak or think, it taught you to sit in rows and be quiet under strong teachers or rowdy under weak ones. The people who manage you, Denny, have been taught to make brazen speeches in firm clear voices, THAT is FAR more important than geography or technology, because RHETORIC RULES, O.K.?" (*1982 Janine*, p. 215). The RHETORIC that rules Denny can also (as with *Lanark*'s advertisements) be seen to be (literally) capitalist: capitalism, as the dominant political ideology in the UK in 1982, as now, functions through the apparatuses of the State and through the corporations that support (some would say run) it (see Monbiot, 2000) and provide work for its subjects. Jock's imagined lecturing of Denny is somewhat ironic considering both that Jock's monologue tells Denny that she is being dictated to by itself taking the form of dictation and also because Jock himself is interpellated as an ideal capitalist subject: he voted for Thatcher's government and as such has supported the very system - and erosion of the labour unions - he would denounce to Denny, although Jock's political conscience does not let him off easily for such hypocrisy. 'I am very sorry God,' he says in one of his frequent mental conversations with the deity, 'I would like to ignore politics but POLITICS WILL NOT LET ME ALONE' (*1982 Janine*, p. 231-232). Jock's capitalist politics continually come back to haunt him: 'Scotland is fucked,' his conscience forces him to concede, 'and I am one of the fuckers who fucked her' (*1982 Janine*, p. 136), though he still tries hard (rather unconvincingly) to convince himself that his complicity was merely small-scale: 'I REFUSE TO FEEL BITTER OR GUILTY ABOUT THIS. I am not a gigantically horrible fucker. I'm an ordinary fucker. And no hypocrite. I refuse to deplore a process which has helped me become the sort of man I want to be: a selfish shit but a comfortable selfish shit, like everyone I meet nowadays' (*1982 Janine*, p. 136-137). Jock doth, however, protest too much: far from becoming 'the sort of man' he wanted, he has become a sad and lonely alcoholic, so tortured by his own thoughts that he must resort to fantasies and booze to try to stifle them.

Apparatus); Persuasion by the technology of language (as it is used by the Ideological State Apparatuses) and, more recently, by the technologies of the communications media.

The power of the media to focus people's attention upon certain aspects of their lives while distracting it from others (usually more pressing and sinister), is well depicted in Gray's short story 'Moral Philosophy Exam', where the media function ideologically to confirm capitalism:

> A big television company regularly broadcast a news programme
> informing the viewers of bad deeds: not the bad deeds of corporations
> who might withdraw advertising revenues, or the bad deeds of big
> businessmen and government officials who could afford to bring strong
> libel actions, but the exploitive practices of small private landlords,
> tradesmen and moneylenders. This did some social good and entertained
> viewers, who were also encouraged to help the programme by supplying
> it with evidence of scandalous instances.
>
> (*The Ends of Our Tethers*, p. 63)

Whilst the 'public interest' programme here described admittedly does 'some social good', by focussing on small-scale and domestic crimes it serves to deflect attention away from crimes of a larger scale (at corporate or governmental level) and ensures that subjects go on working happily 'by themselves' - oblivious to the manipulation that is taking place - supplying the makers of the programme with stories in the thought that they are acting for the social good. This action in turn keeps them from acting in directions where it would really matter and where it might threaten to upset the political status quo. In effect, it ensures that subjects quarrel amongst themselves rather than quarrelling with the State and its Apparatuses or with large corporations (and as suggested in the last footnote - (111) - under capitalism the interests of big business and those of the State cannot be separated easily, if at all).

Jean Baudrillard in typically apocalyptic style suggests that 'we will never in future be able to separate reality from its statistical, simulative projection in the media' (Baudrillard, 1989, p. 210), and while this statement is grounded in the postmodernist claim that reality must always be mediated, that historical 'facts' come to us of necessity through representative constructions that cannot be clearly or finally distinguished from fictions, for Baudrillard, the consequences for the subject are fairly drastic; the subject, he suggests, will be unable to exert themselves or act meaningfully in the face of these media

representations or simulations of 'reality'. The subject instead becomes powerless, a passive recipient (an object rather than a subject) of what he terms 'hyperreality'.[112] The media and the media technology which enable it to be such a ubiquitous presence in the lives of subjects, for Baudrillard also functions (ideologically) to blind them to reality, to obscure their real conditions of existence by making 'reality' indistinguishable from its media projection. And since language constructs the subject and language is frequently related to the subject via the media, Gaggi asks whether the media may not therefore construct and interpellate the subject on its own terms:

> [I]f the subject is wholly a construction, what ethical constraints on that construction could be possible? In an age characterized by the ubiquity of mass media representations and by the unprecedented cultural power of those representations, might the deconstruction of the subject, regardless of the ethics and politics of those who theorize the subject, license the construction of social subjects who behave and consume in ways most beneficial to those who control representation? Given the power of the media, the subject deconstructed inevitably will be reconstructed in some form, old or new, and if so, on what basis shall that reconstruction be conducted?
>
> (Gaggi, 1997, p. xi)

Against this background of such heavy implication in the subjection of the subject at the levels of both force and persuasion, and suspicion at the ways in which technologies of the media may be used to construct passive and powerless subjects or consumers it can be difficult to see how technology may be extricated from these uses and applied in more positive ways, or indeed how hypertext as an advanced technology of language or writing can fail to be complicit in the technological 'project'. But the implication of technology in the subjection of the subject is not merely a consequence of its being deliberately employed by those in power and used in the service of force and ideology: as has already been argued, subjects are already in technology when they enter into language. We cannot, then, simply do without technology or regress from its use. But as with language this should not leave us as subjects completely powerless; there are still decisions to be made regarding exactly how technology is to be used (just as there are linguistic choices to be made), and if we cannot always

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[112] Although he also goes on to argue that this passivity is not without some form of agency, that it in fact constitutes a *strategy* on the part of the subject, albeit a negative one (see 'The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media' in Baudrillard, 1989).

make these decisions on an individual basis, we may at least attempt collectively to influence how they are made at governmental level (through political protest, for example, as has been the case for many years with the work of the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament whose presence at the Faslane nuclear base in Scotland, incidentally, has frequently over the years been supported by Alasdair Gray).

The narrator of Gray's story 'Wellbeing' in *The Ends of Our Tethers* describes a dream he has in which advanced technological devices are used to protect the wealthy and powerful and to repress anyone else:

> I dreamed of a future state in which human police had disappeared
> because the rich no longer needed them. The rich never left their
> luxurious, well-defended homes except when visiting each other in
> vehicles moving at the speed of light. Each home was protected by a
> metallic creature the size of a kitten and resembling a cockroach. It hid
> under chairs and sideboards and was programmed to kill intruders.
> (*The Ends of Our Tethers*, p. 165)

The Ends of Our Tethers is Gray's most recent fictional collection and displays a marked and grown sense of anger and frustration at the misuse of technology in general, at its implication in such destructive purposes as those imagined in 'Wellbeing' (and at its perceived negative effect on the private lives of individuals as already witnessed in 'Pillow Talk' and 'No Bluebeard'). Although 'Wellbeing' is not itself a new story it fits well with the agitated mood of the rest of the collection. Gray does indeed appear to be at the end of his tether, losing patience and faith that humans might work together and employ technology wisely for the common good.[113] That this could be possible is suggested earlier in 'Wellbeing':

> I used to have several friends with homes and visited each of them once
> a fortnight. They gave me food and a bed for the night and put my
> clothes through a machine. Modern machines do not only wash, dry and
> iron, they remove stains, mend holes, replace lost buttons and re-dye
> faded fabric to look like new. Or am I dreaming that? If I am dreaming

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[113] The notion of humans as bound or tethered is reflected in both the title and cover art of this collection, which depicts a naked man (Prometheus again perhaps, a little older than before?) with ropes around his neck and waist being pulled in opposite directions by two monstrous skulls who hold the ropes with their teeth. That these monstrous skulls may represent humans made monstrous by technology fits in with some of the ideas already suggested in this chapter - that technology both dehumanises and creates monsters - that will be explored further in the next.

such a machine it is certainly possible because, as William Blake said, nothing exists which was not first dreamed.

(*The Ends of Our Tethers*, p. 163)[114]

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[114] This idea that positive change is something that needs first to be imagined is one that is familiar from other encounters with Gray's fiction. In *Lanark*, for example, Duncan Thaw explains to his friend Kenneth McAlpin that Glasgow is not being improved because no one imagines its improvement: '"Glasgow is a magnificent city," said McAlpin. "Why do we hardly ever notice that?" "Because nobody imagines living here," said Thaw. ... "think of Florence, Paris, London, New York. Nobody visiting them for the first time is a stranger because he's already visited them in paintings, novels, history books and films. But if a city hasn't been used by an artist not even the inhabitants live there imaginatively. What is Glasgow to most of us? A house, the place we work, a football park or golf course, some pubs and connecting streets. That's all. No, I'm wrong, there's also the cinema and library. And when our imagination needs exercise we use these to visit London, Paris, Rome under the Caesars, the American West at the turn of the century, anywhere but here and now. Imaginatively Glasgow exists as a music-hall song and a few bad novels. That's all we've given to the world outside. It's all we've given to ourselves"' (*Lanark*, p. 243). Glasgow, Thaw suggests, has not yet been imaginatively transformed by art and as such its inhabitants are unable to conceive of Glasgow as a city that can change, that can become more than just the sum of a house, place of work, football park etc. In this can be seen Gray's own sense of responsibility as an artist (as a writer of books for the public and a painter of portraits and murals for the public) to creatively transform Glasgow and indeed Scotland, as he does in his own work. Thaw's view of his function as artist links the notion of the artist's creative responsibility with the concept of the need for 'work' that has already been discussed; the nobility of the idea that the artist is in some way a martyr to his work, burdened by it and by the sense that it should be shared in a socially responsible way is undercut by the less flattering but equally plausible idea that the artist simply functions out of the selfish need for work and purpose: 'After a moment McAlpin said, "So you paint to give Glasgow a more imaginative life?",' to which Thaw responds, "No. That's my excuse. I paint because I feel cheap and purposeless when I don't" (*Lanark*, p. 244). The tradition of the artist's role as dreamer, responsible for imaginative transformations which may point to the possibility of real political change harks back to William Blake's visionary dream tradition, as Gray points out. That Gray's 'work' follows in the tradition of Blake will be suggested again in the next chapter. Gray's seeming frustration with technology may also be compared with Blake's. J. Bronowski writes that Blake's 'prejudices against some kinds of painting and many kinds of science grew stronger, for the failure of his Radical hopes now made him suspicious of rational and material plans for human betterment' (from the introduction to *William Blake: A Selection of Poems and Letters*, p. 10). The artist, to Blake and to Gray can be seen to be a creative agent for change, and the concepts of agency and responsibility can be contrasted with the view of the human subject as subjugated and determined by external forces. It is interesting to note that in 'Five Letters from an Eastern Empire' the agency of the artist or tragic poet Bohu in creating a poem that condemns the emperor (and is imaginatively and politically volatile) is wholly undermined by the creative transformations of the headmaster of literature. The free will of the artist is thus crushed - or at least manipulated in ways intended to function ideologically and politically conservatively - by the external forces of the State or in this case empire. What is noticeable is that the artist in this situation retains complete integrity, though his words have been used against his wishes; this may help to explain Gray's often scarcely veiled contempt for the critics and academics who can twist words to suit themselves, disregarding what the artist may claim to be the work's 'intention'. (Gray's own tendency to want to control the way his work is received

This dream of the possibilities for technology may seem rather prosaic, but technological innovations can here be seen to improve the conditions of everyday life in ways that would benefit most working folk by easing their domestic workload; it is certainly a more optimistic dream of technology than that expressed formerly and highlights the point made in the Introduction that it is not technology by itself that does damage, but technology as it is manipulated politically, often destructively. As Gray's narrator here points out, the very act of imagining such positively useful implementations of technology should serve to instate them as real possibilities.[115]

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will be discussed again in the following chapter.) In 'Prometheus' Lucie tells the narrator: "At university you were my special study. Do you know how the professors use you? Not to free, but to bind. You are understood to support their systems. The students study commentaries on your book, not the book itself. I defended your assertion of the radical, sensual monosyllable. I was not allowed to complete the course" (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 212): Academia, here as in Bohu's empire, is shown to function as an Ideological State Apparatus; one that all the while binds as it pretends to enlighten.

[115] Though one must be careful not to suggest that technology can simply be extracted from its negative uses and put to purely positive ones, for inherent in such a simplistic view is the belief again that technology could always be used to free rather than to bind human subjects (thus merely restating the object of the so-called technological 'project', which is to create some sort of rational Utopia such as that envisioned by Vannevar Bush and others). As has already been pointed out, technology is already complicit in conditioning subjectivity – it always already binds – and cannot therefore ever be used to attain complete freedom (though this does not of course mean that it cannot be used positively, just that this should not be equated with or mistaken for the path to liberation). Kitwood, though his argument seems well enough motivated, misses this point and thus argues naïvely for something that is impossible: a conscious return to an unconscious (and so pre-linguistic) state and for a regression from and re-appropriation of technology. He writes that, 'every advance in consciousness, through education, the arts, all efforts at 'consciousness-raising', needs to be accompanied by a parallel return to the unconscious, a renewal of contact with the world of phantasy which is present in all persons but denied by most. And this, not in quietism or pietism, but in the midst of current struggles and projects. For here lies the source of energy, the fertile soil of new vision. So we look for a culture in which, eventually, the Western 'error' of forcing a division between conscious and unconscious - that error established by the 'scientific revolution' and 'corrected for' by psychoanalysis - is transcended. And we look, eventually, for new forms of scientific and technical practice, integrated into genuinely human concerns, the material basis for the freedom and well-being of all' (Kitwood, 1984, p.104). Better, I think (or more measured), to take Nietzsche's view of *The Gay Science* that one form of technological employment will not necessarily preclude another (one 'bad' use being the binary opposite of the 'good' other), but rather that one may contain the possibilities (trace or inscription) of alternative others. Technological 'freedom' or progress, then, will be inevitably accompanied by technological bondage. Nietzsche writes: 'The aim of science should be to give men as much pleasure and as little displeasure as possible? But what if pleasure and displeasure were so tied together that whoever *wanted* to have as much as possible of one *must* also have as much as possible of the other - that whoever wanted to learn to "jubilate up to

It can also be argued that the two dreams display differing views on the relationship between technology and the political economy of capitalism. In the first dream here described, technology reinforces the conditions of capitalism by protecting only the wealthy and ensuring that anyone who 'intrudes' upon or challenges the capitalist order will be punished. In the second dream, technology can be viewed as subverting capitalism through the machines that mend clothes and make them look new again; this will mean that people need not always buy new clothes, thus ensuring that they do not consume in the ways necessary for capitalism to thrive. Michael Thompson in his book *Rubbish Theory* suggests that goods and objects in the world can be divided into three categories: durable (objects like antiques, for example, that are unlikely to need replaced in a lifetime); transient (objects that will depreciate in value and deteriorate in a relatively short period of time, like clothes and cars and foodstuffs); and rubbish (objects of no value). These categories are tied to the normal conditions of production and consumption. Very basically speaking, the capitalist rules of production and consumption depend on transient objects being consumed at a rate that will require continual reproduction. Durable objects, too, will eventually need to be replaced. Rubbish, being of no value, does not really interfere with these economic rules; rubbish, rather, is taken as the rather unpleasant but necessary result or by-product of objects from the durable and transient categories losing their use-value (by being worn out or broken, for example). So durable and transient items, in the normal order of things, can slip into the rubbish category through time, from whence they will largely be ignored. Rubbish, Thompson argues, is a covert category that people do not in general like to acknowledge: rubbish, including bodily waste, is rather to be quickly disposed of (and dealt with or consumed by refuse disposal services) or placed out of sight and ignored. Items in the rubbish category are destined to stay there and cannot make the transition back to transience or the leap to durability (with the exception of some art objects, like Marcel Duchamp's

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the heavens" would also have to be prepared for "depression unto death"? And that is how things may well be. ... So far [science] may still be better known for its power of depriving man of his joys and making him colder, more like a statue, more stoic. But it might yet be found to be the *great dispenser of pain*. And then its counterforce might be found at the same time: its immense capacity for making new galaxies of joy flare up' (Nietzsche, 1974, p. 85-86).

famous urinal or some of Damien Hirst's formaldehyde creations, which make art out of waste and thus transfer it as art object to the durable category. This type of transference, Thompson points out, is closely connected to social class since those who decide that a particular item of rubbish warrants the title of art are unlikely to be members of the working class who have found a decomposing animal in their back garden and decided it ought to be worth some money and critical attention. Only those in the upper social classes may confer value on the valueless in this way[116]). The clothes-mending machines that Gray's narrator describes in his dream upset the normal movements between Thompson's categories and the production/consumption ratio that sustains capitalism by enabling working class people to use the machines to make worn-out (and valueless) clothes wearable (and valuable) again and allowing the (hitherto impossible) transfer from the covert category of rubbish back to the overt category of transient (or perhaps even durable) object.[117]

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[116] Illustrating this point well is the piece of art entitled 'bum garden' in Gray's *Something Leather*. The bum garden is a piece of 'conceptual art' made by public schoolgirl Harry when she is just seven years old. Because of Harry's élite social status her childish bum garden is taken seriously by the art world, or, specifically, by the media who control it: 'Since Harry is splendidly gaunt, related to royalty and makes weirdly fashionable objects she is photographed for glossy publications financed by art and property manipulators' (*Something Leather*, p. 145).

[117] This hugely oversimplifies Thompson's complex and fascinating study (see Thompson, 1979). Thompson argues that recycling of waste - and the clothes-mending machines of the narrator's dream in 'Wellbeing' may be viewed as recycling machines - is a potentially subversive activity involving individuals in the consumption of rubbish (normally left to refuse disposal services and generally thought of with revulsion) and the transformation (or reproduction) of rubbish back to something of value (though he associates recycling explicitly with the middle classes, which restricts its force or potency in this sense). He writes of the recycling phenomenon: 'Since the 'production to transient to consumption' sequence provides the norm, and since the rubbish category is also covert, there is a tendency to ignore, and even deliberately to deny, the existence of this consumption of rubbish. Consumption is normally assumed to mean the consumption of valuable things and, in consequence, a person's level of consumption provides an indication of his status and power. The overt inclusion of the transfer 'rubbish to consumption' would play havoc with keeping up with the Joneses. After all, the his-and-her-Jensen-Interceptor family is hardly likely to be outfaced by the ardent composters next door. But perhaps this is not so ridiculous as it sounds. If one accepts the consumption of rubbish as part of consumption - that is, if one makes rubbish overt rather than covert - then the compost heap becomes a powerful status symbol. The growing concern with ecology, pollution, and conservation inevitably makes rubbish overt and allows the development of that most prestigious of all consumption activities, conspicuous non-consumption. Hence the compost heaps, the macrobiotic food, the little French cars, the dendrophilia, and the country cottages of those whose income and

Both dreams in 'Wellbeing' are equal technological possibilities, but capitalism, as an economic system based around the creation and preservation of monetary wealth in a competitive market, may be more likely to realise the dream - or nightmare - where technology merely protects wealth. Technology in this case, in serving to protect the wealthy physically with light-speed vehicles and home protection devices would also shield them from the evidence of life outside their own environment, which will not likely be so comfortable. Such a notion of technology has been explored by Gray before. In 'The Trendelenburg Position', technology in the form of 'virtual reality' helmets (and even complete suits) enables individuals to protect or certainly distract themselves from the life that goes on in the world of *real* reality beyond the virtual environment. The subject can again retreat from the world of (necessary) political action - to a safe, virtual world, one in which they need not be faced with any difficult or serious decisions and choices. 'The Trendelenburg Position' sees a dentist talk to a patient about his opinions on the world, including his view of virtual reality. The patient, reclining in a chair in the so-called Trendelenburg position, is kept in this position from which she is told she is in no danger of losing consciousness, yet from which she cannot easily move while the dentist works on her and talks to her:

> I am starting the motor - which lowers and tilts the chair - so easily and smoothly that your heart and semi-circular canals have suffered no shock or disturbance. The Trendelenburg Position - that is what we call the position you are in, Mrs Chigwell. This chair gets you into it, and out of it, in a manner which ensures you cannot possibly faint.
>
> (*Ten Tales Tall & True*, p. 102-103)

The position, along with the fact that the dentist is working on her mouth so that she may not speak also ensures that Mrs Chigwell must endure the banal chatter of the dentist without being able either to get away or contribute to the conversation herself. Simply speaking, the dentist can keep her where he wants her and she has no recourse to complaint or escape. Since Mrs Chigwell cannot answer for herself, the dentist simply answers his own questions for her: 'Do I

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educational status are such that never for one moment could we confuse them with rude peasants so poor as to be unable to afford chemical fertilizers, fresh meat and Mother's Pride bread, chain saws, and proper vehicles' (Thompson, 1979, p. 117). The notion of the subversive nature of recycling will be discussed again in Chapter 4 with relation to the recycling of texts.

bother you, talking away like this? No? Good. You probably realize I do it to stop your imagination wandering, as it would tend to do if I worked in perfect silence' (*Ten Tales Tall & True*, p. 103). He here not only talks on her behalf, he also presumes to tell her what she thinks or 'realises' and does it deliberately to stop her thinking for herself, as she may do if her imagination has the chance to wander. In effect, the Trendelenburg position keeps Mrs Chigwell in the same state as someone wearing one of the virtual reality suits the dentist describes to her, a state wherein the virtual reality environment surrounding them both keeps and distracts subjects from questioning or complaining about their position in the outside world.

He describes to Mrs Chigwell the benefits of virtual reality helmets:

> by the end of the century everybody will have headgear. Their sanity will depend on it. Am I boring you? Shall I change the subject? Would you like to suggest another topic of conversation? No? Rinse your mouth out all the same.
> The hat of the future – in my opinion – will ... have a visor like old suits of armour or modern welders have, but when pulled down over your face the inside works as a telly screen. ... The difference between one hat and another will be the number of different channels you can afford. The wealthy will have no limit to them, but the homeless and unemployed will benefit too. I am not one of these heartless people who despise the unemployed for watching television all day. Without some entertainment they would turn to drugs, crime and suicide even more than they're doing already.
>
> (*Ten Tales Tall & True*, p. 106-107)

Virtual reality from this perspective simply becomes the new opiate of the masses, replacing television as the broadcast media form that keeps subjects viewing passively and so diverts them from alternative action. It also confirms social inequalities by enabling the wealthy to exercise a greater degree of choice in deciding which virtual realities to 'participate' in. In all cases, however, the real conditions of existence (and subjection) are being ignored. As the marginal comment suggests, virtual reality is taken to provide '*THE ANTIDOTE FOR EVERYTHING*' (*Ten Tales Tall & True*, p. 109) and protects subjects from what they would rather not see: 'The hat of tomorrow – an audio-visual helmet with or without the suit – will not only release you into an exciting world of your own choice; it will shut out the dirty, unpleasant future my wife keeps worrying about' (*Ten Tales Tall & True*, p. 108-109). This 'dirty, unpleasant future'

includes extreme poverty and homelessness yet virtual reality, the dentist maintains, would distract thought from even these:

> In tropical countries, like India, homeless people live and sleep quite comfortably in the streets. ... Why not add Virtual Reality visors and pressure pads to ... suits and give them to our paupers? Tune them into a channel of a warm Samoan beach under the stars with the partner of their choice and they'll happily pass a rainy night in the rubble of a burnt-out housing scheme and please rinse your mouth out.
> (*Ten Tales Tall & True*, p. 109-110)

Virtual reality as a use of technology, then, instead of addressing social problems and attempting to redress inequalities functions simply to direct attention away from them. Subjects engaged in virtual reality are kept - like Mrs Chigwell in the dentist's chair - entirely prone and subdued.

As argued in the preceding chapter there is a danger that authors of hypermedia may attempt to create similar such sensory virtual environments, environments that fuse audio-visual data (and in the future, as Delany and Landow enthusiastically suggested, may include other sensory data of smell and touch) in an aim to represent 'the complex interrelatedness of everyday consciousness' (Delany and Landow, 1991, p. 7). Such hypermedia applications may offer little more than passive entertainment: visually impressive environments that absorb attention but do not really engage the subject in the work of constructive thought or decision-making. Bolter writes of the possibilities for a hypermedia encyclopaedia:

> In more than one proposal for the encyclopedia of the future, the pictures, sounds, and even smells and tastes seem to overwhelm and replace verbal text. The result would not be principally a hypertext, but instead a multimedia presentation in which the computer addresses all the reader's senses and puts the reader into the situation described. Readers do not read about the French Revolution; they visit Paris in 1789. They do not read about the chemistry of rubber; they take part in an experiment. They do not read about Jupiter, but instead board a simulated spacecraft heading for the planet.
> Such multimedia displays would seem to expand the range and the power of the encyclopedia, to be the computer's equivalent to the diagrams or pictures common in printed encyclopedias since the 18th century. ... But there is a danger in such an encyclopedia of losing the symbolic character of reading and writing. As an encyclopedic computer program grows more elaborate, it may make more decisions for the reader and present these decisions in a perceptual, rather than symbolic form. The reader becomes a mere viewer, and the encyclopedia becomes interactive television, or what is now sometimes called "virtual reality." ... [C]omputerized simulated environments are in general anti-books.

> Entering into an environment is the antithesis of reading, because in
> place of a symbolic structure of words, equations, graphs, and images,
> the program offers the user the illusion of perceptual experience. An
> encounter with texts is replaced by perceptions, and the distancing and
> abstracting quality of text is lost.
>
> (Bolter, 1991, p. 97-99)[118]

Many examples of hypermedia, Coover argues, lack genuine interactivity. Instead, he writes, 'the reader is commonly obliged ... to enter the media-rich but ineluctable flow as directed by the author or authors: In a sense, it's back to the movies again, that most passive and imperious of forms' (Coover, 1999). That hypermedia may be manipulated to the same 'realistic' ends as cinema - as a media form that simply seems to present or represent alternative 'realities' and as such functions to provide the sort of cinematic escapism Thaw described to McAlpin in *Lanark* - is one that Ulmer, too, has suggested:

> The same drive of realism that led in cinema to the "invisible style" of
> Hollywood narrative films, and to the occultation of the production
> process in favor of a consumption of the product as if it were "natural,"
> is at work again in computing. Articles published in computer magazines
> declare that "the ultimate goal of computer technology is to make the
> computer disappear, that the technology should be so transparent, so
> invisible to the user, that for practical purposes the computer does not
> exist. In its perfect form, the computer and its application stand outside
> data content so that the user may be completely absorbed in the subject
> matter – it allows a person to interact with the computer just as if the
> computer were itself human" (*Macuser*, March, 1989). It was clear that
> the efforts of critique to expose the oppressive effects of "the suture" in
> cinema (the effect binding the spectator to the illusion of a complete
> reality) had made no impression on the computer industry, whose
> professionals (including many academics) are in the process of designing
> "seamless" information environments for hypermedia applications.
>
> (Ulmer, 1991, section 1)

Such environments would function as 'virtual reality': a reality that is only illusory but which is at the same time realistic enough to keep subjects

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[118] Although Bolter describes such simulated hypermedia environments as anti-books, he also points out that books themselves – and in particular genre fiction like science fiction or romance - can be guilty of keeping their readers passive. In the case of reading such fiction, he argues, as with watching television, 'the reader or viewer assumes a passive role, enters into the text, and loses any real critical distance. In fact, passive reading, the desire to be surrounded by the text, is as close as reading can come to being a perceptual rather than a semiotic experience. ... [T]he passive role of the genre reader is a way of watching a book as if it were television. The goal of passive reading is to forget oneself by identifying with the narrative world presented' (Bolter, 1991, p. 228). This question of the possibility of the reader attaining a 'critical distance' from text will be looked at again shortly.

distracted from the serious business of real life (and Joyce points out that hypertext author Stuart Moulthrop 'has argued that hypertext could be pre-empted by the "military infotainment establishment" or offered as a diversion to a dissatisfied society in lieu of real access or power' (Joyce, 1996a, p. 26)).

This of course is a possibility, that hypermedia too will function ideologically, creating an illusion ('virtual reality') that is an allusion but which is affirmative in the way Marcuse suggests of culture, creating an alternative environment that would seem to offer an 'interactive' reading experience - thus pacifying the subject's desire for participation, to exert themselves as 'autonomous' agents - but that either directs them as Coover suggests according to the author's wishes or offers them choices that are of little or no constructive value. Hypertext does set itself up as an interactive antidote to the 'passive' consumption of texts; readers must not only read hypertexts, they must make choices regarding which links to follow and this it is argued will empower the reader. Such an equation of choice with empowerment is a common stratagem of capitalist ideology in interpellating subjects that believe themselves autonomous. Belsey writes: 'It is in the epoch of capitalism that ideology emphasizes the value of individual freedom, freedom of conscience and, of course, consumer choice in all the multiplicity of its forms' (Belsey, 1980, p. 67). Such a prizing of the concept of choice has led, for example, to the large numbers of television channels available for viewers to choose between (supported by digital technology, which also now facilitates 'interactive' TV) or the array of products that line the shelves of supermarket chains, but as George Monbiot argues (and as Gaggi has also recognised) these choices are quantitative rather than qualitative (due largely to the consolidation of big businesses in global capitalism; the consolidation of the Sky television companies is a case in point). Monbiot writes:

> One result of this consolidation is that we are faced with a profusion of
> minor choices and a dearth of major choices. We can enter a superstore
> and choose between twenty different brands of margarine, but many of
> us have no choice but to enter the superstore. Were we to tell the
> corporations dominating some sectors that, dissatisfied with their
> services, we shall take our custom elsewhere, they would ask us which
> planet we had in mind.
> (Monbiot, 2000, p. 16)

The wealthier subjects described in the dentist's virtual reality future of 'The Trendelenburg Position', though they may have access to a greater number of

available choices regarding which virtual reality environments to enter are still at the end of the day duped by this erroneous equation of choice with freedom, for their choices are still only of the minor type that Monbiot describes and will not change the circumstances of their lives beyond the illusory, virtual level. The problems of their realities will still exist if they can only take off their virtual reality helmets long enough to see them. The notion and stratagem of choice, then, functions simply as a palliative, to placate and interpellate subjects that (mis)recognise themselves as autonomous, as free to choose. As such we ought to be wary as readers of hypertext that we are not seduced simply by the number of textual choices hypertext gives us, for these choices may too be of the minor variety. Joyce has already complained that the proliferation of Hypercard applications of the 1980s and 1990s used hypertextual features in often irrelevant ways, adorning texts with 'hypertextual' bells and whistles that did little to engage readers constructively and rather forced them along textual paths determined by the software's author or authors (see footnote 70). For hypertext to live up to its potential as a truly interactive textual form it must therefore offer textual choices that are genuinely constructive rather than trivial or pointless. As Gaggi states, confirming Monbiot's earlier point:

> [T]he choices available in hypertext - the texts included and the links among them - must be significant. Hypertext, huge as it may be, cannot be total, cannot contain all texts ever produced by humans. Therefore, those texts that are made available must be made meaningful. In television it is the proliferation of irrelevant choices that produces a specious freedom that obscures increasingly powerful constraints on imaginable possibilities. Ninety cable channels might broadcast shows that entertain but none of which contain serious social or political analysis. Thus, viewers are provided with an illusion of freedom that is really equivalent to a grocery aisle filled with different brands of laundry detergent. They can point to all kinds of objectively real choices that provide evidence for an unprecedented freedom they seem to possess, at the same time that their lives are increasingly constrained ideologically by sophisticated commercials and entertainment shows that construct consumer subjects. Incapable of conceiving things or themselves differently, convinced that the choices they are presented with are the most anyone can reasonably expect, viewers are impotent to affect things that touch them in important ways. ... If hypertext also comes to be dominated by the interactive equivalents of sitcoms or home shopping, not much will really be gained and the interaction will be meaningless. What is worse is that, because it will present itself as an enlargement of choices but limit those choices to the trivial, it will really be a means of control disguising itself as freedom.
>
> (Gaggi, 1997, p. 121)

Network-structured hypertexts or hypermedia may offer the subject the best chance of making meaningful choices, for the choices made regarding which links to follow will directly affect the way the text is constructed from its composite parts or lexias. Because the hypertext exists only as a collection of lexias and does not have a prearranged narrative order, the active participation of the reader is required to stitch together the disparate patchwork parts (which may include image or audio components as well as text), to create a new - and always malleable - narrative path. This narrative flexibility as already pointed out stresses the hypertext's own status as constructed textual entity or, rather, as text under construction: it is not fixed or given, but 'always-to-be-validated,' a phrase Christopher Norris has used to refer to Nietzsche's philosophical methods that seems appropriate here (Norris, 1991, p. 83). Network-structured hypertexts, in appearing as sets of lexias 'to-be-validated' or made into narrative direct attention towards the text's own artifice and architecture, especially in environments like Storyspace where lexias may be viewed onscreen alongside map windows showing diagrammatic and structural representations of the relationships between them as already illustrated in the preceding chapter (see Fig. 2.1). In these cases the hypertextual scene is obviously artificial yet still visually engaging: it is theatrical rather than cinematic and requires that the reader as well as the text 'perform'. Such hypertexts do not attempt to present themselves as transparent in the realistic and cinematic 'seamless' mode Ulmer suggests is elsewhere prevalent in computer and hypermedia applications and do not therefore allow the reader to slip easily into the passive role of spectator. Since the reader is implicated in the process of the text's construction this narrative building work becomes a self-conscious undertaking. As such the reader is less likely to become completely absorbed or 'lost' in the text in the way that virtual reality environments - or genre fiction as Bolter observed - may absorb and engross subjects. The reader rather remains conscious of his or her role in the performance or work of narrative accretion and conscious also of the technological mediation that is taking place: what is offered is not an escape from reality into a seamless media environment, but an insight into the way that technology (in this case the technological apparatus of the computer) and the technologies of writing can be used to construct alternative - and artificial - narrative realities.

Such an emphasis on textual architecture and narrative device has already been witnessed in many of the printed texts mentioned in Chapter 1, including those of Alasdair Gray, paratextual infringements on the 'main' body of text, 'authorial' intrusions and the like consistently reminding the reader of the textual fabrication that is in process. And as with an awareness of the constructedness of the 'self', this can underline the possibilities for change, for the realisation of imaginative transformation: 'self' and 'story', those two fundamentally interdependent concepts, are not fixed or given but in process or 'always-to-be-validated' (and the subject, though not wholly autonomous, is not entirely powerless either and as such can play an active role in proceedings). From the prescription of the narrator in Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* that 'a satisfactory novel should be a self-evident sham to which the reader could regulate at will the degree of his credulity' (*At Swim-Two-Birds*, p. 25) to the revelation of the 'damned conjuror' Nastler to Lanark that his entire reality "is made of one thing. ... Print" (*Lanark*, pp. 484 and 485), the reader is confronted with a deliberate exposition of the mechanisms of narrative. Whilst the disarming effect of device foregrounding has been dissipated somewhat by the use of such 'postmodern' techniques for mainstream and commercial purposes - Currie, for example, points out that subjects may now be interpellated ironically as 'self-conscious' consumers[119] - there is a difference between the type of passive cynicism produced or confirmed by television and advertising and the vigilance of the reader of print or hypertext encouraged to think that they can actively engage in the positive work of narrative construction.

That postmodernism has been taken by some critics, Jameson among them, to remove the individual from the possibility of (responsible and political) action is a point that has been touched upon briefly in Chapter 1. Postmodernism, for

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[119] He writes: 'There is an atmosphere of spoofery [in TV advertisements], of ironic self-distance, sometimes of ideological candour which reproduces the experimental techniques of postmodern fictional narratives as if this kind of knowingness were the only remaining mode of narrative persuasion. The narrative of a television advertisement often has to distance itself from the product, or from conventional marketing rhetoric, to sell it, creating a complicity between the narrative and its suspicious, resistant viewers through the device of bearing the device. If the process of interpellation as Althusser described it was the process of positioning a reader within the narrative through identification, this new kind of interpellation seems to hail the reader into a position of narratological distrust' (Currie, 1998, p. 99).

Jameson, confirms what Guy Debord termed a 'society of the spectacle': a society of passive subjects – or consumers – hypnotised by and subjected to the spectacle of mass media representations. Jameson writes that postmodernism is:

> a periodizing concept whose function is to correlate the emergence of new formal features in culture with the emergence of a new type of social life and a new economic order - what is often euphemistically called modernization, postindustrial or consumer society, the society of the media or the spectacle, or multinational capitalism.
>
> (Jameson, 1985, p.113)

Postmodernism's concern for surfaces and for the ubiquity of media representations should not be taken wholly as vacuous unconcern for the conditions of reality though: postmodernism – like poststructuralism in this sense – just stresses the impossibility of dispensing altogether with representation and 'revealing' (as part of any project of enlightenment) some depth or truth below the surfaces (the noumena below the phenomena, to use Kantian terms). This aspect of postmodern theory may be defended in a similar way to poststructuralism (see footnote 88), for to claim that truth and reality cannot be separated from representation is not the same thing as to claim that truth and reality do not exist and that it would thus be pointless for subjects to try to change or engage with them, to act politically and responsibly. Truth and reality, always caught up in their subjective representations, simply cannot be objectively identified; they always come to the subject via some form of mediation and as such, postmodernist thought reminds us, we should be conscious of that (and self-conscious about the ways we are manipulated and constructed as subjects as a result).

Whilst popular culture is by now completely saturated with evidence of 'postmodern' thought and technique - indeed pop culture is in itself evidence of a condition of postmodernity that rejects boundaries between 'high' and 'low' culture; it is perhaps wrong therefore to suggest that culture and postmodernity are actually distinguishable - and consequently some postmodernist effects like pastiche, collage and device exposition may seem to have lost much of their novelty and force, some of the concerns of postmodernism still hold fast and can still offer useful critical and discursive modes. All critical movements have their day and although postmodernism's star has waned it ought to be considered that many of the techniques commonly associated with postmodernism have in fact

been around far longer than the term that came to be applied to them and will therefore have the potential to outlive it. Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, for example, the novel that so influenced B.S. Johnson, and O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*, a book that has been referred to many times in this thesis and that has a bearing on so much of Alasdair Gray's fiction (not least *Something Leather* which uses a quote from it as an epigraph)[120] could both be argued with justification to be 'postmodern' (on some levels at least), though they were written before (centuries before in the case of *Tristram Shandy*) postmodernism became the cultural dominant. Some of postmodernism's favoured narrative techniques, then, have been and will continue to be relevant far beyond the shelve-life of critical fashion. And they may also be used not to dispel agency or political responsibility on the part of the subject - or consumer within the culture of consumer capitalism - but to encourage it, as Randall Stevenson suggests is the case in Gray's fiction. He writes:

> Postmodernism may have lost its inherent radicalism, but there are still radical ends it can be used to achieve. Gray's insistence on his work as a constructed artefact, for example, is in certain ways as much an act of responsibility as of indulgence. *Lanark*, in particular, illustrates the paradox that the most transparently, ostentatiously artificial texts may be the ones most likely to redirect their readers' attention upon reality: as Bertolt Brecht showed, an undermining of seductive, secure containment within illusion encourages spectators to take responsibility for reshaping the world beyond the stage. ... The real achievement of *Lanark* is not in seducing readers with illusion, but in allowing them to escape from it; in forcing them to consider conjuring and to examine and experience imagination as process rather than securely finished product. ... Whatever "games" may be going on in Gray's texts tend, on balance, not to diminish but to add to the satiric, political directions which are a central feature of his work.
>
> (Stevenson, 1991, p. 60-61)

Baudrillard's critique of the hyperreal and the passive subjects it constructs (subjects that are merely 'pure screen[s] ... switching center[s] for all the networks of influence' (Baudrillard, 1985, p. 133)) is also the product of a view of postmodernism wherein subjects no longer engage actively or politically with the world - or its representations - around them. He directly associates the passivity of the subject in the face of the hyperreal (even although this passivity

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[120] And see Stevenson, 1991, p. 55ff. for further discussion of the influence of O'Brien's text on Gray.

is the subject's ironic strategy) as a turning away from (political) responsibility. The subjects of hyperreality simply disappear, just as the passive and miserable subjects in *Lanark*'s Unthank – those unable to engage in meaningful work or to exert themselves creatively - 'disappear' or are swallowed by the gaping mouth of the Creature. Baudrillard writes that:

> What characterizes the mass media is that they are opposed to mediation, intransitive, that they fabricate non communication - if one accepts the definition of communication as an exchange, as the reciprocal space of speech and response, and thus of *responsibility*. In other words, if one defines it as anything other than the simple emission/reception of information.
>
> (Baudrillard, 1989, p. 207)

Intransitive media forms, for Baudrillard, leave subjects without means of communication or meaningful informational exchange, and consequently exempt or excluded from responsibility. The suggestion of alternative - and transitive - media possibilities may again be found in the writings of Bertolt Brecht. As Dean Blobaum points out, referring to Brecht's definition of the apparatus of the radio as an intransitive media form, the digital technology of the computer – and particularly that of the computer network - can facilitate genuine information exchange, as well as its simple 'emission/reception':

> The difference between broadcast and interactive media is fundamental and no computer experience is required to understand it. In 1932 Bertolt Brecht, writing about a new technology that was quickly becoming a mass media, said "... radio is one-sided when it should be two. It is purely an apparatus for distribution, for mere sharing out. So here is a positive suggestion: change this apparatus over from distribution to communication. The radio would be the finest possible communication apparatus in public life, a vast network of pipes. That is to say, it would be if it knew how to receive as well as transmit, how to let the listener speak as well as hear, how to bring him into a relationship rather than isolating him. On this principle the radio should step out of the supply business and organize its listeners as suppliers." [From 'The Radio as an Apparatus of Communication,' see The Weimar Republic Sourcebook, page 616.] It may have taken sixty years for that "vast network of pipes" to finally appear, and it may turn out to be pipes for the transmission of the written word rather than the spoken, but Brecht states succinctly the difference between broadcast and interactive media.
>
> (Blobaum, 1995)

If political responsibility is to be associated with interaction and informational engagement, it could be that the digital computer is the apparatus to circumvent the hyperreal, if, as already stressed, it can foster interactivity at

meaningful levels and offer major rather than only a proliferation of minor choices.[121]

And even if the choices available are qualitative ones, it has been argued that too many choices might have a paralysing effect on the subject. Like the Kierkegaardian concept of dread or angst, it is suggested that subjects may be so alarmed at the possibility of being able to choose - at being confronted with an element of free will - that they are rendered immobile, so fearful of the consequences that they are incapable of positive action. Jock McLeish tells Denny that she is taught in school only to be obedient and not to think for herself (or to think herself capable of exercising choice) and this is a sentiment echoed elsewhere in Gray's fiction. In *The Fall of Kelvin Walker*, Jake comments that, 'most people are so afraid of running their own lives that they feel frightened when there's no-one to bully them' (*The Fall of Kelvin Walker*, p. 57) and in *Mavis Belfrage* the university lecturer Colin, as Bernstein has pointed out, pointedly eschews Rousseau's philosophy of choice or decision-taking, preferring rather the Platonic model of obedience. He refuses, as one of his students tells him, 'to admit that choice is *necessary*' (*Mavis Belfrage*, p. 12).[122] Baudrillard writes:

> Choice is a strange imperative. Any philosophy which assigns man to the exercise of his will can only plunge him in despair. For if nothing is more flattering to consciousness than to know what it wants, on the contrary nothing is more seductive to the other consciousness (the unconscious?) - the obscure and vital one which makes happiness depend on the despair of will - than not to know what it wants, to be relieved of choice and diverted from its own objective will. It is much better to rely on some insignificant or powerful instance than to be dependent on one's own will or the necessity of choice.
>
> (Baudrillard, 1989, p. 216)

For Baudrillard then, the subject may be compelled to *avoid* making choices rather than to actively pursue them. The subject, instead of feeling empowered by the large number of available choices, experiences:

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[121] And interactivity must be accompanied by self-consciousness about how discourse is conducted in the electronic medium: Mark Poster points out that Derrida, in a conference entitled *États généraux de la philosophie* called for '"vigilance" at a time when the media threaten to undermine "critical capacities for evaluation" by the "control, manipulation, diversion or cooptation of discourse"' (Poster, 1990, p. 100).
[122] See *Mavis Belfrage*, pp. 11-13 for the debate on choice and Bernstein, 2002, p. 158ff. for further discussion.

> a state of stupor ... a radical uncertainty as to our own desire, our own
> choice, our own opinion, our own will ... it is a question here of a
> completely new species of uncertainty, which results not from the *lack* of
> information but from information itself and even from an *excess* of
> information. It is information itself which produces uncertainty, and so
> this uncertainty, unlike the traditional uncertainty which could always be
> resolved, is irreparable.
>
> (Baudrillard, 1989, p. 209-210)

The subject, that is to say, has too many choices, and since they render him or her powerless, the subject may as well - and indeed may rather - have none at all.[123]

While it is true that hypertext presents the reader with many alternatives regarding their path through the text (and certainly with many more alternatives than can be offered in the medium of print), these possibilities need not overwhelm the reader in the manner Baudrillard describes. With network-structured hypertexts in particular the number of choices offered at one time can be relatively small; the reader encounters only one lexia at a time, which may yield to only one or to several other possible lexias. Since each lexia is normally only the size of a paragraph, there is little chance of the reader feeling stupefied by choice. The reader simply makes decisions - in the same way that the text is constructed - in a piecemeal fashion, incrementally from one lexia to the next; that the number of choices is manageable should encourage the reader to make decisions rather than put them off. And as has already been argued, the notion of choice - and of linguistic choice - offers the subject the possibility of some form of agency (and of taking part in the construction of their own subjectivities): it is the element of free will that counters the determining conditions of subjectivity. As such, a degree of choice should appeal to the

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[123] And Gleick, too, has commented that the excess of choices to be made in our everyday lives, rather than empowering us, in fact robs us of time, that most precious of commodities. He writes: 'The very variety of experience attacks our leisure as it attempts to satiate us. We work for our amusement. *Five hundred channels* became a watchword of the nineties even before, strictly speaking, it became a reality. It denotes too much to choose from. And not just channels: coffees, magazines and on-line 'zines, mustards and olive oils, celebrity perfumes and celebrity rumors, fissioning musical styles and digitized recordings of more different performances of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony than Beethoven could have heard in his lifetime. ... What is true is that we are awash in things, in information, in news, in the old rubble and shiny new toys of our complex civilization, and – strange, perhaps – stuff means speed. The wave patterns of all these facts and choices flow and crash about us at a heightened frequency. We live in the buzz' (Gleick, 2000, p. 10).

subject (as the capitalist stratagem of consumer choice recognises and exploits): it is the subject's opportunity to exert themselves in the face of external forces. And while choice cannot ultimately lead to freedom, happiness or unity of identity, as consumer capitalism would have us believe, it can - if the choices available are meaningful enough - involve us in the responsible process of constructing our own linguistic and political identities and narratives.[124] Although Baudrillard argues that the subject may unconsciously desire to be relieved of responsibility, his argument depends very much on the ways in which choices are presented to the subject, i.e. through the excessive informational sources of the mass media and in terms of quantity rather than quality.[125] The

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[124] Such a notion of free will as consisting of responsible decisions regarding the (external) forces which are recognised to condition subjectivity finds source in the *Ethics* of Spinoza. Spinoza argued that although subjects were bound, like Prometheus, by external or alien forces they could, by self-consciously recognising themselves as bound and attempting to understand the conditions of bondage, internalise the causes of their actions. Thus they could act from internal rather than purely external sources. This does not free the subject, but does offer a limited form of agency and thus a limited degree of freedom. Spinoza's philosophy of the subject who can exert free will whilst remaining bound reappears in poststructuralism and poststructuralist theories of the subject: the poststructuralist subject is capable of making choices whilst being conscious of conditioning forces and may therefore be a responsible (and political) agent of change. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari contend that this free will on the part of the subject, which arises from desire, but desire in a multiplicity of forms rather than simply the form of the *manqué* or lack defined by psychoanalysis, can in fact be revolutionary (and indeed is involuntarily so). They write that a subject's desire is not only 'a desire for the mother or for the death of the father; on the contrary, desire becomes that only because it is repressed, it takes that mask on under the reign of the repression that models the mask for it and plasters it on its face. ... If desire is repressed, it is because every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of calling into question the established order of a society: not that desire is asocial, on the contrary. But it is explosive; there is no desiring-machine capable of being assembled without demolishing entire social sectors. Despite what some revolutionaries think about this, desire is revolutionary in its essence' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984, p. 116). That the human being is conceived of as an assemblage of desiring-*machines* (grafted onto a body (without organs)) is particularly pertinent in the context of the human who, through technology, becomes a cyborg, a theory that has already been hinted at and that will be explored again in the concluding chapter. Spinoza's notion of ethics, as Brian Massumi points out, also has a bearing on Nietzsche's philosophy of 'gay science' and on the 'nomad thought' of Deleuze and Guattari, which is relevant to the condition of the subjects of hypertext who must construct narrative - and thought - as they go (an idea that will also be returned to. See Massumi, 1992, p. 6ff.).
[125] Poster agrees that Baudrillard's arguments are reliant on particular informational circumstances. He writes: 'The generalization of the concept of the hyperreal from specific communications practices to the social totality is the problematic element in Baudrillard's discourse, the aspect of his position that the critical theory of the mode of

challenge for hypertext and hypermedia, as has already been outlined, is to offer the subject qualitative and manageable - and so *desirable* - choices.

The type of paralysis that Baudrillard has described is a result of the subject's encounter with hyperreality, with an over-abundance of media representations or simulacra. The subject, in consequence, is not merely incapable of action but is also in a position where all that can be conceived is the immediacy of the present moment, a cultural condition commonly defined as 'schizophrenia'. Baudrillard writes that:

> we are now in a new form of schizophrenia. No more hysteria, no more projective paranoia, properly speaking, but this state of terror proper to the schizophrenic: too great a proximity of everything, the unclean promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, with no halo of private protection, not even his own body, to protect him anymore.
> The schizo is bereft of every scene, open to everything in spite of himself, living in the greatest confusion. He is himself obscene, the obscene prey of the world's obscenity. What characterizes him is less the loss of the real, the light years of estrangement from the real, the pathos of distance and radical separation, as is commonly said: but, very much to the contrary, the absolute proximity, the total instantaneity of things, the feeling of no defense, no retreat. It is the end of interiority and intimacy, the overexposure and transparence of the world which traverses him without obstacle.
>
> (Baudrillard, 1985, p.132-133)

The confusion of the schizophrenic, as Baudrillard describes it, arises from his or her inability to comprehend existence or 'reality' beyond the immediacy of its representations. Any actions that the schizophrenic subject may make (contrary to Baudrillard's assertion of their passivity) will thus be consequential only in terms of the media moment (image or sound-bite). This is the condition of Wat's rational Utopia in *A History Maker*. Since Utopia has allegedly been reached in this futuristic vision of Scotland, the clans of the emergent society find they have little else to do other than organise battles between themselves. They need no longer work for a living, since the powerplants that can synthesise any object on demand have dispelled material want, so instead they fight amongst themselves for pride and to give their lives a sense of purpose. And their battles provide compelling images for the communications media that broadcast them

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information must reject. ... in Baudrillard's position a differential analysis of a set of discourses/practices recedes in favor of global statements' (Poster, 1990, p. 63-64).

courtesy of the 'public eye', the ever-present global surveillance network. The public eye - precisely as Baudrillard described - invades the lives of the subjects of *A History Maker*, leaving them 'no halo of private protection ... no defense, no retreat.' Their deaths become part of what Baudrillard contends has gone beyond the realm of the spectacle to that of 'obscenity', played out on television screens across the globe.[126] General Craig Douglas, head of Wat's Ettrick clan, urges his warriors to 'perform' for their viewing public, to provide a momentous image in death:

> He points upward at the public eye which floats round the standard between him and his crescent of soldiers, but he looks to them as he declares, "There is the eye which will show the world how the Ettrick clan will die, will show your sweethearts and aunts how their men can die! I ask you to die with me so that our death will be viewed and viewed again to the last days of mankind and television and time!"
>
> (*A History Maker*, p. 9-10)

That the warriors' deaths seem only to have the consequence of creating a media moment is indicative of the temporal dislocation of Wat's society: they no longer conceive of time duratively, in terms of past and future, but focus only on the present, the immediacy of the image that can be played over and over again. Such disregard for past or future, for the causes and consequences of actions, constitutes cultural schizophrenia and Jameson sees this as the condition of our current society, which he fears 'has become incapable of dealing with time and history' (Jameson, 1985, p. 117). The schizophrenic 'perpetual present' that Jameson writes of is a common condition in Gray's fiction (Jameson, 1985, p. 119); it has already been seen how Jock McLeish is stuck 'travelling in a circle again' (*1982 Janine*, p. 194), 'incapable of dealing with [his own] time and history' and how he turns to fantasy to avoid it. The female subjects of his fantasies are frequently ensnared in situations from which they cannot escape, and their bondage - like the S&M bondage of June in *Something Leather* - keeps them too in a perpetual present, as well as a perpetual state of (erotic) desire. The schizophrenic 'instant' and the inability of the subject to comprehend time linearly is captured perfectly in Gray's story 'Near the Driver', where the

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[126] Baudrillard writes: 'Obscenity begins precisely when there is no more spectacle, no more scene, when all becomes transparence and immediate visibility, when everything is exposed to the harsh and inexorable light of information and communication' (Baudrillard, 1985, p. 130).

complicity of technology - and particularly digital technology - in the culture of schizophrenia is made explicit. The story recounts a conversation on a train where some passengers, including a young child, an old man and a schoolteacher discuss what time it is. The old man tells the time in terms of the twelve-hour clock as half past eleven, to which the child and the teacher respond in differing ways:

> "No no no!" cries the child excitedly, "Our headmaster says we shouldn't think about time in twelves because of computers and decimals." ... the teacher merely sighs. Then says, "I wish they had let us keep the old noon with the twelve hours before and after it. But even the station clocks have changed. Instead of a circular face with all the hours and minutes marked around the edge, past AND future, we have a square panel with nothing in it but the minute we're at now. Nothing eight hours twenty minutes, then flick! – it's nothing eight hours twenty-one. That makes me feel trapped. Trapped, yet pushed at the same time."
> (*Ten Tales Tall & True*, p. 132-133)

Like Jock McLeish and his fantasy women, like June, Lanark and Rima, the schoolteacher is stuck in the moment, unable to identify past or future, yet she is still conscious and resentful of the compelling force of 'that little flick when one minute becomes the next' (*Ten Tales Tall & True*, p. 133): as pointed out by Gleick in Chapter 1, digital timekeeping is responsible not just for improved accuracy but for the growing - or impending - sense of acceleration in everyday life.

The perpetual present of the schizophrenic also constitutes a crisis of identity, for as Jameson points out (referring to Lacan's definition of clinical schizophrenia as a largely linguistic condition), identity - which has been seen to be linguistically constructed - depends on a durative reckoning of time.

> For Lacan, the experience of temporality, human time, past, present, memory, the persistence of personal identity over months and years - this existential or experiential feeling of time itself - is also an effect of language. It is because language has a past and a future, because the sentence moves in time, that we can have what seems to us a concrete or lived experience of time. But since the schizophrenic does not know language articulation in that way, he or she does not have our experience of temporal continuity either, but is condemned to live in a perpetual present with which the various moments of his or her past have little connection and for which there is no conceivable future on the horizon. In other words, schizophrenic experience is an experience of isolated, disconnected, discontinuous material signifiers which fail to link up into a coherent sequence. The schizophrenic thus does not know personal identity in our sense, since our feeling of identity depends on our sense of the persistence of the "I" and the "me" over time.

If subjectivity is constructed by language over time and if in the culture of postmodernity the dimension of time has been shattered as Calvino suggests (see *If on a winter's night a traveller*, p. 8), then the postmodern subject will be necessarily schizophrenic (if they cannot relate the fragments of time into a coherent patterning of past, present and future). This difficulty in piecing together identity through narrative is precisely what troubles Jock McLeish, what gives him in his own words 'vertigo':

> I can put up with a lot of present misery if it is solidly based, but if I am wrong about my past WHO AM I? If the reality I believed in is wrong, how can I right it? What solid truth can we find in our mistaken heads? My head is a windy cave, a narrow but bottomless pit where true and false memories, hopes, dreams and information blow up and down like dust in a draught. Vertigo. No go.
>
> (*1982 Janine*, p. 329)[127]

McLeish's questioning of identity is replicated in the inner cover illustration of *The Book of Prefaces* - 'Who am I? How did I get here? Where am I going? What should I do?' - and the spatial as well as temporal confusion of this interrogative voice, along with Jock's description of his head as 'a windy cave,' is reminiscent of Lanark and Rima's groundless experience of time-space compression in the intercalendrical zone. Such spatial dislocation is also typical of postmodern schizophrenia. The instantaneity of the media image and eradication of distance through global travel as well as through communications networks has been reflected in contemporary architecture, as Jameson points out, and has seen the creation of postmodern spaces wherein it is difficult for the subject to orient him or herself. Jameson writes:

> The new space that thereby emerges involves the suppression of distance ... and the relentless saturation of any remaining voids and empty places, to the point where the postmodern body - whether wandering through a postmodern hotel, locked into rock sound by means of headphones, or

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[127] A more commonplace notion of schizophrenia is that of the split personality, a condition that permeates Scottish fiction from Hogg through Stevenson to Gray (his short story 'The Spread of Ian Nicol', as well as the doubling of Thaw/Lanark and Bella/Victoria offering ample evidence to this end). For Bella Baxter, her schizophrenia is also a consequence of her amnesia and struggle to construct identity, to find a past for herself that she can believe in and build upon. Bernstein comments that: 'Like Lanark or Jock McLeish, she must struggle to integrate two parts of a damaged life in an effort to attain a cohesive identity' (Bernstein, 1999, p. 129).

undergoing the multiple shocks and bombardments of the Vietnam war as
Michael Herr conveys it to us - is now exposed to a perceptual barrage of
immediacy from which all sheltering layers and intervening mediations
have been removed. ...

I take such spatial peculiarities of postmodernism as symptoms and
expressions of a new and historically original dilemma, one that involves
our insertion as individual subjects into a multidimensional set of
radically discontinuous realities, whose frames range from the still
surviving spaces of bourgeois private life all the way to the unimaginable
decentering of global capital itself. Not even Einsteinian relativity, or the
multiple subjective worlds of the older modernists, is capable of giving
any kind of adequate figuration to this process, which in lived experience
makes itself felt by the so-called death of the subject, or, more exactly,
the fragmented and schizophrenic decentering and dispersion of this last.

(Jameson, 1991, p. 412-413)

The problem for the subject in such spaces, as with the intercalendrical zone,
lies in the inability to find spatial coordinates, landmarks with which subjects
may gain their bearings, or as Jameson puts it, 'cognitively map' their
surroundings (Jameson, 1991, p. 44). And the most disorienting of all postmodern
spaces, he asserts, is that of digital computer networks, or 'hyperspace':

this latest mutation in space - postmodern hyperspace- has finally
succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to
locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and
cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world. It may now
be suggested that this alarming disjunction point between the body and
its built environment ... can itself stand as the symbol and analogon of
that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least
at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered
communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual
subjects.

(Jameson, 1991, p. 44)

For Jameson, the notion of cognitive mapping is crucial for it can enable the
subject to comprehend their spatial location in relative terms: they know where
they are in relation to other objects around them and this knowledge provides
some stable ground and the basis for purposeful spatial traversal. As Denny tells
Jock in *1982 Janine,* 'geography is the most important thing ... Because if you
don't know geography you don't know where you are, so everything you think is
wrong' (*1982 Janine,* p. 214).[128] Jameson argues that being able to construct

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[128] Jock, however, sees that globalisation, which has eradicated distance, undermines
geography in the way that Jameson suggests: 'I could tell Denny now,' he later realises,
"Geography no longer matters because there is no near or far, the monetary sheath
enclosing the globe has destroyed the geography of distances" (*1982 Janine,* p. 214).

cognitive maps is essential if subjects are to be able to act (politically and responsibly), in the same way as subjects need maps to find their way around places, especially in city environments. He writes: 'the incapacity to map spatially is as crippling to political experience as the analogous incapacity to map spatially is for urban experience' (Jameson, 1991, p. 416).

And while Jameson does not explicitly extend his notion of cognitive mapping to include mapping of the temporal environment, or situation in history, the cognate issues of temporal and spatial dislocation can be viewed as presenting similar types of problems for the subject. In order that human experience be meaningful, it is argued, subjects must be able to conceive of their present 'selves' in relation to both their past and future. Such stable grounding or centring of the subject in time as well as in space would arguably also provide a basis for action in the way Jameson suggests. Subjects measure their lives through the measurement of time: if time cannot be measured, the meaningfulness of life is diminished. Lanark's persistent search for daylight is evidence of this need to measure time, for in Unthank - as in Thaw's Glasgow - clocks no longer function reliably. At his friend Drummond's house, Thaw asks the time (the enquiry into time paralleling that of 'Near the Driver'). Drummond's father lifts up a nearby alarm clock and says with some regret: "The hands have ceased to go round and round, and no trust whatever can be placed in it. ... We are in the region of midnight" (*Lanark*, p. 273). The metaphorical darkness of Thaw's Glasgow (which can be compared to Gray's depiction of the effects of postmodernism in *Sixteen Occasional Poems 1990-2000*: 'darkness lectures to darkness on darkness/ and the darkness sees it is good' (*Sixteen Occasional Poems 1990-2000*, 5. 'Postmodernism')) is reproduced literally in Unthank, where sunlight - signifying time - is a precious rarity. Since clocks have ceased to be useful, Lanark must revert to other methods of telling the time. In Glasgow Drummond tells Thaw, "It's a pity Ma isn't here. She could estimate the time by things like passing aeroplanes" (*Lanark*, p. 273). Drummond's father confirms:

> "Oh, aye. She would shake my shoulders in bed in the morning. 'Hector! Hector! It's ten past four. There's Mrs. Stewart going to her work in the bakery - I'd know her step anywhere.' Or it would be 'It's a quarter to eight - I can hear the horse of Eliot's milk cart two streets away.' "
> (*Lanark*, p. 273)

For Lanark in Unthank, however, there are no such dependable temporal clues or coordinates, for people in general no longer follow regular routines of work and activity. Lanark instead can only look to the sky and regularly sits on the balcony of the Elite Café to do just that. He likes daylight, so he tells Sludden, because:

> "I can measure time with it. I've counted thirty days since coming here, maybe I've missed a few by sleeping or drinking coffee, but when I remember something I can say, 'It happened two days ago,' or ten, or twenty. This gives my life a feeling of order."
>
> (*Lanark*, p. 273)

Where Lanark feels the need for daylight and to measure the passing of time, Sludden and his clique disregard time almost completely. Sludden views time as restrictive, even sedative, telling Lanark:

> "No wonder you've a morbid obsession with daylight. Instead of visiting ten parties since you came here, laying ten women and getting drunk ten times, you've watched thirty days go by. Instead of making life a continual feast you chop it into days and swallow them regularly, like pills."
>
> (*Lanark*, p. 5)

Sludden and the clique of the Elite embody what Gray depicts as the unenlightenment of postmodernism, for they too are happy in the darkness. Gay, Sludden's pitiful girlfriend, invites Lanark to sit with them in the Elite:

> She pointed to a thick red curtain which Lanark had thought covered a door to the cinema. She pulled it aside slightly, saying, "Come and join us. All the old gang are here."
> Beyond the curtain was perfect blackness. Lanark said, "There's no light here at all."
> "Yes there is, but your eyes take a while to get used to it."
>
> (*Lanark*, p. 44)

What Gray considers the vacuity of postmodern life, life without substance or structure, is summed up by the lack of authenticity in Sludden's gang: the gang members are simply a group of hangers-on, followers of they know not what. Gay in particular is nothing but a postmodern surface or pastiche, a puppet-like body (without organs) that has the mouth of Sludden grafted onto the palm of its hand, a mouth that mocks Lanark's old-fashioned attempts to make sense of or measure things:

> All he could see was a perfectly shaped white little hand, the fingers lightly clenched, until she unclenched them to show the palm. He took a moment to recognize what lay on it. A mouth lay on it, grinning

sarcastically. It opened and said in a tiny voice, "You're trying to understand things, and that interests me."

(*Lanark*, p. 45)

The horror of this sight drives Lanark to the brink of suicide: to the mouth of the Creature that will swallow him. Standing at the edge of the pit 'He remembered the mouth in Gay's hand which had nothing behind it but a cold man being nasty to people in a dark room' (*Lanark*, p. 47); for Lanark, living this life bereft of structure and meaning is like living in the abyss – "Oh! Oh!" he exclaims on seeing Gay's hand, "This is hell!" (*Lanark*, p. 46) – and as such even the gaping jaws of the pit offer a preferable escape.[129]

Living hell, it is suggested, might be avoided if subjects could obtain a firm grasp or cognitive map of their spatio-temporal environments, thus providing a stable ground from whence to act. Such is also the conclusion of Jock McLeish, who realises that he may only progress from his present situation by cognitively engaging with his past, learning from his mistakes and thus using his history and memories to inform his future. What Jock feels he needs is a linear narrative, one that will provide him with a past and a future, and as such will function to posit him (though falsely, as we have seen) as a stable subject. As the narrative of *1982 Janine* shifts from that of disjointed fantasy and fragmentary memory to that of *bildungsroman*, Jock explains:

> I am postponing the moment when I start telling my story in the difficult oldfashioned way, placing events in the order they befell so that I recall the purchase of my new suit before, and not after, I seduce Denny in it. This had better be done, though it will be hard. When we cannot see our way in the world of course we circle circle circle until we stumble on a straight stretch of it, but then, even though that stretch was left behind years ago, let us use it to go forward for a change. Straight movement leads to pain, of course.
>
> (*1982 Janine*, p. 192)

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[129] Lanark's horror at discovering Gay is nothing but a voice, a superficial surface, finds parallels elsewhere in Gray's work, notably in Lanark's discovery that Nastler is no more than a Wizard of Oz-like conjuror and the similar revelation that the emperor in 'Five Letters from an Eastern Empire' is only a puppet. It echoes Marlowe's horror in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* on finally 'discovering' that Kurtz, for all his projected aura, is just that: a projection, an aura created by words. Sludden, the 'cold man being nasty to people in a dark room,' finds his antecedent in Kurtz, who hides 'in the magnificent folds of eloquence the barren darkness of his heart' (*Heart of Darkness*, p. 98).

What Jock feels he needs is the same thing that the readers (inscribed and by implication real) of *If on a winter's night a traveller* feel that they too are in need of and consequently search for: a conventional story with a beginning, a middle and an end. Lamont, one of Dermot Trellis's characters in *At Swim-Two-Birds* maintains:

> whether a yarn is tall or small I like to hear it well told. I like to meet a man that can take in hand to tell a story and not make a balls of it while he's at it. I like to know where I am, do you know. Everything has a beginning and an end.
>
> *(At Swim-Two-Birds*, p. 63)

This need for a unified story has been theorised by Frank Kermode in his seminal book *The Sense of an Ending*. He writes that:

> it makes little difference – though it makes some – whether you believe in the age of the world to be six thousand years or five thousand million years, whether you think time will have a stop or that the world is eternal; there is still a need to speak humanly of a life's importance in relation to it – a need in the moment of existence to belong, to be related to a beginning and to an end.
>
> (Kermode, 1967, p. 3-4)

As such, unified narratives - like the Bible - such as give shape to existence by projecting unity onto beginnings, middles and endings, follow a winning formula. The Bible in particular is especially appealing in that its unity is projected onto an end even beyond death (and onto its origins or genesis aeons before the historical 'moment' of an individual subject): the end of life, then, need not be the end of all things, a comforting thought for the humans stuck struggling in the present, and perhaps fearful of the end that they cannot see:

> Men, like poets, rush 'into the middest,' *in medias res*, when they are born; they also die *in mediis rebus*, and to make sense of their span they need fictive concords with origins and ends, such as give meaning to lives and to poems. The End they imagine will reflect their irreducibly intermediary preoccupations. ... We project ourselves – a small, humble elect, perhaps – past the End, so as to see the structure whole, a thing we cannot do from our spot of time in the middle.
>
> (Kermode, p. 7-8)

Hypertext, as an open and potentially fragmentary narrative form, lacks such projected unity. Indeed it can be argued that hypertext is more likely to contribute to the condition of schizophrenia. With network-structured hypertexts in particular the subject loses the sense of progressing through the hypertextual narrative from beginning to end and instead simply moves among a collection of

lexias. The 'present' lexia is exactly that, the present narrative moment - or 'spot of time in the middle' - seemingly disconnected from any past or future, like the digital clock-face of 'Near the Driver'.[130] Like the postmodern city space, the hypertextual space may too seem disorienting since the reader has no immediate idea of where they are in the text, how far through it they might be and how many new lexias remain to be traversed (and with hypertexts in the hyperspace of the web, the untraversed textual spaces may seem infinite). Gaggi writes:

> Individuals can access a horizonless textual space ... But in that space there are no clear axes or established directions, no vanishing points to help the subject position his or her self. The subject, physically seated in front of a networked computer and monitor, is in effect "everywhere and nowhere," conceptually occupying a virtual space that cannot be grasped the way streets, rooms, and natural landscapes can be grasped. ... The groundless, shifting subject articulated by poststructuralist theory and represented in postmodern art and literature is actualized in the virtual space of hypertext.
>
> (Gaggi, 1999, p. 114-115)

Attempting to cognitively map such 'horizonless' spaces is likely to prove a major headache for the subject.

The problem with Jameson's argument of the need for cognitive mapping, however, is that imposing or projecting some conceptually unified map upon the

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[130] Such an idea of a disconnected narrative moment will be undone, however, as Mark Currie points out with reference to Derrida, by the logic of the trace. He writes: 'there can be no such thing as a moment. A moment, like a word, only comes into being as a structure of exclusion or an undivided presence. A moment can only be present when it is not yet in the past and no longer in the future. But any definition of what a moment is, any attempt to cleanse the moment of the trace of past and future and see it as pure presence, will be forced to impose arbitrary boundaries which mark off the present from past and future. As with any structure of exclusion, the moment then becomes an entity in its own right but only by virtue of the fact that it has arbitrarily excluded the relations that constitute it. One is hard pushed to explain what one means by a moment without reference to the past and future because it is structured by their exclusion. According to Derrida, the elusive nature of the moment is like the elusive nature of undivided presence in general. Its autonomy or purity is mythical. It is a desire rather than an actuality. One reason that undivided presence can be understood as a desire is that it helps to bring the explanation of something to rest on something stable, something no longer in motion, no longer referring backwards or waiting to be altered' (Currie, 1998, p.81 - 82). I hope that the relevance of this statement to the 'individual' or 'momentary' hypertext lexia will be clear: though each lexia may seem disconnected, a separate entity (or schizophrenic 'moment') in its own right, it is only 'present' by virtue of its being linked to by other lexias (its lexical 'past' one might say). It also bears the traces of lexias still to come. The links or yielding spaces in hypertext, then, are the visible marks of the trace at play.

experience of time and space amounts to an attempt to totalise, to view the space to be mapped as a totality that can in fact be mapped, cognitively if not representatively. As such, cognitive mapping purports to construct in the mind another grand or explanatory narrative, one of spatio-temporal rationalisation.[131] To conceive of time in terms of a linear 'map' of present and future will, as has already been discussed, be necessarily reductive, suppressing the difference that fragmentary or in any case multilinear accounts of history and of experience can allow to flourish. While Jock McLeish decides to tell his story linearly, in 'the difficult oldfashioned way' (*1982 Janine*, p. 192), this is not the only way to tell stories. That *Something Leather* takes the form of a series of interrelated and fragmentary tales suggests as much, based as it is on the premise of *At Swim-Two-Birds* that:

> One beginning and one ending for a book was a thing I did not agree
> with. A good book may have three openings entirely dissimilar and inter-
> related only in the prescience of the author, or for that matter one
> hundred times as many endings.
> (*At Swim-Two-Birds*, p. 9 and epigraph to *Something Leather*)

In both texts, however, the need for unification persists in the notion of 'the prescience of the author,' for the author makes the story fragments cohere. Barthes's essay 'The Death of the Author', whilst dismantling such a privileged notion of the author as prescient source or unifying presence, still displays a residual thinking of textual unity as necessary, though the agent of unity becomes the reader rather than the author:

> a text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and
> entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but
> there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the
> reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author. The reader is the space on
> which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any

---

[131] And it would be a metanarrative relying once more upon the idea and promise of rational enlightenment. Christopher Norris points out that Marxist theory frequently uses visual and spatial metaphors to describe what it sees to be the necessary task of discursive criticism: to illuminate and give shape to the disorder of life (see Norris, 1991, p. 74ff.). Jameson's cognitive maps follow this same metaphorical tradition. Such metaphors also predominate in Gray's fiction: Lanark's real and figurative search for light to counter darkness is one example; the recurrent theme of subjects who seek elevated vantage points from which to survey or topographically map their environments also fall into this category. Further discussion of the importance of topography in Gray's work can be found throughout Bernstein, 1999 as well as in Craig, 1991 (see especially pp. 103-107).

of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.

(Barthes, 1977, p. 148)

Any notion of a text's unity must though carry some implication of its closure and completion, for if discontinuity can be resolved by the reader, then the reader will again feel stable and centred, fixed through the fixing or synthesising of disparate elements into a finally unified whole.

This tends against the idea of the open-endedness of texts and particularly of hypertexts, which have no 'final cut' but which are continually in process. It is worth remembering that both text and subject are involved in the work of productivity - *signifiance* - rather than production. Gray's texts locate themselves somewhat ambivalently with relation to the notion of unity, on the one hand mourning lost unity in 'Wellbeing' and replicating the premise of *At Swim-Two-Birds* that the author can function to unify the text in *Something Leather,* and on the other undermining the idea that unity has been or can in fact be achieved at all by ending his work in what can be construed as an arbitrary fashion. Each printed text of Gray's end with the final flourish: 'GOODBYE', and while this certainly signifies a departure, it is I think more representative of the need to bring the text to a conclusion - a task incumbent upon any writer, not least the writer of the present thesis - rather than of a feeling that the text has been finally resolved (has achieved closure in the traditional sense). His visual art, too, displays some evidence of this suggestion that the work is not closed, but has merely - and perhaps temporarily - been left off; his mural at the Abbot House in Dunfermline exhibits the statement 'Begun July 1994, Almost Finished 4.1.1996' as well as the incomplete signature, 'Alasdair Gr', partially effacing his own role as 'author' or unifying designer and signalling his difficulty in considering his work finished (see Fig. 3.3 below. Unfortunately the dates are not legible in this image).
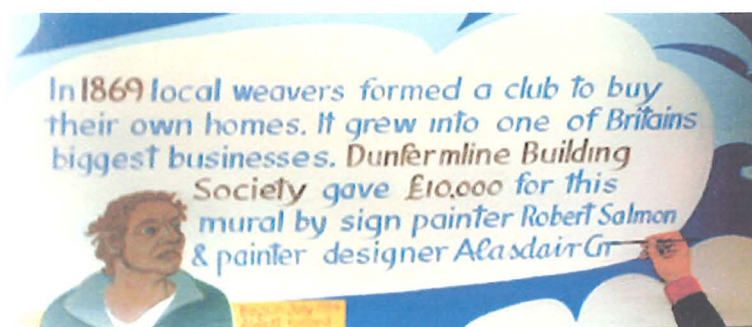
Fig. 3.3 Part of Gray's mural at the Abbot House, Dunfermline

Gray's work, then, displays evidence of its own open-endedness, of its status as work in progress as much as finished product, while still maintaining a relationship with traditional notions of beauty through unity by the aesthetic presentation of his books as discrete and individually crafted objects of art.

That hypertexts can be open rather than closed (and again it should be stressed that not all hypertexts will necessarily exhibit the openness that their medium permits) does not mean that they lack any form of coherence whatsoever. Although they may not be subject to an overall unity, they may still display evidence of patterning, multiple layers of coherence, as with the notion of the hypertextual fugue discussed in Chapter 2. Bolter writes:

> An electronic book is a fragmentary and potential text, a series of self-contained units rather than an organic, developing whole. But fragmentation does not imply mere disintegration. Elements in the electronic writing space are not simply chaotic; they are instead in a perpetual state of reorganization. They form patterns, constellations, which are in constant danger of breaking down and combining into new patterns. This tension leads to a new definition of unity in writing, one that may replace or supplement our traditional notions of the unity of voice and of analytic argument. The unity or coherence of an electronic text derives from the perpetually shifting relationship among all its verbal elements.
>
> (Bolter, 1991, p. 8-9)

Hypertexts, and particularly network-structured hypertexts, can therefore encourage the idea not that narrative or story is redundant or that information should be reduced to incoherent fragments of textual rubble, just that story need not be organised in a singularly linear manner. In short, hypertext encourages little narratives instead of grand ones.

Hypertexts are also not without the possibility of a degree of mapping, since as already indicated many hypertexts have paratextual features like the map

windows of Storyspace to enable the reader to orient him or herself within the textual network.[132] And some form of orientation *is* necessary to give readers the sense that their traversal of the hypertextual space follows some sort of pattern rather than being entirely random. What is notable about these hypertextual maps is that they are not fixed or static: the links between lexias displayed are dynamic paths that may not always be taken or available, depending on how the hypertext is being constructed, and the reader, too, may add new levels of movement by creating new links. The hypertextual map, then, like text and reader, is a productivity rather than a totality.[133] Whilst a degree of mapping is necessary, the maps formed must always be only tentative and subject to change and augmentation – they must admit the possibility of difference - in order to avoid presenting a closed or purportedly total system. Disorientation in itself is also a negative term, and as ever there is another side to the coin, the trace of an alternative possibility. Espen J. Aarseth points to Vannevar Bush, commenting that in Bush's 'fascinating vision – his *poetics* - nonlinearity is as much a problem (the "maze") as a solution (the "trail")' (Aarseth, 1994, p. 68), and the converse of this statement will be equally true. Where some see a maze, a labyrinth of potential textual anxiety, others will see trails, the potential for alternative textual possibilities. Instead of thinking solely in terms of disorientation or spatial dislocation, then, the shifting space of hypertext might instead be viewed more positively as facilitating decentred textual traversal and discourse, enabling the reader to freely construct his or her own textual path instead of being forced a single predetermined one. Marginal discourses or stories will also be enabled to move, albeit temporarily, to the centre. Lanham comments: 'The norms of electronic art will be so volatile that the volatility of a nonexclusive

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[132] With Storyspace, readers may switch between the diagrammatic spatial maps such as that illustrated in Fig. 2.1 of the preceding chapter, a hierarchical chart view or an indented outline view of the spaces in the map window; these features assist the reader in navigating through the hypertextual space.

[133] Though Jameson does seem to argue for an element of flexibility or dynamism in his conception of the global cognitive map, which he maintains may be continually remapped depending on changing routes: 'Disalienation in the traditional city, then, involves the practical reconquest of a sense of place and the construction or reconstruction of an articulated ensemble which can be retained in memory and which the individual subject can map and remap along the moments of mobile, alternative trajectories' (Jameson, 1991, p. 51).

matrix will be the only norm; it will prove a great exposer of pontificating ukase' (Lanham, 1988, p. 278).

As well as recentring the subject, the activity of projecting unitary schema onto the fluidity and difference of experience privileges the actual process of unification. Jameson, in stressing that time and space should be mapped or structured inadvertently gives false privilege to the method of structuring itself: cognitive mapping thus takes the form of a metalanguage, a privileged discourse that can organise chaos but considers itself impervious to the chaotic. This is the limit that all rational philosophies must finally come up against: any attempt to impose structure upon experience, through a process of cognitive mapping or any other such form of homogenisation can never be complete since to achieve totality it would need also to include itself. This will lead to the type of infinite regression witnessed in Borges's 'Library of Babel', where explanatory books of explanatory books proliferate, highlighting the futility of the attempt to contain or fix knowledge in metanarrative. Norris writes of Jameson that he:

> pins his theory to a faith that *method* can retain some absolute validity
> even when history and meaning have been reduced to a constantly
> shifting interplay of tropes. He sides, in other words, with that element
> of Lévi-Strauss's thinking which seeks to preserve 'structure' as a mode
> of intelligibility immune to the assaults of sceptical doubt.
> (Norris, 1991, p. 79)

Jameson writes of the possibility of achieving 'critical distance', of obtaining an abstract vantage point that could provide the basis for critique. He states:

> No theory of cultural politics current on the Left today has been able to
> do without one notion or another of a certain minimal aesthetic distance,
> of the possibility of the positioning of the cultural act outside the
> massive Being of capital, from which to assault this last. What the
> burden of our preceding demonstration suggests, however, is that
> distance in general (including "critical distance" in particular) has very
> precisely been abolished in the new space of postmodernism. We are
> submerged in its henceforth filled and suffused volumes to the point
> where our now postmodern bodies are bereft of spatial coordinates and
> practically (let alone theoretically) incapable of distantiation.
> (Jameson, 1991, p.48-49)

Such critical distance as Jameson laments the loss of is in fact an unachievable ideal. It is impossible for critique to step outside of the economies of the text or of writing. Criticism must always be subject to writing's figurative tropes and rhetorical devices and as such there can be no privileged place, no

transcendental status for critical discourse or metalanguage. As a character in J.M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* basically puts it, "There is no position outside of reason where you can stand and lecture about reason and pass judgement on reason" (*The Lives of Animals*, p. 80).

The search for elevated perspectives that recurs throughout Gray's fiction inevitably addresses the same problem: it is impossible to achieve an abstract perspective on life while involved in the business of living. This paradox is highlighted in 'Prometheus', where the mythical figure of Prometheus is evoked both generally, in the form of the divine hero with the abstract perspective and particularly, as the domestic man M. Pollard, a French dwarf with the involved (and in his case particularly lowly) view. One of the books Pollard publishes, *A Child's Plainchant Dictionary of Abstractions* itself attempts to resolve the two irresolvable perspectives. The book, he relates:

> was thought an inept satire against dictionaries and final proof that I was
> not a serious thinker. Twelve years later a disciple of Levi-Strauss
> discovered that, though printed as prose, each definition in my
> dictionary was a pattern of assonance, dissonance, half-rhyme and
> alliteration invoking the emotions upon which words like *truth, greed,
> government, distaste* and *freedom* depend for their meanings. ... This
> realization brought me the reverence of the structuralists who now used
> my dictionary as a text in three universities.
>
> (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 204-205)

The *Dictionary of Abstractions* therefore functions as metanarrative and aligns itself perfectly with the structuralism of Lévi-Strauss, which as Norris already pointed out 'seeks to preserve 'structure' as a mode of intelligibility immune to the assaults of sceptical doubt' (Norris, 1991, p. 79). Pollard/Prometheus cannot in the end though achieve a transcendent discursive mode while bound by the limits of discourse; as has already been seen he cannot gain complete (or unmediated) knowledge through language for such an attempt will always be undermined by its play:

> This story is a poem, a wordgame. I am not a highly literate French
> dwarf, my lost woman is not a revolutionary writer manque, my details
> are fictions, only my meaning is true and I must make that meaning clear
> by playing the wordgame to the bitter end.
>
> (*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 231)

Prometheus, that is to say, beyond the fictional details of Pollard, is bound and lonely, but can only express his condition locally (particularly) and

representatively through these very fictions, which bind as they aim to enlighten.

Some form of resolution between the two perspectives is here, as elsewhere in Gray's fiction, seen to be desirable, for it would enable subjects entrenched in their day-to-day lives, bound to the yoke of necessity, to perceive the conditions of their lives – and of their subjectivity – a little more clearly.[134] What is needed is not the either/or binary logic of abstract or involved perspective, but a recognition of the necessity of both, even although the two would seem to be mutually exclusive. Such is the nature of the paradox. And while Pollard desires transcendence, Prometheus desires the passions of everyday life (a theme also explored in the Wim Wenders film *Wings of Desire*, where an angel desires to become a mortal).[135] Prometheus/Pollard sorrowfully states that:

> the writers of the greatest divine and human comedies are men of the world, they discover and represent that drama in commonplace streets, bedrooms and battlefields. I can only represent Gods, and lonely intelligences, and multitudes viewed from a very great distance. I will never be popular.
>
> (*Unlikely Stories Mostly*, p. 202)

Gray's texts indicate that artists may offer the best chance of achieving some critical distance: through the work of the artist, it is suggested, subjects may be able to see things more clearly. This is certainly the case in the two Axletree stories of *Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, where subjects instructed to build a Babel-like structure up to the heavens are forbidden from calling it a tower and must instead refer to it as an axletree. It is left to the poet (as with Bohu in 'Five Letters') to denounce the folly of the vain project - along with the mismanagement of the State - and to show things as they really are:

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[134] Bernstein points to a pertinent example in terms of evoking this particular problem, a poem from Gray's verse collection *Old Negatives* entitled 'Both Perspectives' (see Bernstein, 1999, p. 37). And Jameson has pointed to Frank Gehry's attempts to resolve the two positions in his architecture. He writes: 'The problem ... which the Gehry house tries to think is the relationship between that abstract knowledge and conviction or belief about the superstate and the existential daily life of people in their traditional rooms and tract houses. There must be a relationship between those two realms or dimensions of reality or we are altogether within science fiction without realizing it. But the nature of that relationship eludes the mind. The building then tries to think through this spatial problem in spatial terms' (Jameson, 1991, p. 128).

[135] Harvey devotes a chapter to the postmodern ideas developed in this film, along with Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*. See Harvey, 1990, p. 308-323.

"But we are using our surplus to organize disasters!" said the poet. "If those who have grabbed more food and space and material than they need would share it, instead of bribing and threatening the rest with it, the world could become a splendid garden where *many* plants will grow beside this damned, prickly, many-headed, bloodstained cactus of a poisoned and poisoning TOWER."
"Strike that word from the minutes!" said the president swiftly.

(*Unlikely Stories, Mostly*, p. 259)

The poet in this case exposes the truth that others too caught up in the project of the axletree either cannot see for themselves or do not want to admit. But positioning the artist in such a privileged position is itself problematic, for art cannot achieve a transcendental status outside of systems of representation either (and nor can the aesthetic sphere be separated entirely from the economic sphere, a point made earlier in Chapter 2 and the subject of the 'Culture Capitalism' chapter of *Something Leather*). The artist's version of the 'truth' is just that, and as such must be open to critique.[136]

Jameson sees the subject's inability to obtain a critical and panoptic overview as precluding the possibility of action. He writes that our 'capacity to act and struggle ... is at present neutralized by our spatial as well as our social confusion' (Jameson, 1991, p. 54). But abstraction may not provide the only opportunity for action or critical practice; as already outlined what is required is rather that subjects attain the contradictory - and seemingly impossible - position of being both inside and outside at the same time. As Donna Haraway points out: 'Irony is about contradictions that do not resolve into larger wholes, even dialectically, about the tension of holding incompatible things together because both or all are necessary and true' (Haraway, 1991, p. 149). And abstraction may itself at times preclude action: Prometheus, as has been seen, feels he is not part of the 'drama in commonplace streets, bedrooms and battlefields,' and Lanark, too, in striving always for a bird's-eye view may neglect action at ground level. "Tell me, Dr. Lanark," Munro asks him in the Institute, "is there a connection between your love of vast panorama and your

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[136] Though Gray's attitude to criticism is ambivalent (a point that will be taken up again in Chapter 4): the persistent baiting and evading of critics that explicitly occurs in his texts could, for example, be construed as evidence that in trying to pre-empt and deflect criticism he is attempting to place his own work beyond critique. This is perhaps rather an extreme position, and not one I wish to take, yet it is not beyond the bounds of possibility.

distaste for human problems?" (*Lanark*, p. 64). So while abstraction can be viewed on one hand to be necessary and desirable, on the other it may be seen negatively as putting *too much* distance between humans and their reality. Indeed that the abstract perspective is normally reserved for the gods is indicative of its inhumanity.[137]

Which brings us back to the condition of the schizophrenic. The schizophrenic, it is alleged, can have no critical distance, cannot step back from the barrage of immediacy with which s/he is faced. Yet the schizophrenic is also decentred, is not located inside the centre of a stable subject (or at least inside the conception or projection of a stable subject), for the schizophrenic is unable to construct identity but operates instead on the margins of subjectivity or identity. Deleuze and Guattari comment: 'This subject itself is not at the center, which is occupied by the machine, but on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentred, *defined* by the states through which it passes' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984, p. 20). As Currie recognises, Deleuze and Guattari also observe that the (clinical) schizophrenic will often use third person pronouns rather than the first person when referring to him or herself and as such the schizophrenic can be seen to be both inside and outside the 'self', human and inhuman at the same time. The desiring-machines that together constitute or assemble the subject in desire and the 'outside' self, the body without organs that is not the real human body but its abstract body or 'self', are grafted together so there is no longer any clear or separate inside or outside. Deleuze and Guattari write:

> There is no such thing as either man or nature now, only a process that produces the one within the other and couples the machines together. Producing machines, desiring-machines everywhere, schizophrenic machines, all of species life: the self and the non-self, outside and inside, no longer have any meaning whatsoever.
> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984, p. 2)

To some extent, then, the schizophrenic may be seen to resolve, or at least to hold or graft together, the two contradictory positions. And for Deleuze and

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[137] Lyotard comments that artists, in attempting to attain an abstract perspective, or 'critical distance' strive towards the inhuman. He observes: 'I am not dreaming: the aim of the avant-gardes ... is something that they declared on numerous occasions. In 1913, Apollinaire wrote ingenuously: 'More than anything, artists are men who want to become inhuman.' And in 1969, Adorno again, more prudently: 'Art remains loyal to humankind uniquely through its inhumanity in regard to it'' (Lyotard, 1991, p. 2).

Guattari the subject's condition of schizophrenia will actually induce rather than prevent action; the schizophrenic is potentially revolutionary, a far cry from Jameson's schizophrenic who has lost the capacity to act and struggle. The activism of the schizophrenic comes from seeing that things in the world – identity, story, stories of identity – are not fixed but subject always to change and transformation; they exist as assemblages rather than seamless constructions. Deleuze and Guattari write that the schizophrenic experiences 'nature as a process of production' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984, p. 3) and that 'The schizophrenic is the universal producer' (*ibid.*, p. 7); such notions are empowering rather than paralysing or enfeebling.

The productive position of the schizophrenic - the decentred subject 'on the periphery, with no fixed identity' yet who is still able to effect transformation - perhaps indicates that there are alternative bases for action and critique that do not depend on a capacity to totalise or to construct cognitive maps. The inability to achieve transcendence through discourse - or to attain the enlightenment of the abstract perspective - should not as a consequence make discursive activity worthless. Critical discourse is still of value but must always be subject to further critique, the type of edifying discourse urged by Rorty and practised by poststructuralists. Metanarratives, by trying to explain and homogenise difference (and cognitive maps are a form of conceptual metanarrative, as already discussed), function rather to close off discourse, and in this can be seen the positive contribution hypertext may make to the critical process through its resistance to structures of closure and totality. Subjects cannot escape or exceed the limits of discourse (and this must necessarily include technological discourse, since all discourse is finally technological), yet they may still use discourse productively - critically and analytically. They can also use it self-consciously, aware of the necessary limits of the critical methods being formed.

Hypertextual critique can also situate itself self-consciously in this way. The schizophrenic reader of the schizophrenic text should not be the passive recipient of a barrage of information, nor the subject of an absorbing virtual reality, but the active participant in the assemblage or construction of text - or story - that is always tentative, never final, but still subject to pattern and production of meaning. Hypertextual critique must display the contradictions of

the form, not from the outside, from singular narratives of explanation –
including this one – which inadequately attempt to rationalise and so subdue the
potential difference of the form, or to achieve some sort of objective
perspective, but from a position on the inside, the decentred position of
hypertext itself. Hypertextual criticism can of course still take place in the
medium of print; I am just suggesting that printed criticism will naturally tend
towards linearity and singularity and as such will tame the radical critical
potential of the fragmentary and schizophrenic digital form. It will also, in most
cases, be inadequate to the task of demonstrating more than precursorily some
of the problematic possibilities of hypertext, for it cannot re-enact these
problems in the fixed medium of print (in the way, for example that printed
texts may display the limitations of print, as in the case of those texts discussed
in Chapter 1. Printed texts cannot engage with the limitations of digital ones in
this way).[138] Hypertextual critique performed within the electronic medium may
display the contradictions of hypertext by writing or enacting them reflexively,
using the means and tools that themselves recreate the conditions being
criticised, which is what Ulmer argues for as part of his *Applied Grammatology*
and attempts to do in his 'Grammatology (In The Stacks) of Hypermedia' project.
He is attempting to construct, as already outlined in Chapter 2, 'a discourse of
immanent critique' (Ulmer, 1991, section 4).[139] Such critique may assume any or
all of the forms available in the hypertextual mode: multilinear, patchwork

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[138] And the converse of this is that the digital media should be used in self-relevant
ways, rather than in ways harking back to the methods and problems of print (digital
'books' would fall into this category). Ulmer writes: 'the new media should not be used
(or are ineffective when used) for purposes originally derived for other media. Rather,
new ends that exploit the strengths of the new media should be developed' (Ulmer,
1985, p. 305).

[139] Jameson describes such reflexive and self-conscious technique as the '*homeopathic*
strategy'. He writes: 'The more properly postmodern political aesthetic – which would
confront the structure of image society as such head-on and undermine it from within …
might be termed the *homeopathic* strategy, most dramatically and paradigmatically
exemplified in our time by Hans Haacke's installations, which turn institutional space
inside out by drawing the museum in which they are technically contained into
themselves, as part of their thematics and subject matter: invisible spiders, whose net
contains their own containers and turns the private property of social space inside out
like a glove. Formally, however, … Haacke … seems intent on undermining the image by
way of the image itself, and planning the implosion of the logic of the simulacrum by
dint of every [sic] greater doses of simulcra' [sic] (Jameson, 1991, p. 409).

criticism that involves the reader as much as the author in the process of its construction and that can also include image, audio and video data.

Aside from the issue of reflexivity, it is also important that hypertextual critique take place in the digital medium in order that hypertext becomes neither a marginalised type of textual ghetto nor the exclusive domain of computer programmers, profiting at the expense of the technophobes; the digital domain must remain democratic and should not be allowed to lapse - or progress - into the realm of complete science fiction. No textual form should be able to operate beyond critique, lest we truly come up against an unruly monster. It is important that subjects engage critically with the digital technology of writing, that they exert themselves in this direction, artistically and creatively, so that this technology, like that of earlier written forms, remains comprehensible. Whilst the subject has been shown to be inevitably bound by technology and by the technology of language, the subject can still exert themselves against their limits by exercising choice in the ways they employ their linguistic and other technologies. If the subject does not engage with the technology of digital text in this way it is likely to be to the detriment of both subject and text, for we are more likely to be repressed by what we do not understand and cannot contribute to, and hypertext will have lost its radical potential. While the binary code that intervenes between the subject and the text is not the subject's own, neither is language, and the abstractedness of the digital text should serve to focus attention upon the artificial process that is underway whenever the subject attempts to construct narrative. In this way digital text should not render the subject powerless but should bring into relief the possibilities for transformative textual construction. It has already been seen how hypertexts lend themselves to notions of textual productivity and open-endedness, what Ulmer describes as *inventio*, and this continual creativity, the generation and synthesis of story, self, and of new forms of both is the textual work of the final chapter.

Chapter 4.

From Text to Graft: Baring the Sutures

The work of narrative production or synthesis can take place in hypertext, or at least in network-structured hypertexts, through the grafting together of the hypertextual fragments, and as already described, the process will be carried out in a piecemeal fashion, fabricating a text that will never be a complete or unified whole but will always be a work in progress, a patchwork text that can be rearranged and perhaps even augmented as the reader chooses.[140] Deleuze and Guattari write:

> We live today in the age of partial objects, bricks that have been shattered to bits, and leftovers. We no longer believe in the myth of the existence of fragments that, like pieces of an antique statue, are merely waiting for the last one to be turned up, so that they may all be glued back together to create a unity that is precisely the same as the original unity. ... We believe only in totalities that are peripheral. And if we discover such a totality alongside various separate parts, it is a whole *of* these particular parts but does not totalize them; it is a unity *of* all of these particular parts but does not unify them; rather, it is added to them as a new part fabricated separately.
>
> (Deleuze and Guattari, 1984, p. 42)

As already outlined, the parts that are grafted together to construct the temporary hypertextual whole can consist of multiple forms: image, audio and video, as well as fragments from different textual genres may all be collected together in the hypertextual montage, as is the case in Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*

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[140] This process of textual construction can be compared with the nomad thought of Deleuze and Guattari, an open approach to discursive activity (similar to the methods of Nietzsche) that encourages readers to think of the text as an assemblage of thoughts (subject to rearrangement) rather than as a unified whole. Brian Massumi writes that nomad thought 'synthesizes a multiplicity of elements without effacing their heterogeneity or hindering their potential for future rearranging' (Massumi, 1992, p. 6).

which as has been seen explicitly borrows or grafts from existing fictional and non-fictional texts to create a hybrid – or monstrous - textual form.

As such the hypertext can be viewed as a form of recycling, enabling textual parts to be creatively transformed or regenerated in potentially subversive ways (the subversive potential of recycling has already been mentioned in Chapter 3 with reference to the clothes-mending machines of Gray's 'Wellbeing' and Thompson's *Rubbish Theory*). Gray is not averse to the notion of recycling himself: *Poor Things* and *The Book of Prefaces* in particular are grafted from their textual antecedents. That the process of recycling can become an art form is alluded to in Don De Lillo's *Underworld*, where the ritual of waste disposal echoes through the text, forming a textual pattern:

> At home we separated our waste into glass and cans and paper products. Then we did clear glass versus coloured glass. Then we did tin versus aluminium. We did plastic containers, without caps or lids, on Tuesdays only. Then we did yard waste. Then we did newspapers including glossy inserts but were careful not to tie the bundles in twine, which is always the temptation.
>
> *(Underworld*, p. 89)

Variations - or recyclings - of this pattern appear throughout the text (see pp. 102-103, 803-804 and 807). The function of this ritual is the positive textual transformation of waste, the creation of something meaningful (also valuable in terms of its recycling potential) and even aesthetically pleasing from what would otherwise be seen as rubbish. Such is the case with hypertext, where the textual fragments, meaningless by themselves, can be patterned and re-patterned, and where the reader is called upon to carry out the creative work. The recycling of textual remnants that occurs in *Glas, The Book of Prefaces* and *Patchwork Girl* and which may be considered a paradigm for the hypertextual form may also be viewed as offsetting in some way the idea that the past or history has been completely jettisoned in our current culture of late or post- postmodernity, that the schizophrenic subject engaging with the schizophrenic text has 'become incapable of dealing with time and history,' as Jameson suggested (Jameson, 1985, p. 117). As already pointed out in a preceding footnote (see footnote 130), there can in fact be no such thing as a detached or self-sufficient moment in time, a moment completely cut off from the past and future (for they serve to constitute it precisely as the present). Culturally, then, complete schizophrenia

is not really possible (though of course the clinical condition is more than real). The process of recycling ensures that debris from the past is not ignored, but is used or regenerated in a positive way, to inform the present through the act of creative transformation.

If the recycling of household rubbish can create patterns that are aesthetically pleasing then the recycling of texts can surely do the same. In terms of the appearance of the text, hypertext may by grafting together differing textual genres and particularly by accommodating non-verbal forms of writing come close in some ways to the aesthetic result of mediaeval texts, as already suggested in Chapter 1. Mediaeval manuscripts were less restricted in terms of visual content than printed texts and 'marginal' or paratextual manuscript commentaries could work their way into the inscription of the text proper more readily than is possible with print. The notion of the hypertext as a 'present tense palimpsest' as put forward by Joyce also bears some relevance here, since the mediaeval text was so often inscribed over and across the traces of other, faded and perhaps forgotten stories. (In the case of these 'past tense' palimpsests though, unlike in the hypertextual matrix, the other stories can less easily be retrieved and will often be lost entirely.) Comparing hypertext to the mediaeval manuscript is interesting in that, on the face of it, it would seem such an unlikely comparison. Hypertexts, after all, are not tangible aesthetic objects, while the beauty and appeal of the mediaeval text lies very much in its status as object, and, more specifically, as object of labour, founded on the artistic work of those involved in its production. It is this reverence of the object of the book – or the notion of an artistic labour of love - that Gray, following in the creative tradition of Blake and Ruskin, is so keen to preserve (or consecrate) through his printed texts.[141] 'The book,' writes S.B. Kelly, 'has always had a totemic, material existence in Gray's work; from the postmodernist erratum slip to the coded messages beneath the dust-cover' (Kelly, 2002, p. 68).

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[141] And Blake considered that technology in many ways put paid to such creative labour. Bronowski comments that Blake saw the machinery of the Industrial Revolution 'grow round him and wrote about it and feared it; his own craft of engraving in the end was destroyed by the Industrial Revolution' (from the introduction to *William Blake: A Selection of Poems and Letters*, p. 12).

Gray's texts, as textual objects painstakingly measured and controlled in their production down to the smallest aesthetic detail, are still bound to the concept of the text as 'work', which in turn will always tie them to their author, implicating them in what Barthes called 'the myth of filiation' (Barthes, 1977, p. 160). According to this myth, Barthes writes, 'The Author is thought to *nourish* the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child' (Barthes, 1977, p. 145). Gray's particular attention to paratextual detail serves as much as can be possible to ensure that these paratexts 'present' or 'objectify' his text according to his own wishes for and vision of the book. The recent Artworks Scotland BBC television programme marking Gray's 70th birthday, *Gray at 70*, lends support to the textual hints that Gray may be something of a control freak. It took the form of an interview with Gray conducted by someone termed 'his own harshest critic': himself. This comment is not intended ungenerously, for Gray is here as elsewhere characteristically self-deprecating and unafraid to openly and honestly criticise himself (he may well be his own harshest critic in many respects); nonetheless, the format conveniently enables him to remain in complete control of what he asks and answers.[142] Gray does seem to appreciate this and the irony of the following exchange between himself and himself rather nicely confirms the point:

> [Gray the interviewer]: "So you're a control freak? Your friend, the poet Tom Leonard once said that working with Alasdair Gray was like a sandcastle working with the sea."
> [Gray the interviewee]: "I'm certainly the kind of artist who wants to control as much as I can the appearance of the work I do in writing and in painting and how it's produced."
> (*Gray at 70*, Artworks Scotland programme for BBC2, broadcast on 14.11.2004)

Frequent inclusion of what he terms 'Critic Fuel' and the autographic reviews and blurb accompanying his texts would also suggest that Gray, in pre-emptively attempting to deflect or perhaps to assimilate criticism, is going out of his way to direct not just the presentation of his texts but their reception too. The

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[142] This 'interview' technique, like the Socratic or Platonic dialogue, can allow an argument to follow a precise – and seemingly very logical – pattern, and as such often takes the form of polemic, as is the case with Gray's *Why Scots Should Rule Scotland 1997* and its 'dialogue' between the author and interlocutory 'publisher'. It can, then, be a very effective means of persuasion.

flyleaves of *The Book of Prefaces* contain 'Author's Blurb' and 'Publisher's Blurb' entitled 'Our Editor Confronts Critics' and 'Our Editor Evades Critics' and here Gray writes the text for the roles of author, publisher and editor alike. Fond of populating his textual cast-list with literal and metaphorical puppets manipulated by often unscrupulous puppet-masters (the papier mache emperor of 'Five Letters from an Eastern Empire', *Lanark*'s Nastler or Jock McLeish with his fantastical and cruel teasing of Janine, to give a few immediate examples), Gray himself would like perhaps to remain finally in control of the strings. Evading critics in *The Book of Prefaces* he writes emphatically:

> This book is NOT a monster created by a literary Baron Frankenstein, but a unique history of how literature spread and developed through three British nations and most North American states.
> The result of a lifetime's reading and creative labour, intellectual and artistic, it will delight, amaze and inform both casual browsers and students. Its like will not be seen again for at least another millennium. A copy of *The Book of Prefaces* should be found in every household and hotel bedroom.
>
> *(The Book of Prefaces, dust jacket)*

The emphasis here is clearly upon the importance of the author as the inspirational source of 'the work': the book is not merely a compilation or combination of other people's writing but is the unique product of 'a lifetime's reading and creative labour, intellectual and artistic', and specifically it is the product of the creative labour of its author, Alasdair Gray. Or so, Gray's words suggest, the publishers would like us to think, for this text is part of the 'Publisher's Blurb'. This situates the premise of these words in a typically ambivalent position, for they are and are not Gray's words, and they in fact contradict the 'Author's Blurb' of the other flyleaf, which in the self-effacing manner of Gray attempts rather to diminish any sense of the author's importance or creative uniqueness: 'To every generation appears an ageing writer who, with some published work behind him and no ideas for more, decides to produce THE BOOK OF BOOKS by grafting together pieces cut from the corpus of other writers' (*The Book of Prefaces*, dust jacket). According to the author (officially), then, the book may well be 'a monster created by a literary Baron Frankenstein', while according to the publisher and to the author (unofficially) it most certainly is not. By supplying text for both perspectives - with a tongue-in-

cheek element to both - Gray once again asks and answers his own questions and in so doing craftily ensures that his critics cannot pin him down.

The conflicting bits of blurb also focus attention on the differing concepts of 'work'. On the one hand, 'the work' belongs to the author, it is the consequence of his own imaginative labour; an individual's work, from this perspective, is thus valuable and culminates in something - 'the work' - that the individual can be both responsible for and proud of. On the other hand, the 'Author's Blurb' argues, 'the work' in question exists only by virtue of the labour of other writers and from this perspective it could be argued that Gray is taking another side-swipe at postmodernism and at what he considers to be its devaluing of the work of the individual and, concomitantly, of the result or product of this effort ('the work'). Postmodern theory (following poststructuralist theory in this respect) has suggested that the text should be viewed not so much as the original work of an author but rather as a rearrangement (whether more or less explicit) of pre-existing texts: where poststructuralism and psychoanalysis stress that words and text can never really be 'our own', since they belong instead to the rule-set of the Symbolic or thetic Other, postmodernism further challenges any concept of originality (of our 'selves' as being the origin of our words or artistic endeavours) by favouring techniques like collage and montage, which are self-consciously derivative. As such, the 'creative labour' of the individual might seem to be worth less - or even worthless - and if this is the case there would be little incentive in trying to labour creatively at all. If 'the work' cannot be attached to the author, then consequently the author will not be responsible for his or her work, and irresponsible authors will not endeavour to transform the real world imaginatively, a social duty that Gray, through his emphasis on public rather than private art has never shirked (his portraits for the People's Palace, murals in churches, restaurants and community museums, in addition to his invariably political fiction and non-fiction provide the evidence to support the point).[143] In Kittock's notes of A History Maker Gray writes of postmodernism:

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[143] This notion of the artist's social responsibility which has been briefly touched upon in Chapter 3 is one that is looked at closely - and very critically - in the chapter entitled 'Culture Capitalism' in Something Leather (the chapter is in fact a scathing critique of the commodification of art in general and in particular of its appropriation by the upper echelons of society). Here Harry's piece of concept art - the 'bum garden' - is to be used

> [The] indifference to most people's wellbeing and taste appeared in the
> fashionable art of the wealthy. Critics called their period *postmodern* to
> separate it from the modern world begun by the Renaissance when most
> creative thinkers believed they could improve their community.
> Postmodernists had no interest in the future, which they expected to be
> an amusing rearrangement of things they already knew. Postmodernism
> did not survive disasters caused by "competitive exploitation of human
> and natural resources" in the twenty-first century.
>
> <div align="right">(A History Maker, p. 202-203)</div>

For Gray, then, postmodernism devalues the work of the artist.

The digital computer further complicates the subject's relationship to their work by adding intervening layers of abstraction. Mark Poster comments that:

> Artisans and assembly-line workers, whatever their differences, had an
> active, "hands-on" relation to the materials used in production. Their
> bodies engaged directly the transformation of raw materials into the
> finished product. The senses, minds, and muscles of the worker were
> deployed in a unified effort of mastery and skill. ... Now, since the
> introduction of computers in the workplace, a new worker is being
> produced, one who sits, away from the place of production, in front of
> monitors, switches, lights, an interpreter of information.
>
> <div align="right">(Poster, 1990, p. 129)</div>

But while the focus here is upon the direct involvement of the subject in the construction of a 'finished product,' hypertext, as has been argued, deals not in products but in productivity. The process of work itself replaces 'the work', perhaps obeying Gray's repeated exhortation to 'Work As If You Live in the Early Days of a Better Nation.' And the work – or graft – of hypertext is still both valuable and meaningful (though it might well, by dint of techniques like montage, be described as postmodern), for it constructs texts, though it may not be as clearly identified with the figure of the author as is the case with print. In hypertext the reader too has the responsibility to work and as indicated in Chapter 2, hypertexts will frequently involve the collaborative work of more

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for Glasgow's year of 'Cultcha' (as Harry's dealer calls it, *Something Leather*, p. 171) and is taken more notice of by the English middle and upper classes than by the people of Glasgow themselves: it is private and élitist rather than public and accessible or democratic and the implication is that such art is selfish and solipsistic. A magazine interviewer with an upper-class English accent (phonetically represented in Gray's text) tells Harry that "to most people nowadays the new things in the galleries look like doodling! They add very little beauty or intelligence to the places wha they appia, none at all to those who see them. Does it occur to you that yaw art may be a game played for nobody's plesha but yaw own? Like doodling. Or mastabation' (*Something Leather*, p. 146). For a fairly up-to-date list of public collections of Gray's visual art see King, 2002, p. 119. Recent work not included in this list is the magnificent ceiling mural in the Oran Mor pub at the bottom of Glasgow's Byres Rd, adjoining Great Western Rd.

than one author. The hypertextual graft is a form of productivity: graft, literally, is productive work, work that transforms in the operation. Philippe Sollers writes in *Logics*: 'The essential thing is to set the song in motion as a *graft* and not as a meaning, a work, or a spectacle' (quoted in Derrida, 1981, p. 355). Graft, then, eschews the notion of completion, of textual product and the unified meaning of 'the work'. Derrida writes of Sollers's *Numbers*:

> It is the sustained, discrete violence of an incision that is not apparent in the thickness of the text, a calculated insemination of the proliferating allogene through which the two texts are transformed, deform each other, contaminate each other's content, tend at times to reject each other, or pass elliptically one into the other and become regenerated in the repetition, along the edges of an *overcast seam [un surjet]*. Each grafted text continues to radiate back toward the site of its removal, transforming that, too as it affects the new territory. Each is defined (thought) by the operation and at the same time is defin*ing* (think*ing*) as far as the rules and effects of the operation are concerned.
> (Derrida, 1981, p. 335)

Defining the graft as productive and transformative act, Derrida here also draws attention to the seams created by the grafting process; the visibility of these seams can be compared to those of the patchwork text, the text stitched together by the graft of the reader. As argued in the preceding chapter, network-structured hypertexts do not attempt to present themselves in the seamless manner of either cinema or virtual reality. By drawing attention to their own artifice and constructedness they rather expose their own seams, baring the sutures that hold the text together. The visible sutures of hypertext can be contrasted sharply with the cinematic concept of the suture mentioned by Ulmer in the last chapter, which functions to bind representation to reality and as such pretends invisibility.

As already argued, texts that display the conditions of their making are likely to elicit subjects who, in seeing the way narratives are fabricated, will also see how narratives play a large role in their own subjective construction: the fabrication of identity or 'self'. The 'self', as outlined in Chapter 3, is a constructed entity, a projection created by language. The irony of the self is that while it is taken to be constitutive of the subject's 'humanity' – the Cartesian self is at the centre of the 'humanist' view of the world – the self is projected in words not our own but Other. On entering language, as Lacan said, the subject must put on the 'armour of an alienating identity' (Lacan, 1977, p.

4). The subject, then, becomes human through adopting discursive codes that are inhuman. The commonplace notion that humans are dehumanised or become inhuman through their exposure to or engagement with technology therefore fails to recognise that the subject who has entered language with a view to becoming fully human has also entered into a condition of inhumanity. Whilst writing with pen and paper may provide the sort of "hands-on", immediate relationship to text, or to the object of work, so valued by Gray, writing is still a technological mediation. But writing of this traditional kind, through habit and through its apparent immediacy, just manages to hide the sutures that graft it to the desiring-machines of the subject; traditional forms of writing, as pointed out in the Introduction, have become so familiar as to seem completely natural. But a gap still exists between the subject and the word, regardless of the medium. Electronic writing, as an immaterial form lacking the immediacy of the inscribed word, simply draws attention to this gap, and to the technological mediation that occurs when the subject enters language.

From a recognition that language is an alien armour, it is a short step to argue, as do Donna Haraway, N. Katherine Hayles and others, that the subject who engages with digital discursive technologies (and indeed who considers these technologies as prostheses) is a cyborg. 'A cyborg,' writes Haraway, 'is a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction' (Haraway, 1991, p. 149). Haraway contends that: 'By the late twentieth century, our time, a mythic time, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs' (ibid., p. 150). Whilst we are simultaneously human and inhuman, hybrids of humans and language and, in the digital medium, of human and computer interfaces, I would suggest that the cybernetic transition should not be seamless. Poster writes that since digital technologies of writing can operate in ways akin to the human mind (a topic discussed at some length in Chapters 1 and 2), the gap between the subject and the word may seem to have been closed by the computer: 'The screen-object and the writing-subject merge into an unsettling simulation of unity' (Poster, 1990, p. p. 111). But at the same time as this simulation of unity occurs, the subject feels startled by it, and thus remains aware or self-conscious of the relationship with and boundary between

subject and machine. Poster describes the subject's alarm in the same terms as Lacan's mirror-stage of development:

> Human being faces machine in a disquieting specular relation: in its immateriality the machine mimics the human being. The mirror effect of the computer doubles the subject of writing; the human being recognizes itself in the uncanny immateriality of the machine. ... the mirror effects of this aspect of the mode of information are noticed with shock.
>
> (Poster, 1990, p. 112)

This shock on the part of the subject should serve to prevent the boundaries between subject and computer from becoming too indistinct (until, that is, digital writing becomes as familiar as have other textual forms and we cease to view it even as a technology. In this event we will truly be living under the guise of the cyborg). Meantime, the discomfort of the digital textual environment, as suggested in earlier chapters, keeps us vigilant. A degree of estrangement from the technologies that condition us is a good thing, for as with the schizophrenic's estrangement from centred identity it can encourage us to act. The subject of digital text, as with the schizophrenic, is not permitted to find the 'place of rest, certainty, reconciliation ... [and] tranquillized sleep' that Foucault suggested could be found in continuous histories, histories that posit stable identities (Foucault, 1982, p. 14); with digital technologies of writing, as yet, there is no such comfort zone.

Haraway, in her discussion of the cyborg, argues sensibly for 'pleasure in the confusion of boundaries and for responsibility in their construction' (Haraway, 1991, p. 150); these boundaries are I would suggest, like those in the fabricated hypertext, delimited by sutures, and it is in our own interests to remain vigilant and to ensure that they remain visible. Such attention to the seams or scars of self and text can be witnessed among the hypertextual fragments of McLaughlin's *Notes Toward Absolute Zero*.

> [In the fragment 'Relic']: She had a small scar, a line of raised flesh with marks from the stitches on either side. It was on her pelvis, the relic of a childhood operation. I found it strangely beautiful.
> [In the fragment 'Gesture']: Laughing through thickets of hair, cool cool cheek against stomach and scar. ... Listening to your architecture. ... The bones, the bones, the bones. The edge of your skeleton, the torn fabric of your skin.
>
> (*Notes Toward Absolute Zero*)

The subject of hypertext, like the hypertextual narrative and like the patchwork girl, is grafted together incrementally; it is in process of becoming, rather than a finished product. Such patchwork hypertexts do not project or confirm a false and fixed identity, but implicate the subject in the creation of new, patchy and always difficult projections of self. 'We are,' the French band Air sing in one of their songs, 'electronic performers. We are synthesisers.' And we synthesise our selves through our engagement with text.

That McLaughlin's hyperfiction describes the scars as 'strangely beautiful' is significant, for it suggests that we should not be ashamed of our patched selves. In the case of the creation of the female companion for Frankenstein's creature, the construction work is described as a 'filthy process' that horrifies and sickens Frankenstein (*Frankenstein*, p. 159) as it engages him in the production of another 'fiend' (*ibid.*, p. 160). In Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*, too, the cat, in a fragment entitled 'beauty patches' comments: "That poor patched thing will hate herself when she's once alive ... If I were you, I'd use her for a mop and make another servant that is prettier" (*Patchwork Girl*). McLaughlin's text suggests that the grafted body might be not just pretty but beautiful, and this is a sentiment echoed in Gray's *Poor Things*, in the nominal significance of Bella. Bella, through proper nurture, achieves the contradictory status of beautiful monstrosity and as such points the way for the constructive and sensitive application of technology. As N. Katherine Hayles points out with regard to her definition of the cyborg as the 'posthuman', whether such identities are taken to be beautiful or monstrous depends very much upon what we decide to see in them - whether, to use Hayles's distinction, we see 'terror' or 'pleasure' (Hayles, 1999, p. 283). She writes:

> When the self is envisioned as grounded in presence, identified with originary guarantees and teleological trajectories, associated with solid foundations and logical coherence, the posthuman is likely to be seen as antihuman because it envisions the conscious mind as a small subsystem running its program of self-construction and self-assurance while remaining ignorant of the actual dynamics of complex systems. But the posthuman does not really mean the end of humanity. It signals instead the end of a certain conception of the human, a conception that may have applied, at best, to that fraction of humanity who had the wealth, power, and leisure to conceptualize themselves as autonomous beings exercising their will through individual agency and choice. What is lethal is not the posthuman as such but the grafting of the posthuman onto a liberalist humanist view of the self.

The patched subject will, however, experience some anxiety regarding its possible futures, for unlike unified narratives - especially religious ones - which promised subjects a stable position within a stable epoch (and the possibility of a similarly stable future), the fragmentary hypertext can offer no such guarantees. Indeed the hypertext is only temporary, and the power that its flexibility and dynamism may bring may also hold the indication of its limits: the future of hypertext is not certain, does not reside in monuments like the printed book, but is held in the fragile form of digital and evanescent code, comparable, perhaps, to writing in the sand, or to a sandcastle on the beach (to repeat Tom Leonard's despairing metaphor regarding the resilience of work done for Alasdair Gray). The work of hypertext, unlike 'the work' of the book, will not 'remain and explain.' The fragility of the digital text must be mirrored in the subject and in any vision of a possible future, yet this fragility, as with the condition of the schizophrenic, might make us graft all the harder. Hayles discusses the position of the androids in Philip K. Dick's book *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (later made into the film *Blade Runner*), describing them as 'schizoid' (see Hayles, 1999, p. 160ff.). The androids, known as 'replicants' are intensely productive, revolutionary, like the schizophrenics of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*. Yet the basis for their action is their anxiety for their futures, for they are destined and programmed to live only half-lives. Their future, that is to say, is non-existent and as such their passionate intensity will be short-lived. Harvey, quoting from the speech of the replicants' designer, Tyrell, writes:

> "Revel in it," says Tyrell, "a flame that burns twice as intensely lives half as long." The replicants exist, in short, in that schizophrenic rush of time that Jameson, Deleuze and Guattari, and others see as so central to postmodern living.
>
> (Harvey, 1990, p. 309)

As a society of schizophrenics, with unstable and patched identities, we too may be frantically grafting for our survival. As Gleick earlier stated, 'We live in the buzz' of the present time, yet we must continue to construct narratives in order to keep living (Gleick, 2000, p. 10). This need for story - of text and of self - has been evident for centuries, the *1001 Tales of the Arabian Nights* being told as a stay against death. That continual (textual) renewal is necessary for life (just as

the regeneration of his liver is vital to Prometheus struggling in his bind) is an idea that has already been formulated in Rorty's call for edifying discourse, discourse that in keeping the conversation going, serves to avert the 'freezing-over of culture' and 'the dehumanization of human beings' (Rorty, 1980, p. 377). Our intense productivity needs, however, to be balanced with a measure of slowness and with the resistance to too much acceleration. We must, that is to say, take our time with the serious business of textual engagement and productivity, and this is a requirement particularly incumbent upon our engagement with hypertext, in order that it does not become too hyper. Ulmer points to Jonathan Crary's observation that we ought to refuse 'productivist injunctions by inducing slow speeds and inhabiting silences' (Ulmer, 1991, section 18). We still need to produce, but we must do so wisely. It would appear, then, as a dying man tells Lanark with some conviction, that a 'good life means fighting to be human under growing difficulties' (*Lanark*, p. 55).

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http://www.sunshine69.com (see Arellano, 1996)

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http://www.virtualwriter.net/technology.php (see Greco, 1999)

List of Illustrations

Fig. 2.1, Storyspace map view from Michael Joyce's hyperfiction *Twilight: A Symphony*, image taken from screen shot.

Chapter 3: Title illustration from front cover of *Lanark* (Picador, 1994), © Alasdair Gray;
Fig. 3.1, Da Vinci's 'Vitruvian Man', image taken from the website of the Karolinska Institutet Library, Stockholm,
http://gallery.euroweb.hu/art/l/leonardo/10anatom/1vitruviu.jpg, © Karolinska Institutet, Library;
Fig. 3.2, Gray's 'Vitruvian Man', illustration taken from front cover of *1982 Janine* (Penguin, 1985), © Alasdair Gray;
Fig. 3.3, Part of Gray's mural at the Abbot House, Dunfermline, image taken from digital photograph, © Emma Lister.

Chapter 4: Title illustration from *The Ends of Our Tethers* (Picador, 1994), © Alasdair Gray.