

This thesis is submitted to Auckland University of Technology  
in partial fulfillment of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

# *Beyond Words*

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*An investigation into aspects  
of meaning articulated  
through the material forms  
of 'old' media as expressed  
in a polysemous narrative*

LISA WILLIAMS

JULY 2011



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## *Attestation of Authorship*

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I hereby declare that this submission is my work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment is made in the acknowledgments.

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Lisa Williams  
AUGUST 2011



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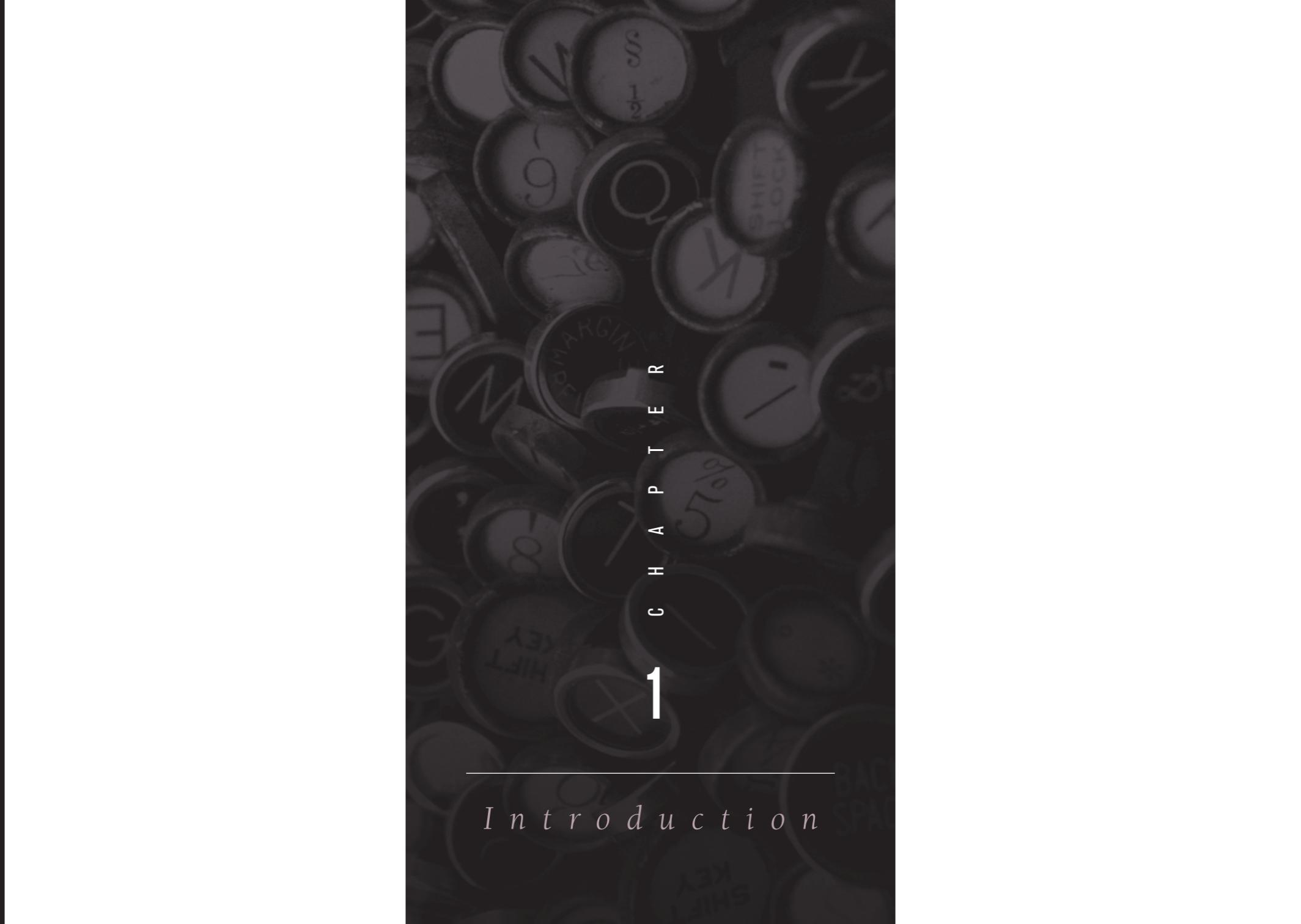
## *Abstract*

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This work is a creative production PhD project that consists of a designed creative text and an exegesis. The creative text, a novel, is made up of seven artefacts: a novella, a photograph, a series of newspaper clippings, a photocopied news clipping, a VHS tape, an audiocassette, and a personal letter. Produced in old media (media that pre-dates the Internet and is not disseminated digitally) each artefact tells an individual story. When considered together, they form the larger, polysemous narrative.

'Polysemous narrative' refers to the ability of a sign to express multiple meanings in story form. In this context, it refers to specific ways in which the designer has purposefully constructed divergent articulations of the text as well as to the ways in which the artefacts, as material objects, contribute to divergent interpretations of meaning.





C H A P T E R

1

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

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- 1 Defining exactly what a novel is can be a daunting task, given its development from the early eighteenth century (in English). Forster (1955) uses words such as “amorphous” and “formidable mass” (p. 5) to describe the novel and settles on a broad definition that encompasses a wide range of texts. He argues that a novel is fiction that tells a story, is written in prose, and contains at least 50,000 words. Since his classic treatise, *Aspects of the Novel*, was first published in 1927, it is arguable whether he anticipated how the novel might evolve beyond its basis in written language. However, as the term novel has its roots in the word new, I argue that *No Such Luck*, as a new expression of a work of fiction of considerable breadth that tells a story, may be considered a novel. (Distinguishing characteristics of a *polysemous* novel are discussed in the Critical Framework.)

## Introduction

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E. M. Forster's (1955) advice to novelists offers a means for concisely describing the nature of the polysemous novel, *No Such Luck*. He argues that the novelist's role is to expand the story being told. Rather than completion or rounding off, the author must seek to open it out. Taking inspiration from his directive, I have applied his advice literally to the form of the text. *No Such Luck* expands beyond the confines of a book to express its narrative through diverse genres and media forms.<sup>1</sup>

Adopting such an outlook has led to an approach that regards *No Such Luck* as a work of design. Accordingly, this thesis explores how one might design rather than write a novel. Considered from this perspective, the designer of the text draws upon modes and materials beyond the written word to convey meaning. Yet designing a novel is about more than making use of diverse semiotic resources. A story designer is interested in the relationships between the various parts of the text, how they interact and how, together, they form the greater work. Viewed in this way, new conceptualisations of what a story is, how it might be told, and how it might make meaning emerge.

The research is comprised of two parts. The first is the creative project, *No Such Luck*, a polysemous novel. The second part is an exegesis that explores contextualising ideas and concepts integral to the creative work's development. It also explains the research design that underpinned the design process.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE EXEGESIS

The exegesis is divided into six main parts:

- » *The Designer's Positioning Statement* provides insight into the personal and professional circumstances that motivated my interest in the project.
- » *The Review of Contextualising Knowledge* positions the research within a wider body of relevant knowledge and creative texts.
- » *The Critical Framework* explains the two discourses (polysemy and wear and tear) fundamental to the development of the novel's design.
- » *The Research Design* explains the theoretical underpinnings and methods use to test emerging hypotheses.
- » *The Commentary* explains many of the processes, procedures, and experiments undertaken in order to craft the artefacts included in the polysemous novel.
- » *The Project Reflection* considers how outcomes from the project might be extended through further research.





C H A P T E R

2

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*Designer's  
Positioning  
Statement*



## Introduction

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Scrivener (2000) argues that a report of a creative production PhD project should include a pre-project reflection on practice. The purpose of this reflection is to address issues, concerns, and interests that will be worked through in the course of the research. While I was aware at the beginning of the project of such considerations, I was also cognizant of how the research itself, as an avenue for discovery, would reflect core concerns that held deep meaning for me. As a result, I was interested in what I might learn from the finished artefact and its implications for my practice in the future. Therefore, as my starting point, I will begin at the end. I will hold up *No Such Luck* as a mirror and describe what I see.

### THEMES – SECRETS

Secrets recur as a theme in my writing. In my first novel, *Drifting at the Bottom of the World* (2003) the main character, An Jones, uncovers a family secret she has repressed since she was six years-old.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in *No Such Luck*, Jill Beth Sorenson stumbles across the secret that her father was an African-American. In both books, the secrets have devastating consequences, and the characters suffer a rupture that alienates them from their families and cultures.

Sela-Smith (2002) argues that within each of us lies a tacit dimension of personal knowledge. She describes it as “that internal place where experience, feeling, and meaning join together to form both a picture of the world and a way to

navigate that world” (p. 60). The tacit dimension is the storehouse where our personal myths are held: those beliefs that mould our interpretation and response to experience. Feinstein, Krippner, and Granger (1988) suggest that it is our personal myths that serve as organising models of perception, understanding, and behaviour. I would argue they are also a source for creative expression.

Though I did not anticipate when I began the novel that I would again explore secrets, the recurrence of the theme suggests how deeply the topic resonates within me. Once again, I wrote about what I know. The secrets of sexual abuse and a repressed sexuality informed my early life. Like the main characters in both of the novels, I understand what it is like to suffer the consequences of a secret and how its exposure can serve to devastate and liberate at the same time.

### THEMES – RACISM

Only as the novel evolved, did I realise that racism was developing into a core theme. As originally conceived, the work was to centre on the relationship of two girls, Jill Beth Sorenson and Aurelia Gordon. Yet as the research unfolded, the story began to shift. The African-American woman Naomi Mays became a central figure and the subplot was developed in which Jill Beth learns her father is also an African-American.

Born in the American South (Florida) in 1960, I was too young to remember the upheaval of the Civil Rights movement. Rosa Parkes, Medgar Evers, and Bull Connor were names in textbooks that accompanied the pictures of African-Americans being set upon by police dogs or blasted with water hoses.

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<sup>1</sup> The novel was published under the pseudonym Auden Bailey.

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I thought I came along after the tensions had eased, at least a little. I attended integrated schools, I had never seen a 'Whites-Only' sign. African-Americans were allowed to shop where I shopped, to eat where I ate. My parents kept any racist opinions they harboured to themselves. At the age of twenty-one I left the South and, I believed, the conflict of the races behind.

Yet how simple it was nearly thirty years later to re-enter that world and write about the rage and hate that infused the culture. The bold strokes and the nuances of prejudice, I somehow understood. When I studied copies of my hometown newspaper from my childhood for this research, I was shocked by the blatant racism. As a white middle-class girl I had been shielded from much of the invective, but I picked it up all the same: I felt it deep in my bones. That I chose to develop a story about racism, to base the creative component of my PhD project on a narrative that explores it, suggests that it too is a significant aspect of my personal mythology.

In the novel, *Your Blues Ain't Like Mine*, Bebe Moore Campbell (1995) suggests that racism destroys whatever it touches. The perpetrators as well as the victims suffer long after the original violent acts have been committed. As I reflected on *No Such Luck*, I realised I was echoing her premise. Aurelia Gordon and Nosuch Luck die because of racism. Jill Beth Sorenson and Naomi Mays continue to feel its repercussions decades after they are murdered.

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## PROFESSIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

My writing career and the advent of the personal computer occurred during the same period, the early 1980s. I was the director of communication at a small college in the Midwest. When I began the job, the distribution of labour could be described as hierarchical in the sense that Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) speak of: different specialists – photographers, writers, graphic designers, typographers and printers – contributed their skills to create and produce aspects of texts that I co-ordinated through a central editing process. By the time I left, however, desktop publishing had arrived and my role as a communicator began to change. Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) suggest that the digitisation of media has resulted in the different modes of communication becoming technically the same “at some level of representation” (p. 2). As a result, one multi-skilled person, rather than several, can create texts using a single platform, the computer.

While I am not a trained graphic designer, the myriad graphic design software programmes developed through the years have allowed me to expand the range of ‘languages’ in which I can ‘speak’. I used the software programme InDesign to layout aspects of the polysemous novel including the newspaper the *Munnville Star-Post*, the photocopy of the *Atlanta Afro News Leader*, and the novella, *Came Tumbling After*. I manipulated photographs using Photoshop, and edited the TV news clip in the moving image software programme, Final Cut Pro. In the pre-digital era, this would not have been possible. Like my first job in the 1980s, I would have had to rely on a bevy of specialists to create and produce *No Such Luck*.

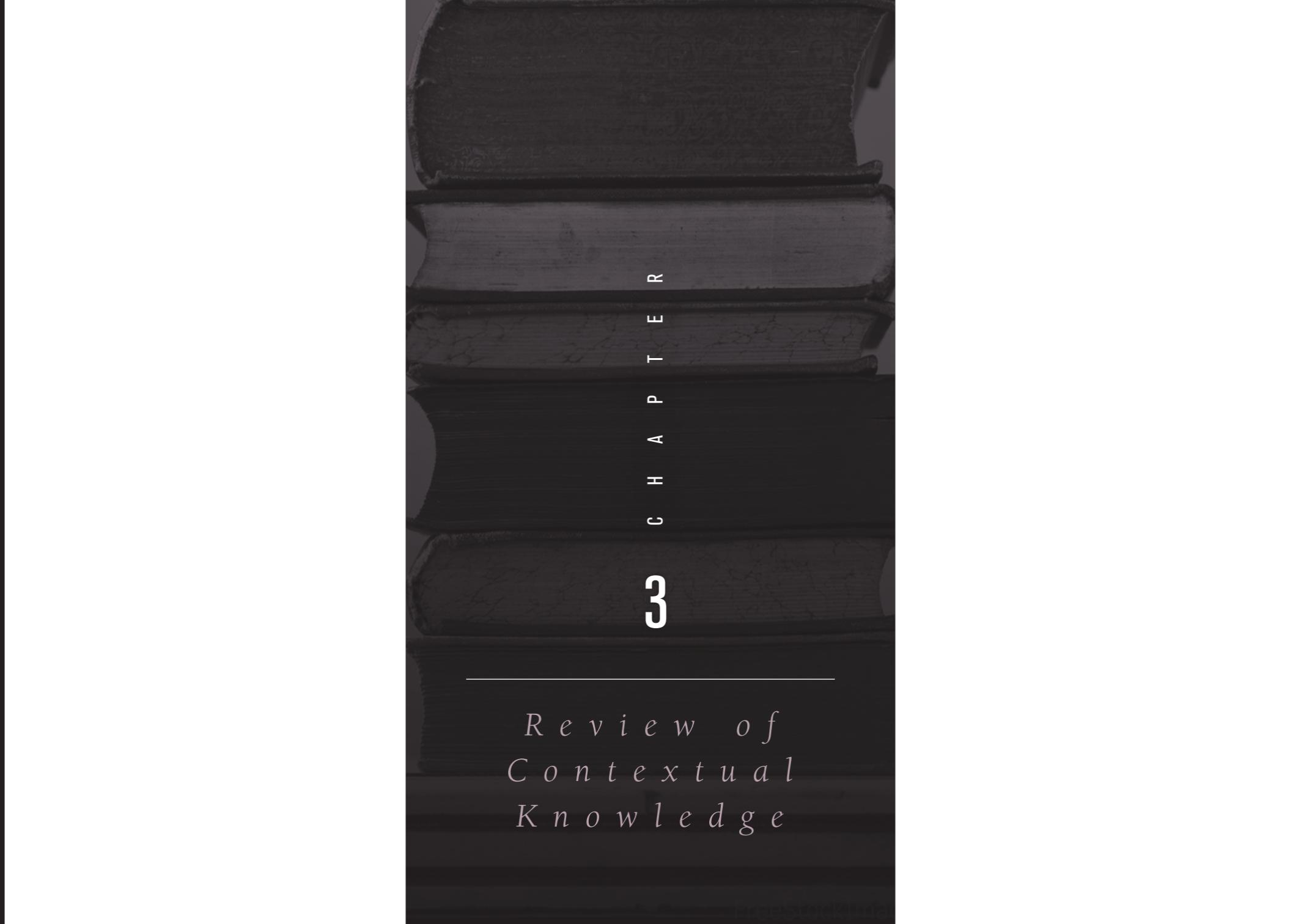
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## IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Van Leeuwen (2008) argues that a new kind of multimodal writing is emerging that integrates writing and image to such a degree that the lines of distinction between them are blurring. The grammar of sentences, he suggests, is being superseded by a visual grammar; connections once made by clauses are being crafted by diagrams, grids and networks. Colour, rather than the ordering of numbers, is being used to create a text’s cohesion. Typography, van Leeuwen (2005) suggests, creates meaning not just as the material expression of words but with its colour, texture, three-dimensionality and movement (in moving-image texts).

Therefore, to remain relevant as a writer in an age when there are so many more choices about how to produce and distribute texts, it is useful to reflect upon the communicative potential of different media forms. Designing the novel served as a means for gaining more of such knowledge as I explored what newspapers ‘say’ and how they say it, as compared to personal letters, photographs, audiotapes, videotapes, or novellas. The significance of this learning has been profound and will continue to manifest itself as I develop new projects that explore the interface of fiction narratives and diverse media forms.





C H A P T E R

3

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*Review of  
Contextual  
Knowledge*



## Review of contextual knowledge

This chapter reviews relevant theory and practical works that influenced the design of *No Such Luck*. The first section discusses polysemy and wear and tear, two significant ideas that contextualise the research, discussed in the Critical Framework.<sup>1</sup> The second section focuses on specific texts and explains how they contributed to the development of the creative project.

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<sup>1</sup> The two ideas are discussed in depth in the Critical Framework.

## Theoretical discourse

This section is divided into three parts. The first part concerns polysemy. It defines the term and reviews significant discussion related to it and then outlines the relationship of these ideas to the design of *No Such Luck*. The second part considers literature relating to wear and tear. It begins with a review of ideas related to old media and its relationship to new media. Following this, it considers discourse surrounding wear and tear as it applies to obsolescence, excesses of meaning, and an aesthetic of wear and tear. Part three offers a closer examination of this aesthetic as expressed in the materiality of three of *No Such Luck*'s old media artefacts.

### SECTION 1, PART 1

#### DEFINING POLYSEMY

The discourses of rhetorical criticism and advertising offer a means for framing how the concept of polysemy relates to this research. Within the discipline of rhetorical criticism, Condit (1989), Gaonkar (1989), McKerrow (1989), Campbell (1990), Solomon (1993), Ceccarelli (1998), Rockler (2001), Zarefsky (2008), Rosteck and Frentz (2009), and Perks (2010) draw attention to language's potential for supporting multiple voices, interpretations, and levels of meaning in texts.

Ceccarelli's (1998) argument that polysemy may be confronted in different ways within texts by audiences, authors, and critics has particular resonance for this research. Her notion of strategic ambiguity offers a means for conceptualising how authors might plan polysemy. Their purpose is to craft the text in such a manner that it appeals to divergent or even conflicting audiences.

In advertising, Barthes (1977), Shields (1990), Peracchio and Meyers-Levy (1994), Elliott and Ritson (1997), Ritson and Elliott (1999), Phillips and McQuarrie (2002), Kates & Goh (2003), Heiligmann and Shields (2005), Bulawka (2006), Dimofte and Yalch (2007), Millard (2009), Puntoni, Schroeder, and Ritson (2010), and Puntoni, Vanhamme, and Visscher (2011) discuss polysemy in terms of the different ways in which advertisers attempt to appeal to consumers. Whether through language, imagery, or a combination of both, advertisers construct complex messages that may be read in different ways by different audiences.

Puntoni, Schroeder, and Ritson (2010) and Puntoni, Vanhamme, and Visscher (2011) reference Ceccarelli's (1998) concept of strategic ambiguity with the term *purposeful polysemy*. Purposeful polysemy refers to strategic attempts by advertisers to design advertisements that will encourage multiple readings. Like strategic ambiguity, purposeful polysemy signals the intent of the creators of the text to embed more than one meaning within it.

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## POLYSEMY AND NARRATIVE DISCOURSE

Aspects of Genette's (1980, 1988) concept of the narrator and narrative level are integral to understanding how polysemy occurs in *No Such Luck*. The role of the fictive-designer in my polysemous novel may be compared to Genette's concept of the fictive author.<sup>2</sup> Within the diegesis, or world of the story, fictive-authors are characters who narrate the tales they tell.

Genette (1980) describes narrative level as the position narrators occupy in relation to the story they narrate. His categorisations include combinations of two main levels (extra/intradiegetic narrative level) and two main types of narrator (hetero/homodiegetic narrator). His framings of narrative and narrative position are useful in this thesis when I discuss certain designed constructions of the polysemous novel.

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<sup>2</sup> The role of the fictive-designer is explored in more depth in the Critical Framework.

## POLYSEMY AND COMPETING NEWSPAPER DISCOURSES

The newspaper clippings and photocopies included as artefacts in *No Such Luck* are written from the point of view of conflicting American newspaper paradigms. These paradigms are objectivity, which I associate with the white press, and partisanship, a feature of African-American news reporting. This discussion outlines the main ideas that underpin the differences between them. Establishing these differences provided a useful means for designing certain tensions within the narration of the novel.

### Objectivity vs partisanship

Schudson (1978, 2001), Schiller (1981), Donsbach and Klett (1993), Mindich (1998), Kaplan (2002, 2010), Hamilton (2004), and Hampton (2008, 2010) argue that objectivity has long been associated with American journalism.<sup>3</sup> Viewed as the presentation of non-partisan factual news, objectivity emphasises fairness and neutrality. Journalists are expected to separate facts from values and present both sides of a story.

However, Kaplan (2002) argues that often objectivity is influenced by hegemonic interests. A review of the literature suggests racism could infuse ostensibly objective reporting. Ross (1985), Thompson (1993), Washburn (2006), Roberts and Klibanoff (2007), and Squires (2009) all suggest that white newspapers at times distorted, ignored, or demonised African-Americans and their causes, such as civil rights. This is significant as *No Such Luck* includes a series of newspaper clippings with racist overtones that purport to be an objective rendering of the news.

In contrast to white newspapers, Ross (1985), Pride and Wilson (1997), Doreski (2001), Washburn (2006), and Roberts and Klibanoff (2007) suggest that a chief aim of the African-American press has been to act as an advocacy press.<sup>4</sup> Impartial reporting was often eschewed for more partisan rhetoric. African-Americans were underdogs in mainstream society and reporters at times openly took their side when reporting the news.

3 Although the authors do not specify that they are talking about the white press, I suggest it is inferred as their research concerns the United States' dominant journalistic discourse. In addition, the intent is not to suggest here that objectivity was eschewed by the African-American press (or partisanship by the white press) but rather to foreground differences between the two institutions, particularly in their reporting style. Doing so provides a rationale for how I constructed the different accounts related to Aurelia Gordon's murder in the *Munnville Star-Post* and the *Atlanta Afro-News Leader*.

4 Simmons (2006) traces the history of the African-American press to 1827 when free African-Americans in New York felt a response was needed to the white press that advocated re-patriating them to Africa. *Freedom's Journal* was founded to challenge this idea. Pride & Wilson (1997) argue that African-American newspapers reached the zenith of their influence during and after World War II. By the 1970s, their influence declined as the white press slowly expanded its coverage of African-American issues and began employing black journalists.

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POLYSEMY AND MATERIALITY

The idea that *No Such Luck*'s artefacts may provoke remembrance that disrupts or extends the narrative rests upon a consideration of involuntary memory in relationship to material objects.

Shiff (1986), Kvavilashvili and Mandler (2004), Moran (2004), Edensor (2005c), Mace (2007), and Wierzbicka (2007) offer a starting point for a discussion of involuntary memory. They suggest that involuntary memories are those that come spontaneously to mind without conscious striving. Mace (2007) identifies them as *precious fragments* and suggests they are the result of typical mental functioning.

Marcel Proust is referred to in the writings of a number of theorists: Jackson (1961), Abbas (1988), Chankin (1990), Crang and Travlou (2001), Brockmeier (2009), and Berntsen (2010). Their discussions are useful for considering how ordinary objects, such as Proust's (1987) encounter with the madeleine, might provoke spontaneous recollection, an idea significant to this research.

Makovicky (2007) argues that cherished domestic objects may have an evocative power linking them to narratives of family history. Damazio (2009) speaks more generally about the relationship between objects and memory. She suggests that things may take on special meaning; people become attached to them because they give expression to their memories and experiences. DeSilvey's (2007) description of abandoned and decaying items suggests that even non-precious items may invoke involuntary memories.

Wear and tear is a distinctive feature of *No Such Luck*. In the Critical Framework I define wear and tear through an analysis of its historical usage. Accordingly, in this review of knowledge I will focus on wear and tear's relationship to related ideas, such as obsolescence and excess meaning. To begin, however, I will highlight the relevance of the concept of old media to a discussion of wear and tear.

### The conflict between old and new media

*No Such Luck*'s artefacts have been produced as old media, a polysemous term that Jackson (2009), Lawson-Borders (2003), Löfgren (2009), Parks (2007), and Wilson and Jacobs (2009) have replaced with alternatives in an attempt to define it more precisely. However, accepted in their definitions is the assumption that old media is contextualised by new media. This is something that Parks (2007) and Sterne (2007) dispute. McNamara (2006) and Shapley (2009) argue that new media attempts to subsume old media by discounting its significance. In contrast, Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant, and Kelly (2003) suggest that new media's legitimacy lies in its contribution to social and cultural change.

Duguid (1996) and Gitelman and Pingree (2003) suggest that studying old media is a culturally important task. One of the outcomes is the questioning of the assumed association of new media with technological progress, which Postman (1993) and Barbrook (2007) also challenge.

### The materiality of old media

Another way to interrogate the meaning of old media is to consider its physical properties. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that materiality must be taken into account when examining texts. They argue that surfaces, substances, and tools of production all act as signifier materials. As an extension of this, Doane (2007) suggests that it is a medium's particular material qualities that distinguish it from other media and thereby shape its modes of expression.

Worn items are often associated with obsolescence as they are judged to be of less value than new items, even though they are still useful. Reviewing some of the ways in which obsolescence is constructed provides a means to consider alternative ideas about wear and tear, which is a feature of this research.

Cooper (2004), King, Burgess, Ijomah, and McMahon (2006), Löfgren's (2006), McCullough (2009), Packard (1961), and Slade (2007) all discuss obsolescence in relationship to its actual and perceived qualities. The common thread in their arguments is the assertion that values other than a breakdown in physical durability contribute to the assumption of obsolescence.

Cooper (2004) argues relative obsolescence occurs when usable objects are discarded. King, Burgess, Ijomah, and McMahon (2006) employ the term fashion obsolescence when old items are judged to be less appealing than new ones on the market.

Advertising and manufacturing discourses are often associated with planned, technical, and psychological obsolescence. Cooper (2004) and Slade (2007) suggest planned and technical obsolescence concern deliberate strategies to limit the lifespan or appeal of goods. Similarly, McCullough (2009) and Packard (1961) argue that psychological obsolescence results from a manipulation of consumer desire. Styling changes cause products to seem worn out and less attractive.

#### Material excess

Edensor (2005a) argues that given the overwhelming amount of material in our lives, we more rigorously police the materials around us. As a result, worn items, in addition to being labeled obsolete, are regarded as unclean or as dirty junk that must be removed from sight. Such a clearance regimen, he suggests, makes way for new 'stuff' and the system of overproduction continues.

#### WEAR AND TEAR AND EXCESS MEANING

Excesses of meaning question, confront, or undermine hegemony. Bowden (2009) suggests excesses of meaning resist hegemony's attempt to present itself as all-encompassing. Shulman (2000) argues that excesses of meaning prompt instability in otherwise stable systems. Edensor (2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2007) and Dobraszczyk (2010) associate excesses of meaning with challenges to the dominant discourse of technological progress. Dobraszczyk (2010) also associates them with aesthetic pleasure. Seal (2009) suggests that not only can discourses create excesses of meaning, they can be contradictory as well. Wear and tear, when looked at from outside the boundaries of the discourse of obsolescence, can produce excesses of meaning, as evidenced in the aesthetics of wear and tear.

A central consideration of the project has been discovering the voice with which wear and tear speaks. In this section I examine the aesthetics of wear and tear as expressed in three of the old media artefacts used in *No Such Luck*.

The concept of an aesthetics of wear and tear rests on Ranciere's (2005) argument that that aesthetic experience does not depend on a lone encounter with the sublime. Pusca (2010) suggests that the aesthetic gaze is an everyday gaze achievable by everyday people who choose to break with routine in order encounter life differently.

The audiocassette, the book, and the newspaper are three media forms representative of the worn old media artefacts that comprise *No Such Luck*. They serve as articulations of the aesthetics of wear and tear in the context of excess meaning.

#### The audiocassette

Wear and tear as applied to the audiocassette offers a means for questioning the discourse of high fidelity in sound recording. Four useful theorists offer distinctly different perspectives on high fidelity's historical development and significance.

Thompson (1995) discusses an early attempt to link high fidelity to authenticity in sound recording. As first conceptualised, she argues, high fidelity was compared to original *live* performance, rather than *recorded* performance.

Hainge (2007) argues that high fidelity attempts to make transparent the technology that mediates between the copy and the originally recorded performance. However, Bates (2004) positions himself almost antithetically, arguing that high fidelity is an undesirable and unobtainable feature. He suggests that as newer media are developed they merely introduce new kinds of sound imperfections, or glitches. These glitches, he suggests, may actually add to the originality of a recording.

Hegarty (2003), specifically addressing the materiality of audiotape, argues that the manner in which a tape winds around a spool acts as a metaphor for human existence. It collects like a life accumulating experience, although the possibility of death looms, as signified by the possibility of the tape's cutting or breaking.

In the context of these arguments, wear and tear becomes a means to introduce other considerations. Rather than seeking to experience high fidelity, a worn audiocassette may introduce glitches or other extraneous sounds that engender a unique listening experience.

### The book

Much of the significance of the book in relationship to the aesthetics of wear and tear lies in its appeal as a worn and familiar item. Regarding wear and tear left behind by the reader, Poe (1844) reflects on the pleasure of marginalia while Ruecker (2002, 2006) argues readers associate comfort with books they have long been acquainted with. Birkerts (1994) notes his love of books originated in the time before he could read, when they were fascinating objects in themselves rather than only containers for words.

The discourse around artist's books focuses on the appeal of the book's materiality. Drucker (1994, 2007), Martino (1997), Anzalone (2000), Frost (2005), Mandaville (2007), and Brusatto (2010) suggest the importance of tactility to the experiencing of a text. Drucker (2007) comments on the satisfaction that holding a book brings. She also notes the pleasure in working with used materials that connect the artist through memory and experience to previously lived lives. Brusatto (2010) singles out paper's particular contribution, suggesting its material form delivers relief from every day encounters with digital texts.

Orbán (2007) suggests the wear and tear evident on the foil patches on the graphic novel *In the Shadow of No Towers* (Spiegelman, 2004) draw attention to the book's materiality. She argues that such scratches, being tactile, call upon the reader to re-imagine vision within the context of touch.

Her argument suggests an awareness of the concept of ocularcentrism. Ocularcentrism is the idea that in Western culture a bias toward vision has improperly subordinated the other senses, including touch. Authors such as Merleau-Ponty (1964), Irigaray (1985), Jay (1993), Levin (1993, 1997), Vasseleu (1998), Okely (2001), Kavanagh (2004), Pallasmaa (2005), Paterson (2005), and Obrador-Pons (2007) have all addressed this idea within their disciplines. Although aspects of wear and tear might be conceptualised as a challenge to ocularcentrism, such an investigation is beyond the scope of this research. The emphasis on tactility remains contextualised by an engagement with the aesthetic of wear and tear and a physical engagement with *No Such Luck's* artefacts.

## Newspapers

Barnhurst (1991), Schoenbach, Lauf, Stürzebecher, and Knobloch (1999), and Flavián and Gurrea (2007) all associate reading the newspaper with aesthetic pleasure. Barnhurst (1991) argues that we may retain from childhood a sensual and emotional attachment to newspapers based on their appeal to our senses of smell, touch, and sound. Flavián and Gurrea (2007) argue that readers associate newspapers with entertainment, an association that, it may be argued, is linked to its physical qualities.

Accordingly, this focus on the physical qualities of a newspaper opens a pathway for a connection to the discourse of wear and tear. An old newspaper's roughened texture, faded pages, and the crackle of paper invite tactile engagement.

<sup>5</sup> As the fictive-designer of *No Such Luck*, Jill Beth Sorenson, is a journalist, I believed it would be more in line with her skills and inclinations as an author to write a print book rather than produce a short film.

<sup>6</sup> *The Life and Times of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, is an early example of the novel's long association with non-linear narratives. Through the centuries, many novelists have experimented in different ways with fracturing chronological sequence in the telling of a story. Modernist writers Woolf, Joyce, and Proust, for example, invoked stream-of-consciousness as a device for temporal dislocation. Calvino's (1993) *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* experiments with non-linearity by fragmenting and interspersing stories throughout a core narrative. In the present day, online hypertext fiction and interactive fiction use reader interactivity to introduce non-linearity into a text.

## SECTION 2

### *Significant practical works*

During the course of the development of *No Such Luck*, certain texts helped generate ideas about the form and structure of the novel. While it was determined that a non-linear short film did not fit the ethos of the project, ideas about cinematic non-linearity were pertinent.<sup>5</sup> Transmedia narratives, with their emphasis on the use of more than one media form to tell a story, were also instructive. Multi-modal novels provided insight into the communicative potential of non-language-based modes of expression.

## NON - LINEAR FILMS

Non-linearity is a concept central to the design of the novel, *No Such Luck*. It allows for the creation of a narrative that does not rely on chronological order for its cohesion. Non-linearity is a narrative device often employed in literature,<sup>6</sup> but it is its application in the cinema that has been most influential to this research. Analysing non-linear films prompted a questioning of how viewers might attempt to make sense of storylines that cannot be apprehended with simple chronology.

### Disrupting the narrative timeline

Berg (2006) suggests that a ‘Tarantino effect’ has influenced aspects of recent cinema. Although the director Quentin Tarantino is not the first to explore non-linear storytelling, Berg argues that his films have spurred a renewed interest among filmmakers in doing so.<sup>7</sup> Of particular relevance to this research are those that present events to the viewer in a seemingly random sequence. These films include *21 Grams* (Iñárritu, 2003), *The Three Burials of Melquiades Estrada* (Jones, 2005), *The Limey* (Soderbergh, 1999), *Pulp Fiction* (Tarantino, 1994) and *Kill Bill Vols 1 & 2* (Tarantino, 2003, 2004) as well as the television series *Damages* (Kessler, Kessler, & Zelman, 1997).

Berg (2006) suggests that the random sequencing of scenes within texts such as these doesn’t eliminate causality (“the cause-and-effect chain”, p. 41) but merely suspends it. Viewers eventually re-order events for themselves imposing linearity upon them. In addition, I suggest that they evaluate and re-evaluate the characters in light of the new information gained as the narrative unfolds.

Also of significance to this project are the non-linear narratives *The Red Violin* (Girard, 1998) and *Babel* (Iñárritu, 2006). The more conventionally structured of the two films, (three of the five stories are told without interruption with the other two narratives interwoven between them) *The Red Violin* uses an object, the red violin, as the connecting device. *Babel* makes use of another object, a rifle, to connect three of the four parallel narratives in the story, although its status as a linking device only becomes apparent as the plot unfolds. A relationship, rather than an object such as the rifle, provides another link between two of the narratives.

### Application to research

The individual narratives that comprise *No Such Luck* tell their stories in forward-moving temporal sequences, except for *Came Tumbling After*, which makes use of flashbacks at times. However, taken as a whole, the polysemous novel presents the reader with an unordered selection of texts that one must make sense of to comprehend the story.

<sup>7</sup> Some of the filmmakers Berg (2006) cites as predecessors to Tarantino include Kurosawa (*Rashomon*, 1951); Kubrick (*The Killing*, 1956); Altman (*Nashville*, 1975) and Linklater (*Slacker*, 1991).

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As Berg (2006) suggests, the viewer works to impose linearity on non-linear narratives, striving to understand how the randomly ordered pieces make sense. In *No Such Luck*, I am seeking to emulate this by presenting the reader with a package that contains seven stories told in different media whose relationship is not immediately apparent.

These texts may be (but do not have to be) examined in chronological order, once the reader works out where they fit on the timeline that begins in the 1940s with the photograph and ends in 2011 with the handwritten letter. Yet their relationship to each other does not depend solely, nor primarily, on chronology. The linkages in *The Red Violin* (Girard, 1998) and *Babel* (Iñárritu, 2006) vary. In *No Such Luck* the murders of Reely Gordon and Nosuch Luck link the newspaper articles, photocopy, novella, and TV news clip, but not the photograph, the audio interview, or the handwritten letter. Only the letter establishes the basis of connection between the artefacts; it is a collection belonging to the package's sender, Jill Beth Sorenson.

Although there are many examples of transmedia narratives, the concept of transmedia storytelling, as articulated in various texts by Henry Jenkins (2003, 2007, 2008, 2010), have influenced this research more than any particular transmedia texts. While non-linear films forego temporal linearity as an organising principle, transmedia narratives suggest the use of different media forms to tell a story.<sup>8</sup>

### Defining transmedia narrative

Jenkins (2007) argues that transmedia narratives are defined by several criteria.<sup>9</sup> Not all of them are applicable to this research, but many have been useful in the design of *No Such Luck*. They are:

- » “Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and coordinated entertainment experience” (para. 3).
- » “Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story” (para. 3).
- » “There is no one single source or ur-text where one can turn to gain all of the information needed to comprehend the [transmedia narrative]” (para. 3).
- » “Most often, transmedia stories are based not on individual characters or specific plots but rather complex fictional worlds which can sustain multiple interrelated characters and their stories” (para. 5).<sup>10</sup>

8 Other concepts such as cross-media (Davidson, 2010) and cross-sited narrative (Ruppel, 2009) espouse similar but not identical ideas. What they share in common is the notion that a story is told across different media forms that contribute to the comprehension of a larger text. Davidson's (2010) conceptualisation of cross-media emphasises audience interactivity. Ruppel (2009) suggests that a distinguishing characteristic of cross-sited narratives is how narrative organises the distribution of the story across media.

9 Underpinning the concept of the transmedia narrative is the notion of media convergence. Jenkins (2008) suggests that the consolidation of mainstream media ownership in the hands of a relative few entities, the capability to deliver content across different media platforms, and the willingness of audiences to explore these various platforms has helped fuel a transmedia focus.

10 The migration of texts across media platforms is not new. Jenkins (2003) argues that “for most of human history, it would be taken for granted that a great story would take many different forms, enshrined in stain glass windows or tapestries, told through printed words or sung by bards and poets, or enacted by traveling performers” (p.3).

Adaptations and spinoffs are antecedents to transmedia narratives. Adaptations are stories originally told in one form and later reproduced in another. Jenkins (2010) suggests that an adaptation is a work that “reproduces the original narrative with minimum changes into a new medium and is essentially redundant to the original work” (p. 945). Davis (2006) advances a more nuanced approach to the definition. In a discussion of fiction texts converted to films, he argues that “straight” adaptations are more literal or conservative representations, which make them “part of a grand tradition of period films and art-house pictures” (p. 52). Sub-genres, on the other hand, approach their texts more liberally, adapting classics into westerns, science fiction, or other genres.

Like the adaptation, the spinoff is a work that has been derived from another text. However, a spinoff is noted for its introduction of new stories and characters. Jenkins's (2010) notion of the extension, which he applies to transmedia narratives, may be regarded as similar to the spinoff. However, rather than seeking merely to adapt a work to a new medium, an extension expands “our understanding of the original by introducing new elements into the fiction” (p. 945).

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## Examples

*The Amanda Project* (Fourth Story Media, 2009) targeted to teenage girls, is primarily encountered through a series of print books and an interactive website. The website seeks to build a social media network centred on writing stories and joining online discussions. Unlike *The Amanda Project*, which uses a character as its focal point, *The Matrix*, as a transmedia franchise, relies on the transmedia concept of world-building for cohesion. It consists of three feature films, a series of nine animated short films, three video games, and a collection of webcomics later published in hard copy.<sup>11</sup> Characters and plot elements in the different narratives at times overlap, run in parallel or prefigure each other. While the trilogy of feature films from which the entire series takes its name appeared first, it does not have to function as the primary access point for the entire narrative.

Given its more than thirty-year history, the *Stars Wars* Expanded Universe (the name assigned to the larger *Star Wars* transmedia narrative) is extensive and includes films, novels, comics, websites, video games, cartoons and fan fiction. It shares with *The Matrix* Jenkins's (2007) notion of world-building. The universe within which the action takes place acts as the nexus for narrative; it provides the link between separate stories and media platforms. Each narrative develops the world of the story and also presents points of entry into the larger story.

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11 Fan fiction may also be considered as part of *The Matrix* franchise. However, in the context of this research, I am focusing on the components of transmedia narratives developed by the original designers of the text, rather than those, such as fan fiction, created in response to it.

### Application to research

Although in non-linear films scenes are presented out of temporal sequence, the real-time experience is prescribed by the filmmaker. The viewer is expected to watch the movie in the order presented. Transmedia narratives, on the other hand, allow the audience flexibility in choosing at what point to enter the story.

Rather than writing a conventional print novel that, like a non-linear film, has an expected entry point, I chose to explore narrative possibilities that arise when there isn't a central text. Like *The Amanda Project* (Fourth Story Media, 2009), I could foreground character but also have room to develop different plot lines. The variety of approaches allowed me to introduce conflicting points of view as the texts were ostensibly composed by different authors in different media forms. The purportedly objective truth of the series of *Munnville Star-Post* newspaper articles is juxtaposed to the subjective experience of Jill Beth Soreson in her novella, *Came Tumbling After*. The theme of racism is presented both overtly, in *Miss Naomi's Interview* as the personal experience of Naomi Mays and covertly in the slant of the news coverage of the *Munnville Star-Post* newspaper articles.

Multiple texts providing varying entry points into the story also allow for contradictions that encourage multiple interpretations of characters and plot points. Nosuch Luck is a good man, war hero and wrongly-accused suspect in the *Atlanta Afro News-Leader* news story, a killer in the *Munnville Star-Post* newspaper series, a friend and confidante in *Came Tumbling After* and a murder victim in the TV news clip.

*No Such Luck* is not intended to be regarded as a complex universe like those developed in the *Star Wars* Extended Universe or *The Matrix*. However, the concept was useful when planning what stories to include in the polysemous novel. It allowed me to think beyond the confines of character and plot as organising principles. Munnville, Florida, the setting within which events occur, served as anchor within which different narratives can be constructed.

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## MULTIMODAL NOVELS

Traditionally, the novel has been conceived as a text that articulates meaning through written language. Yet the concept of multimodality centres on the premise that language is not the pre-eminent, or only mode of communication. Van Leeuwen (2005a) defines multimodality as “the combination of different semiotic modes – for example, language and music – in a communicative artefact or event” (p. 281) Jewitt (2009) builds upon this definition by arguing that at the heart of multimodality lies the concept that communication, representation, and interaction are not restricted to language:

The starting point for multimodality is to extend the social interpretation of language and its meanings to the whole range of representational and communicational modes or semiotic resources for making meaning that are employed in a culture – such as image, writing, gesture, gaze, speech, posture. (p. 1)

Arguments such as these open up possibilities for exploring how other semiotic resources in addition to language might add meaning to a novel. Numerous works have been written about the semiotic potential of typography, including recent scholarship by Fellows (2009), Nørgaard (2009, 2010), Owens and Reinfurt (2005), and van Leeuwen (2005a, 2005b, 2006). Hiippala (2009), Kress (2003, 2010), Peled-Elhanan (2009), and van Leeuwen (2005a) argue that the layout (or composition) of images and text on the page also add meaning. Kress and van Leeuwen (2002), Nørgaard (2009, 2010), and O'Halloran (2008) discuss how colour may contribute meaning to a text. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006)

devote an entire volume to the grammar of visual design that incorporates discussions of image as well as typography, composition, and colour.

### Defining the multimodal novel

Hallet (2009) suggests that the multimodal novel incorporates a range of modes in addition to written language. These include reproductions of images, graphics, diagrams, sketches, and handwritten letters or notes.

Gibbons (2008) argues that the narratives in multimodal literature make use of more than one semiotic mode. However, she also suggests that multimodality in fiction is not a new concept, citing William Blake's illuminated printing in the 18th century as one example. She suggests that multimodal literature exists along a spectrum, ranging from texts that use pictures as mere illustration, to those in which non-text based semiotic modes, such as typography and image, contribute to the narrative's progression. At the extreme end of the multimodal continuum are novels in which the written text and non-text visual modes form a more equal relationship.

In other words, the different modes of expression are located on the page not in an autonomous or separate fashion, but in such a way that, while these modes have distinct means of communicating their narrative voice, they constantly interact in the production of textual meaning (p. 108).

Similarly, Nørgaard (2009) suggests that multimodal novels are not just a collection of different modes. They must be regarded as a complex whole and evaluated according to the interactions of different modes within and across passages in the text.

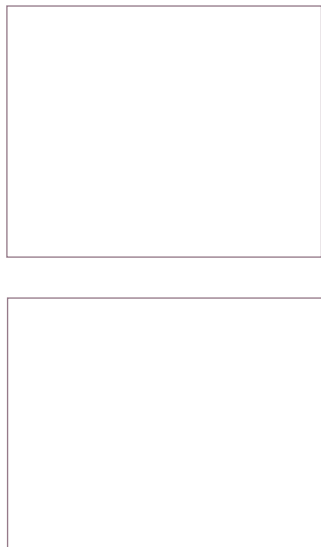


FIGURE 3.1

*Images from Girl Imagined by Chance (Olsen, 2002). Olsen introduces chapters with photographs that emulate snapshots. Blurred and grainy, their enigmatic status contradicts and undermines the veracity of the print narrative.*

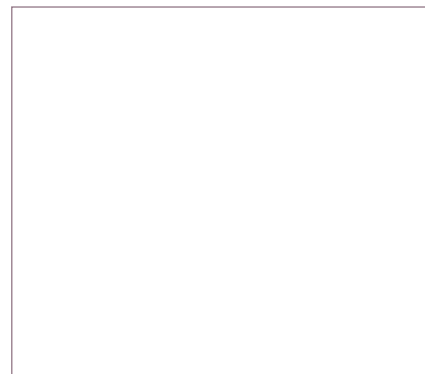


FIGURE 3.3

*Marcel Duchamp's Green Box (1934) and contents. The result was an unordered text that serves as a template for the reconstruction of his art work, The Large Glass.*

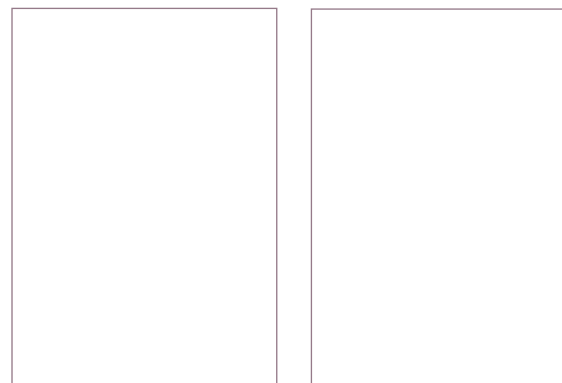


FIGURE 3.2

*Pages from A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel (2005). Phillips's forty-year project has undergone various incarnations as he has explored the multimodal interplay of colour, typography, image, layout, paper, and text.*

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### Examples of multimodal novels and their application to the research

Whereas transmedia narratives suggested the incorporation of different media forms, multimodal novels drew my attention to considering how specific modes might be exploited in *No Such Luck*.<sup>12</sup> *Girl Imagined by Chance* (Olsen, 2002), *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel* (Phillips, 2005), and *Diary of an Amateur Photographer* (Rawle, 1998) use images in ways that extend their meaning beyond mere illustration. Nørgaard (2009) suggests that multimodal novels are more than just an assemblage of different modes. In *Girl Imagined by Chance*, blurry, black and white images are linked to the text through an enigmatic relationship (figure 3.1). They imply that the photographs are being used to raise more questions than they answer. The text explains events in the story; the photographs suggest alternative, unexplored narratives.

In Phillips's (2005) *Humument*, the images and text are inseparable (figure 3.2). The drawings not only emphasise the new narrative Phillips created from an existing Victorian novel, they literally determine it.

The plot in Rawle's (1998) novel is motivated by the protagonist's discovery of an old photograph. The book itself incorporates reproductions of images and clippings and is designed to resemble a real scrapbook. To understand the plot, the reader must negotiate the different representations of various print media forms.

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*House of Leaves* (Danielewski, 2000) uses typography in unconventional ways. It suggests aspects of the semiotic potential of typography by allowing it to mimic events in the text. Whether cramped and claustrophobic on a single page or spread out over a number of pages, the typography is being utilised for more than just word meaning. Its usage corresponds to van Leeuwen's (2006) application of Halliday's three communicative metafunctions to typography. The author suggests that, similar to language, the interpersonal metafunction can be used to "express attitudes towards what is being represented" (p. 143). In other words, it conveys mood. "A word can be changed into a 'warning' or a 'question' through typography and typographic signs alone" (p. 143).

While *No Such Luck*'s use of typography in its various narratives conforms to more traditional applications of text in both font choices and layout on the page, the notion of the contribution of typography to semiosis persists. Jill Beth's letter, handwritten with a graphite pencil, represents a conscious decision to draw upon the semiotic potential of handwriting, paper, and pencil. Compared to the institutional typography of the newspaper, the letter's power derives from its intimacy as a one-to-one mode of communication. In the same way, the typewritten label on the audiocassette tape, with its corrected misspelling, is designed to signify the trace of the individual who created it in a way that a computer printer could not.

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12 When investigating multimodal novels, I concentrated on those produced as printed texts, as these were more relevant than online works to my research.

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THE GREEN BOX:  
AN UNORDERED NARRATIVE

Though mentioned last, Marcel Duchamp's *Green Box* (1934) was an early influence on *No Such Luck*. The *Green Box* is a collection of individual notes kept in a green felt-covered box. They reference the creation of Duchamp's artwork, *The Large Glass* (figure 3.3, p. 44).<sup>13</sup> Thirkell (2005) argues that the box's contents are reproductions Duchamp produced to resemble the originals he kept whilst actually creating *The Large Glass*. The artist's intent was to recreate them as realistically as possible. He chose papers, inks, and a printing process, collotype, that he believed would most accurately achieve his purpose.<sup>14</sup> Although he did not print them himself, Duchamp supervised all aspects of the production

Essentially, the *Green Box* interfaces with some of the primary aims of *No Such Luck*:

- » to create a non-linear narrative in old media that the reader encounters in the order of her choosing
- » to reproduce the components using modern technology so that they resemble authentic originals
- » to assemble the collection of artefacts in a box that is itself part of the finished artwork.

The sense the reader makes of the *Green Box* is inseparable from the materiality of the box and the notes found within. To alter that materiality is to alter the meaning of the book itself.

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<sup>13</sup> *The Large Glass* is also known as *The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors Even*.

<sup>14</sup> Thirkell (2005) suggests that it was unusual for that era for Duchamp to choose collotype as his printing medium rather than halftone letterpress, offset lithography, or rotogravure. Its use did not become significant in fine-art printmaking until the late 1950s and early 1960s.

## Conclusion

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This review of knowledge presents the spectrum of ideas and practical works that underpin the research. As this is a creative work, the sources of inspiration have been diverse. Their diversity is also a reflection of the range of media forms included in the project. It has been necessary to investigate numerous discourses and different kinds of resources in order to understand how the polysemous novel with its various artefacts might best cohere.

In constructing this chapter I am aware that a review of knowledge is not usefully divorced from its explication in a creative work. At times bodies of thought are discussed in relation to specific elements in the novel. However, this has been done to provide a context, rather than a critical analysis.

Having gained an overview of the project's seminal ideas and influences, it is useful to consider how they were expressed in *No Such Luck*. The next chapter offers an in-depth exploration of ways in which they helped shape the polysemous novel.





4

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*Critical  
Framework*



## Introduction

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Two concepts, polysemy and wear and tear, have been integral to the design of the polysemous novel, *No Such Luck*. Polysemy concerns ways in which a plurality of meanings have been integrated into the text. Wear and tear relates to the materiality of the old media forms used in the project.<sup>1</sup>

In the first part of this chapter I will discuss three means by which I have introduced polysemy into the text in order to promote multiple interpretations. The first two are informed by aspects of narrative discourse, as theorised by Genette (1980), although the second's primary focus is on ways in which competing newspaper discourses shape perceptions of truth. The third approaches polysemy from a different perspective. It assesses how the artefacts as physical objects intrude upon a narrative, extending it beyond the confines of the story.

The second part of the chapter considers materiality through an examination of wear and tear. *No Such Luck* is comprised of artefacts that are often defined by discourses that associate wear and tear with obsolescence. However, when the artefacts are recontextualised by an aesthetics of wear and tear, I argue that new appreciations may emerge.

Finally, the chapter ends with a brief discussion of how an emphasis on the materiality of the artefacts as expressions of old media distinguishes the polysemous novel from other, similar genres.

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<sup>1</sup> A definition of and a discussion about the ramifications of the term 'old' media occur later in the chapter.

## Part 1

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### DEFINING POLYSEMY

In order to establish polysemy's meaning in relation to my project, I will draw upon ideas prevalent in rhetorical criticism and advertising. Both disciplines highlight how the creation and interpretation of texts is neither static nor monosemic. Audiences and authors (and critics in their response to texts) negotiate ambiguity to construct meaning.

### Rhetorical criticism

Zarefsky (2008) suggests that the critic's responsibility is to offer an account of rhetorical works. Part of that accounting is to acknowledge how language's polysemy supports diverse authorial intentions as well as diverse interpretations by audiences. Ceccarelli (1998) adds that one of the critic's responsibilities is to tease out multiple meanings within texts, thereby providing hermeneutic depth. The audience, she also suggests, may contribute to polysemous interpretations by engaging in resistive reading practices that subvert normative interpretations. Authors, on the other hand, may engage in strategic ambiguity to embed polysemy into texts.

Campbell (1990) takes for granted the "insurgent polysemy" (p. 369) in texts. He is focusing not so much on language's ambiguity as on the changing nature (over time) of interpretive communities, which promotes alternative readings. Finally, Condit (1989) argues that "viewers and readers construct their own meanings from texts" (p. 104). However, she draws a distinction between polysemous and polyvalent interpretations. Polysemous interpretations occur when different audiences regard the text as carrying different meanings. Polyvalent interpretations occur when different audiences recognise the text as having the same message but exhibit different attitudes toward it.

Understanding the difference between polysemous and polyvalent interpretations helped shape the construction of *No Such Luck*. Polyvalence, for example, might explain different reader responses to the racist tone of the news stories in which Aurelia Gordon's death is reported. However, I was seeking to do more than just prompt varying emotional responses.

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Therefore, it was necessary to focus on working polysemy into the text so that readers might attribute different meanings to the story rather than just register different attitudes toward it.

### Advertising

Advertising research intersects with aspects of Ceccarelli's (1998) notion of polysemy, particularly in relationship to audience and authorial polysemy. Puntoni, Schroeder, and Ritson (2010) define advertising polysemy as "the existence of at least two distinct interpretations for the same advertising message across audiences, or across time and situations" (p. 52). Called *purposeful polysemy*, it may be achieved, they argue, through implementing a targeting, positioning, aesthetic, or social norms goal. The forms are distinguished by the ways in which they use the same messages to appeal to different audiences or seek to promote multiple interpretations of messages within individuals.

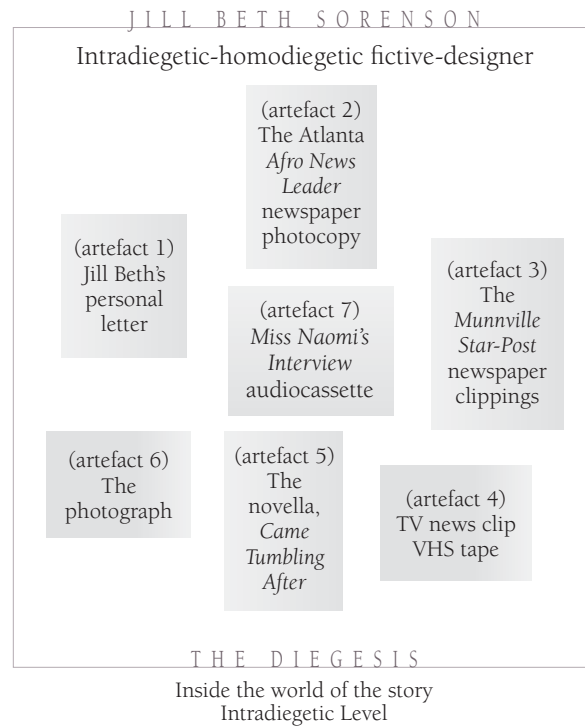
Focusing on ambiguous visual cues, Puntoni, Vanhamme, and Visscher (2011) discuss how the same message may prompt different readings by various consumer groups. In particular, they address gay vague advertising in which the same ad may be read differently by gay and non-gay audiences.

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Discussing polysemy in the context of advertising allows for a multimodal approach, as the discipline broadens the scope beyond language. Barthes (1977) lays the groundwork for the polysemous potential of advertising images. Connotation expands their potential for interpretation according to the cultural and contextual position of the audience. Peracchio and Meyers-Levy (1994) explore how closely but ambiguously cropped images in ads prompt viewers to resolve the ambiguity presented. Phillips and McQuarrie (2002) suggest design as an aspect of style in print advertisements may influence reader interpretation of the products advertised.

These discussions of visual polysemy were useful to my conceptualisation of polysemy. It underscored the significance of considering non-language-based modes of communication when constructing ways of including polysemy in the novel. It also prompted a consideration of how the tactile, as well as the visual, verbal, and written might contribute to polysemy, which I investigated within the context of wear and tear, addressed later in this chapter.

*Outside the  
world of the  
story*  
Extradiegetic  
Level



*Lisa Williams*  
Extradiegetic-  
heterodiegetic  
designer

FIGURE 4.1

*Narrative level and narrator positions. Within the diegesis of No Such Luck there are different narrators in the intradiegetic and metadiegetic positions. They express their stories through different media forms either as heterodiegetic or homodiegetic narrators. Because the novel may be approached in a non-linear fashion, the order in which these stories are encountered will vary according to reader choice.*

## NARRATION AND POLYSEMY IN NO SUCH LUCK

Similar to the notion of purposeful polysemy, my intent has been to design *No Such Luck* in such a way that it promotes diverse readings of the text. Genette's (1980) conceptualisation of the narrator and narrative level has been useful for describing one means by which I achieve this.

Genette (1980) suggests that the narrator occupies one of four positions based on a combination of narrative level and relationship to the story, (table 4.1).<sup>2</sup> Narrative level, either extradiegetic or intradiegetic, refers to whether the narrator is placed outside or inside the story being told. At the extradiegetic level, the narrator addresses the reader directly; she/he sits outside the diegesis of the story. An intradiegetic narrator exists only within the realm of the story. Genette (1988) offers the example of Scheherazade as an intradiegetic narrator, "because before uttering a single word she is already a character in a narrative that is not her own" (p. 84).

Relationship, either heterodiegetic or homodiegetic, refers to whether or not the narrator appears as a character within the story. For example, in relation to *No Such Luck*, Lisa

Williams, the designer, is positioned as the extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrator (figure 4.1). She is outside the realm of the story and plays no part within it as a character. She makes decisions about which media forms to include and designs the individual texts, but no direct trace of her is to be found within the diegesis.<sup>3</sup> Since there may be multiple narrators at multiple levels of narration, Genette (1980) also uses the term, metadiegetic, to explain narratives that act as embedded stories. They occur below the intradiegetic level, such as when characters retell tales told to them. The prototypical example is again Scheherazade in *One Thousand and One Nights*. She is a character within a story, telling other stories, which may in themselves contain other stories.

NARRATIVE LEVEL	RELATIONSHIP
<i>Extradiegetic narrative position</i> The narrator is positioned outside the realm of the story.	<i>Heterodiegetic narrator</i> The narrator is absent from the story.
<i>Intradiegetic narrative position</i> The narrator is positioned within the realm of the story.	<i>Homodiegetic narrator</i> The narrator appears in the story as a character.

TABLE 4.1

How narrative levels and narrator positions interact. This table depicts how Genette (1980) labels the main intersections of narrative level and where the narrator appears in relationship to the story being told.

<sup>2</sup> Genette (1980) argues that the narrator is not to be confused with the author. The role of narrator is always a fiction, even if the author takes on the role. As an example, he offers Balzac's *Pere Goriot*. Balzac as the narrator of the fiction knows the world he portrays in the novel whereas Balzac the author has only imagined it.

<sup>3</sup> Conversely, Robinson Crusoe is an extradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator. He sits outside the story he is telling but also appears within it as a character.

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JILL BETH SORENSON  
AS THE FICTIVE-DESIGNER  
OF NO SUCH LUCK

Genette (1980) labels as fictive-authors those characters who seem to have written the stories they appear in, such as Robinson Crusoe, although Daniel Defoe is indeed the author. In a similar way, the personal letter written by Jill Beth Sorenson (artefact 1) positions her as the fictive-designer of *No Such Luck* (figure 4.1). In the letter, Jill Beth writes to an unnamed friend thanking her for becoming the caretaker of the collection of artefacts. She makes it clear that she is the one who has assembled the collection and that it reflects the legacy she leaves behind after her death.

The point at which readers engage with Jill Beth's letter shapes or reshapes their perception of the novel, thereby introducing the possibility for multiple interpretations. Through the letter, readers learn that the box's contents are, in essence, Jill Beth's personal archive. This may make an encounter with them a much more intimate and poignant undertaking. The artefacts cohere as a collection of special importance to a dying (in truth, now dead) woman. Yet because *No Such Luck* is a non-linear narrative, it cannot be predicted when readers will read the letter or if they will read it at all. If they don't, then a level of narration is removed from the story and the understanding of the text changes.

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If they do read it, then new possibilities for interpretation present themselves. For example, the identity of the unnamed man in the photograph (artefact 6) becomes a different question. Not simply, who is he, but who is he in relationship to Jill Beth, and why is he significant enough for her to include in the collection? Similarly, readers' perceptions of the novella (artefact 5) may change knowing that Jill Beth the letter writer is its author as well. Readers might also re-interpret the text once it is understood that Jill Beth in 2011 knows that Nosuch's body has been found in a swamp (via the TV news video clip from 2007, artefact 4) while Jill Beth, the author of the novella in 1998, does not.

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POLYSEMY AND COMPETING  
NEWSPAPER DISCOURSES IN  
NO SUCH LUCK

A second expression of polysemy surfaces with a comparison of the *Munnville Star-Post* newspaper clippings (artefact 3) and the *Atlanta Afro News-Leader* photocopy (artefact 2).<sup>4</sup> For the moment, I will remove the two different newspaper accounts from inside the story world of *No Such Luck*. My intent is to compare aspects of the discourses that inform their narratives and then re-embed the artefacts into the novel for further explanation.

The individual narrators themselves, named as bylines to the newspaper stories, are of little interest. (If they are regarded outside the context of the novel, they sit as extradiegetic-heterodiegetic narrators who do not appear in the news items they report.) Rather, it is the forces that shape the construction of their stories that have bearing on any discussion of how polysemy is introduced into the text.

As referred to in the Review of Contextual Knowledge, Ross (1985), Thompson (1993), Washburn (2006), Roberts and Klibanoff (2007), and Squires (2009) suggest that a racist bias may be cloaked in the signifiers of white journalistic objectivity. Ostensibly, objectivity, Kaplan (2010) and Schudson (2001) suggest, emphasises the seeking of facts.

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<sup>4</sup> I have chosen not to include the VHS TV news clip in this discussion, although TV news has been influenced by the objective news paradigm. Bolter & Grusin (1999) argue that TV news also incorporates an "insistence on the liveness of the action" as part of its claim that it is presenting what "really happened" (p. 189).

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Such reporting is meant to represent opposing sides fairly without engaging in excess emotionality. However, Kaplan (2002) challenges the actual objectivity present in objective journalism. Offering an historical perspective, he suggests that as it developed in the early twentieth century, journalistic objectivity actually represented a narrow range of perspectives corresponding to hegemonic political and social agendas. Furthermore, journalists in their pursuit of reliable information turned to individuals in positions of power and institutional authority, assigning them a legitimacy that was accepted by the reading public. In the American South, I argue, hegemonic interests would tend to align with white political and civic leaders at odds with African-American interests.

As it is intended to be read, the newspaper account represents a white southern hegemonic view of the death of Aurelia (Reely) Gordon in 1977. The white journalists who act as narrators inscribe this viewpoint into the text. If readers absorb this narrative from inside the paradigm of journalistic objectivity, they may miss or downplay the racist undertones and not question that Nosuch Luck is Reely Gordon's killer.

This objective narrative is troubled by the photocopied news clipping from the *Atlanta Afro News-Leader*. The narrator of the *News-Leader* story (a reporter who is not named) adopts a blatantly sympathetic stance, as is congruent with the partisan writing style employed by many African-American journalists, also analysed in the commentary. Washburn (2006) argues that such a writing style was essential for counteracting how African-Americans were presented in the white press.

The tone, Roberts and Klibanoff (2007) suggest, often departed from a cold factual approach and combined the journalist's individual style with openly biased reporting.

Therefore, Nosuch Luck, rather than portrayed as a dangerous killer on the loose (and by inference a threat to white society) is reconstructed as a beloved war veteran who exists within a community of family and friends who mourn his death. Racist persecution is woven into the subtext of the story as exemplified in the use of language: Luck was "gunned down" in jail and "shot dead" by police; by implication, his body is equated to missing cargo; and through quotations designed to stir emotions, eg, "My cousin was a good man, the best there is. Now they've gone and killed him, but we will not allow him to slip away quietly".

#### THE NEWSPAPERS EMBEDDED WITHIN THE NOVEL

Polysemy occurs in the comparison of these contrasting discourses. The objective paradigm of the white press is juxtaposed to the partisanship of the African-American press. The result is competing narratives that shape the interpretation of the news presented. While certain facts appear in both accounts: Aurelia Gordon died, Nosuch Luck was wanted for her murder, he was shot and killed in an Alabama jail, the tone and slant of the accounts suggest wildly different interpretations.

When the two newspaper accounts are re-introduced into the novel and embedded at the intradiegetic level, further aspects of polysemy surface. Again, the non-linear nature of *No Such Luck* influences the interpretation of the individual artefacts. Neither the order in which they are read nor the assurance that they will be read at all can be taken for granted. However, for the sake of the discussion, it will be assumed that the reader addresses the two narratives from within the context of Jill Beth's position as the novel's fictive-designer.

If the reader has read Jill Beth's novella, *Came Tumbling After*, it will be evident that Jill Beth herself is a journalist. Having this information may influence the reader's perception of why Jill Beth has included conflicting newspaper accounts of her friend's death. Perhaps Jill Beth has questioned the paradigm of objectivity that she has upheld in her job as a journalist working for a white newspaper.

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It may be argued that with her mixed-raced ancestry (uncovered in the novella) Jill Beth sits between the two races and therefore between the two journalistic paradigms. The dissonance this position evokes within her emerges in the novella when Naomi shows her Nosuch's Army medical record that indicates he can't father a child. With this factual evidence, the burden of proof is satisfied, and Jill Beth can believe that he didn't murder Reely. Yet at the same time, she laments that she hasn't been "black enough" (p. 142). If she had been, she would not have needed the objective proof the medical record provided. She would have seen the gaping holes in the white press's story that were always apparent to Nosuch's relatives and friends.

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However, the novella might just as easily be read as her attempt to 'set the record straight', a goal congruent rather than opposed to the discourse of journalistic objectivity. Although her novella is a work of fiction, she uses real events, people, and locales to tell her story. As an eye-witness to events, both as a teenager (1977 narrative) and as an adult (1997 narrative), she may be implying a correspondence between her version and the truth. She was there and uniquely placed in both timeframes to tell what happened. At the same time, her decision to pen fiction rather than a memoir may imply that she has taken liberties with the accuracy of her account and does not wish to be held rigidly accountable to an objective standard of truth.<sup>5</sup>

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5 For example, I suggest Jill Beth could have fictionalised the scene at the end of *Came Tumbling After* where she learns Nosuch did not father Reely's child. She may have made up the story about the Army record in order to emphasise the divide between her white self that demands facts and evidence and her African-American self that should have trusted the account of those who knew Nosuch best.

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#### NAOMI MAYS AS AN EYEWITNESS

The character Naomi Mays is also an eye-witness to events in 1977 and 1997 though only as constructed by Jill Beth in the novella and the press in the newspaper accounts.<sup>6</sup> She speaks for herself only on the audiotape, *Miss Naomi's Interview*. Since the session was recorded in 1972, she makes no allusion to Aurelia Gordon's murder in 1977. On the tape Naomi recalls the traumatic incident of having her finger cut off by a white man when she was a child.

Her story cannot be verified. She is indeed missing a finger, as Jill Beth notes in the novella (p. 124), but other than Naomi's own account, there is no way to know for sure what actually happened. Yet it is easy to believe that she is giving an honest accounting of the event as she remembers it. I suggest this is true for a number of reasons.

First, she is telling the story in her own words; it is an impromptu oral account. There are no writers or editors to re-encode her speech or re-interpret her intent. Her account has not been chopped and changed nor filtered through an imposed discourse of objectivity or partisanship. Second, the audio recording captures Naomi in the eternal present tense. On the tape, she is always telling her story right now. Listeners can hear for themselves her authority and humanity, her rage and despair.

Third, her naivety about the recording technology suggests a lack of premeditation or self-consciousness perhaps not possible today with the proliferation of digital audio-visual technology and the online environment. In 1972 it would have been inconceivable to believe that the tape would have anything other than a limited distribution, which is reinforced by the tape's hand-typed paper label. This was not a recording made for mass production.

Finally, the tape reveals a woman surprised by the distress of an overwhelming memory that has defined her life. For the first time she may be spilling forth the story of a trauma, and trauma Caruth (1996) argues,

is always the story of a wound that cries out, that addresses us in the attempt to tell us of a reality or truth that is not otherwise available. This truth, in its delayed appearance and its belated address, cannot be linked only to what is known, but also to what remains unknown in our very actions and our language. (p. 4)

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6 Naomi Mays is referred to by name and quoted in the *Atlanta Afro News-Leader* article. In the *Munnville Star-Post* article, 'Blacks Agitate Over Investigation', she is not named but identified as Nosuch Luck's neighbour who states she lives just down the road. This fact is verified in the novella where it is made clear that she is indeed Nosuch's neighbor who lives close by.

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## CONTRASTING VOICES

I have drawn Naomi's interview into this discussion to argue that her voice adds another layer of polysemy to the novel. Jill Beth's testimony in *Came Tumbling After* bears the imprimatur of the publishing house while Naomi's relies on the raw power of her experience. Jill Beth's voice is a public one while Naomi's is private. Jill Beth's work seeks to find a mass audience, while Naomi's receives the hushed respect of a lone witness, her interviewer.<sup>7</sup>

As this is Jill Beth's box of artefacts, It might be argued that it is her voice that has the final say.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps there is a correspondence between the two women that she chose to leave out, or more photographs available that she didn't put in. We will never know. However, Jill Beth has included the audiotape. By doing so, she is acknowledging Naomi's authority to speak and the authority of her way of speaking; the audience does not need a fact checker to believe her truth.

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Gerlind (2007) argues that history does not often delve into the lives of ordinary people to give them a public voice. "Most working-class people in Western societies have virtually no power in public media, and their experiences are negated by the 'male, middle-class habit of giving universal or "historic" significance to an extremely partial experience' (Popular Memory Group, 1982: 210)" (p. 50). The reader might conclude that Jill Beth has included Naomi's voice because she sympathises with how little opportunity Naomi has had to speak and to be believed. Alternatively, the reader may conclude that Jill Beth has included Naomi's voice because she recognises how it frames her own. Naomi's voice proscribes the limits of the objective journalistic paradigm. By doing so, it points to lost stories forever beyond the reach of the reader.

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7 In contrast to Jill Beth's published novella (and work as a journalist) Naomi's only written testimony is the homemade, weathered billboard that proclaimed Nosuch Luck's innocence for twenty years.

8 I also argue that even if Jill Beth is removed as the designer of the box's contents, these same issues can be raised. Lisa Williams, as the extradiegetic narrator, could have chosen to insert the two different ways of approaching truth in order to raise or reinforce doubts about the veracity of events as first perceived.

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## INVOLUNTARY MEMORY, MATERIALITY, AND POLYSEMY

I suggest the material forms of the artefacts themselves also contribute to polysemy. Their materiality promotes the leakage of other narratives into the story, and one way they do so is by provoking personal involuntary memories.

Wierzbicka (2007) argues that a modern change in the usage of the English word *remember* obscures its relationship to the mental process of remembering. It has come to mean the ability to retrieve information or accumulated knowledge rather than to go over or savour a past event in one's mind. She suggests that Proust's (1987) treatment of involuntary memories as the past that spontaneously comes to mind aligns more with the older meaning of the term *remember*.<sup>9</sup>

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9 Wierzbicka's (2007) mention of Proust references what Mace (2007) cites as the "cornerstone of involuntary memory descriptions" (p. 3). It refers to Proust's encounter with the madeleine in *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* that brought about a sudden memory of a childhood experience.

10 Wierzbicka's (2007) explanation of involuntary memories appears to combine Mace's (2007) categorisation of two separate types of involuntary memory (precious fragments and by-products of other memories). She relates it both to the surprising instant recall an involuntary memory invokes and to the ability of an involuntary memory to encourage subsequent strings of memories.

Involuntary memory is "capable of awakening the past which is hidden outside the domain of the intelligence and which can 'come back to live with us'" (p. 25).<sup>10</sup> In other words, involuntary memories may act as catalysts that give one the opportunity to dwell in past experiences, reliving them.

Edensor (2005c) emphasises the sensual aspect of involuntary memories. His setting is the industrial ruin that, given its transgressive environment where order has been overturned, may prompt sensations or "vague intimations of previous atmospheres" (p. 837) rather than fully formed memories. The sounds, smells, and tactile interactions may become a kind of a haunting that is at odds with the world outside it. Of interest here is the implication that a simple confrontation with the material world – a wander through an abandoned site – provokes memory, an idea similar to Damazio's (2009) argument that "people, places, things, and memory are so intertwined they hardly can be disentangled" (p. 137).

While Makovicky (2007) and Damazio (2009) are more interested in what makes objects evocative or memorable, I suggest their insights may be applied to ordinary things. Even if we do not have a profound attachment to them, they trigger remembrance. For example, in her cataloguing of an abandoned Montana homestead, DeSilvey (2007) associates the countless artefacts with "shards of memories" that elude the "tidy narration of one farm's micro-history" (p. 881). Although they do not seem to be precious to her, she cannot help but link these objects to memory, as if they are surfaces to which recollection adheres.

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As an example from my own work, I designed the *Atlanta Afro News-Leader* photocopy to suggest a photocopy made off of a microfiche reader. Such machines do not strike me as particularly memorable. However, the photocopy's stray marks remind me of hours spent in the library using one as I searched for information.

Perhaps the Internet will serve as an appropriate metaphor here. With one click we can be a world away from where we started. We hop from site to site, from subject to subject, and story to story. Objects we encounter in our everyday lives, I suggest, can do the same thing with our memories. They invite us to dwell in our past in the manner Wierzbicka (2007) associates with remembrance. A reader opens a used book to find that the previous owner's signature reminds her of her grandfather's handwriting. Then she remembers the letters he used to send her, and the smell of his house as he smoked his pipe, and the time his horrible ginger cat got stuck up the tree . . . .

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#### IMAGINATION AND POLYSEMY

I suggest that such departures from the narrative should not be dismissed from the polysemous novel. They become not only the backdrop to our encounter with the story but part of it, provoking our imaginations as well as our memories. When the photocopy reminds me of the microfiche machine, I then wonder if this is how Jill Beth in *No Such Luck* retrieved her photocopy many years ago, or did she simply download it more recently from a database off the Internet?

The VHS tape also has a story to tell. I imagine that it starts with a telephone call: "Quick, turn on the news, they've found Nosuch's body." The person (is it Jill Beth?) stuffs in the first VHS cassette she lays a hand on, taping over a fragment of a *Friends* episode she started to record months ago. Incredulous, she watches the news that she's waited thirty years for. When the news clip ends, in shock, she presses the stop button and stares at the TV uncertain what to do next.

Such digressions may occur whilst the reader is involved with the novel or they may happen later. Often we do not digest a story in one sitting but are interrupted and return to it later. In the meantime, the text continues to speak. The artefacts call out to our memories inviting us to re-engage with and re-imagine the story.



## Part 2

### THE SEMIOTICS OF WEAR AND TEAR

Wear and tear is a concept central to this thesis. It concerns how the artefacts that comprise *No Such Luck* might contribute to semiosis, given their appearance as instances of worn, old media technology.<sup>12</sup> Accordingly, in this section I first define how I am using the term. Then I indicate how an aesthetic of wear and tear, as realised through excesses of meaning, might challenge normative assumptions that associate wear and tear with obsolescence. As examples, I offer suggestions for alternative ways to experience three of *No Such Luck*'s artefacts. Following this, I discuss the materiality of the artefacts as expressions of old media and how it is precisely their material form that distinguishes *No Such Luck* from similar types of novels.

#### Defining wear and tear

I define wear and tear as the deterioration an object experiences over time during typical use. While such a decline may eventually render an artefact non-functional, I am concerned with the effects of wear and tear accrued whilst an object is, or still could be, employed in its customary manner.<sup>11</sup> This distinction is important because it sets parameters around the amount of distress I subject the novel's artefacts to in the design process. As the following examination suggests, my decision to strategically control damage is congruent with the common, every-day usage of the term.

11 This definition is meant to distinguish ideas about wear and tear from those of decay or the ruin, which are outside the scope of this thesis. Decay, DeSilvey (2006) argues, may on the one hand seem destructive, like an erasure, the loss of memory and history. On the other hand, it may signal a different, generative state in which its evolving ecological status issues it with a new, developing identity. The book as rodent's nest, for example. However, in this conceptualisation the artefact is losing or has lost its functionality that renders it effective for typical use.

Although later in this chapter I link ideas associated with the ruin to wear and tear, I do not mean to imply that objects manifesting wear and tear are ruins. The concept of the ruin connotes extreme damage, abandonment, decay and the inability to use an object for its original purpose. Crawford (1983), for example, discussing architectural ruins, suggests that a ruin is "something that has fallen or crumbled and thus has lost the original structural integrity of the whole" (p. 53). Patrik (1986), writing about artwork, argues that ruination damages a work of art's parts, which comprises its original unity and harmony. It also often prohibits an artwork from carrying out its cultural function.

12 Although of recent origin, I have treated the artefacts that comprise *No Such Luck* so that they appear to be used and created sometime in the recent past.

### Historical uses of the term wear and tear

The etymology of wear and tear may be traced to the thirteenth century when the verb ‘to wear’ gained an additional meaning. It came to be synonymous with gradual damage, as in the effect that results from the continued wearing of clothes (Barnhart, 1988).

By the 1600s, the concept of wear and tear was in sufficiently common usage for Samuel Pepys to refer to it in his diaries (Barnhart, 1988) and for it to be listed as a line item in the funds budgeted for the Royal Navy (*The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons*, 1742). Its use in this document relates to the notion of upkeep or routine maintenance undertaken to ensure the continued readiness of the fleet.

At least as early as the 1700s, wear and tear had acquired metaphorical implications. The term, by then common to the Royal Navy, was employed euphemistically in the discussion of secret payments and government favours. Proceedings from the House of Commons (Namier and Brooke, 1985) quote an exchange from December 1782 between Sir Grey Cooper and Thomas Orde, the newly appointed secretary to the Treasury. Cooper writes,

I can assure you for your comfort, that there is less wear and tear and fewer repairs required in keeping this vessel in trim than any that I know of in the service of Government. A little charity is all that will be demanded of you. (p. 240)

Adam Smith (2009) argued in *The Wealth of Nations* that businesses must factor in expenditures that result from wear and tear when calculating their costs. He cites as examples wear and tear to such valuable commodities as animals, labourers, equipment, machinery, and slaves.

In the present day, governments allow for the depreciation to assets caused by wear and tear when assessing income tax. In *Her Majesty's Revenue and Tax Code* (2010) a wear and tear allowance permits landlords to deduct 10 percent “to cover the depreciation of plant and machinery, such as furniture, fridges etc supplied with the accommodation” (n.p.). The New Zealand Ministry of Consumer Affairs website (2010) offers advice on how to identify signs of wear and tear on automobiles so that consumers may accurately judge their value before purchase.

### Wear and tear on the body

When applied to individuals, wear and tear is often associated with the decline of physical and mental abilities. In the *United States Army and Navy Chronicle* (1839) the author says he has observed “an enviable peculiarity in the constitution of some persons, who in spite of the wear and tear of that cunning old sapper, Time, live as though insensible of any diminution of their faculties” (p. 193).

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Mitchell (1891) in his book *Wear and Tear, or Hints for the Overworked*, seeks to establish a connection between wear and tear and mental health, particularly women's. Mitchell argues that extensive education, because of the prolonged overuse of the brain it engenders, jeopardises a young woman's ability to function later in life as society requires. Evans and Schamberg's (2009) far more recent study correlates the effects of chronic stress to cumulative wear and tear on the body.

#### *Wear and tear and obsolescence*

Wear and tear has long been associated with physical degradation that can signal a loss of economic worth. A used object is considered to be less valuable than an identical new one, although a number of exceptions apply. These include some antiques, autographed memorabilia, used objects once belonging to prominent individuals, formerly common objects, now rare, and money. (No matter its wear and tear, as long as it remains in circulation, a twenty dollar bill will always be worth twenty dollars.) Yet the point remains, most objects found in day-to-day life never achieve this extraordinary status.

However, although some devaluation may genuinely reflect the lifespan attenuation that wear and tear engenders, declines in value are often the result of perceived rather than actual obsolescence. Accordingly, it is useful to consider ways in which obsolescence is constructed.

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#### *Types of obsolescence*

First, it is important to clarify the definition of obsolete. As it is used in the context of this research, obsolete refers to the designation of an object as undesirable for use regardless of its physical condition or capacity to carry out the function for which it was created.

Cooper (2004) suggests absolute obsolescence occurs when an item can no longer physically function; its durability has given way. However, a used object is often discarded for other reasons, ones that the author labels as relative obsolescence. King, Burgess, Ijomah, and McMahon (2006) posit a congruent argument but adopt different terms: functional and fashion obsolescence. They suggest that functional obsolescence results when the object physically fails and needs repair; fashion obsolescence results when new products appear that are more appealing, causing the old item to be set aside.

Löfgren's (2006) concept of cultural wear and tear may be regarded as similar to fashion obsolescence. Culture phenomena go through a lifecycle that ends with their loss of attraction or usefulness, though usually the synchronisation between physical and cultural wear and tear rarely coincides. He says,

From the perspective of fashion and longing for the "brand new", ageing is often seen as unappetizing, shabby or dismal. The unfashionable is always just

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round the corner, which gives the shining “new” a short lifespan. The first dent in the car, the tear in the fabric or the fading of color will transform something into a used object, a worn idea, a second-hand commodity. (p. 55)

Planned, technical and psychological obsolescence are discourses long associated with advertising and manufacturing. Slade (2007) defines planned obsolescence as “the catch-all phrase used to describe the assortment of techniques used to artificially limit the durability of a manufactured good in order to stimulate repetitive consumption” (p. 5). Cooper (2004) delineates specific practices associated with planned and technical obsolescence. These include compromises in quality during the manufacturing process, the inability of goods to be repaired, and the exploitation of changes in fashion to encourage consumers to replace functional items, especially in the realm of electronics.

Packard (1961) argues psychological obsolescence sets in when a product becomes “‘worn out’ in our minds because a styling or other change makes it seem less desirable” (p. 38). McCullough (2009) suggests it occurs when “the consumer is no longer attracted to the product or satisfied by it” (p. 621).

In particular, Cooper’s (2004) argument that planned obsolescence includes exploiting changes in fashion has been a useful idea for this research. The VHS tape, for example, while

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still a viable form of media storage, is no longer fashionable. This unfashionableness is accentuated when wear and tear is applied. The object is not only old (and therefore not appealing as a new item) but, by exhibiting wear, it acquires connotations associated with dirt, as explained in Edensor’s (2005a) discussion of material excess.

#### *Material excess*

Edensor (2005a) suggests that the sheer volume of excess in our lives has given rise to a more intense regulation of the things with which we fill the spaces around our bodies and homes. As a result, we more intensely police the material worlds we inhabit so we are able to ferret out the useless and unfashionable. Obsolete objects, distinguished as they are by their marks of use, do not fit into a system geared to overproduction that must continually make way for the new. They are designated as surplus, which is reclassified as “irrelevant, dirty and disorderly” (p. 315).

Yet wear and tear may signal a weakness in the purported link between technology and human advancement. Worn items that persist despite their loss of a literal and metaphorical new patina serve as refugees from the waste stream. They hint at consumer capitalism’s inability to ever truly eradicate the environmental consequences of overproduction. As Edensor (2005a) suggests, the pile of debris continues to grow.

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### Wear and tear and excess meaning

Connotations of obsolescence may be a normative association for objects manifesting wear and tear. However, I suggest that wear and tear may promote excesses of meaning that provide other ways for evaluating *No Such Luck's* artefacts.

An excess of meaning may be used to describe the ways in which an event, process, discourse or object produces meaning(s) that extend beyond the intended or normative. Bowden (2009), addressing hegemony, argues that excesses of meaning are inherent in the hegemonic order's struggle to present itself as a universal system. What it excludes or denies resists its attempts at closure.

This argument is informative for my research. It suggests that hegemonic interpretations might be evaluated with the intent of identifying the gaps or fissures where alternative meanings may reside. In relationship to wear and tear, such a search might incorporate aspects of Shuman's (2000) approach. She argues that excess meaning foments instability where stability is assumed.

In her investigation of food exchanges during the Jewish festival of Purim, she explores whether they prompt an excess that upends traditional social hierarchies. She suggests that the

Purim food exchange represents an inversion of an Orthodox Jewish community's usually tight constraints on food from production to consumption. Similarly, wear and tear may upend notions about the preference for new, fashionable items over worn, older ones. The existence, the *inevitability*, of wear and tear underscores how quickly newness fades.

Ruins are often discussed in relationship to an excess of meaning. Edensor (2005a, 2005b, 2005c, 2007) and Dobraszczyk (2010) associate the term with modern industrial ruins. Edensor argues that ruins challenge the dominant discourse of technological progress. They act as repositories for cast-off items that expose enchanting and ineffable understandings of the past or offer evidence of how the past and future might be different than once perceived. Dobraszczyk (2010) locates the pleasurable in Chernobyl's ruins, finding delight in the excess of meaning generated by the multitude of abandoned objects through their odd arrangements and juxtapositions.

Like industrial ruins that emphasise the unique materiality of objects, *No Such Luck* attempts to engage in excess meaning by foregrounding wear and tear. The materials and material

condition of the novel intrude upon its content, drawing attention to its corporeality. In that corporeality lies an aesthetic that may provide a means to conceptualise wear and tear beyond its construct as a signifier for obsolescence.

#### THE AESTHETICS OF WEAR AND TEAR

An association of wear and tear with aesthetic experience is grounded in Ranciere's (2005) and Pusca's (2010) interpretation of the concept. Ranciere (2005) suggests that aesthetic experience may emerge through a participation in day-to-day activities. Pusca (2010), building on Ranciere, suggests that aesthetic gazes are "'everyday' gazes of 'everyday' people who choose to break with routines and pursue objectives that challenge previously established hierarchies" (p. 244).

She offers as her example Ranciere's seventeenth century French workers who transfer their gaze from machinery to written text. This is a move that allows them to envisage new possibilities that disrupts their subordinate position. More a gradual change than an instantaneous awakening, the end result is every bit as significant. She writes,

The "shock" of discovering new possibilities is not the "coup de foudre" of the Kantian "sublime" but rather the slow shifting of routines that eventually lead to an attempt to clearly redefine their positioning—in Ranciere's analysis, the French Revolution. (p. 244)<sup>13</sup>

Accordingly, rather than abrupt elightenment through an encounter with the sublime, an appreciation of wear and tear may result from more subtle encounters. Similar to Dobraszczuk (2010), who revels in the diverse and incongruous objects Chernobyl harbours, I suggest that the worn objects that comprise *No Such Luck* offer opportunities to participate in an aesthetics of the every day. As the audiocassette, the book, and the newspaper demonstrate,

13 Pusca (2010) also suggests that Ranciere's "aesthetics of change" is an active process. "Aesthetics – often viewed as representation – is not separated from action. New forms of seeing create new possibilities for action, as Ranciere explains" (p. 244).

far from being fit only for the rubbish bin, they may be a prompt to insight as well as a delight to the senses. It is their very ordinariness, their mundane accessibility that is the key to their appeal.

### The audiocassette

Listening to *Miss Naomi's Interview* presents an opportunity to consider the discourse of high fidelity in sound recording. Thompson (1995) provides an account of the early history of high fidelity, noting its association with authenticity; the recording was purported to faithfully recreate the sound of an original performance. Hainge (2007) argues that hi-fi systems were thus named to suggest an equivalence between the quality of the recording apparatus and the playback device. Furthermore, the development of different audio formats was "driven by a single-minded, stubborn desire to render the communications system or medium entirely transparent or inaudible, rather) and to eradicate entirely any interference coming from the system or the medium itself" (p. 28).<sup>14</sup>

He also suggests that recently a shift in the conceptualisation of high fidelity has occurred. No longer is it equated with a presentation of unmediated reality but with an authenticity that is lifelike. Technology's mediation is acknowledged: the sound is "a self-avowed reconstruction . . . not, then, a direct analog of the 'real' embodied, authentic, and auratic original" (p. 28).

Whether regarded as an authentic recreation or a faithful reproduction, from the perspective of high fidelity recording, *Miss Naomi's Interview* is unsatisfying. To simulate an old tape recording, the original digital recording was transferred onto erased, pre-recorded music audiocassettes created in the 1970s and 1980s. These tapes were used to take advantage of the wear and tear they had already experienced through friction, exposure to sunlight, temperature changes, and ageing.<sup>15</sup> Far from effacing itself, the wear and tear foregrounds itself.

However, Bates (2004) argues that such a reproduction is not to be disparaged. Not only is high fidelity unattainable, it is undesirable. He says,

The music industry has spent over a hundred years creating devices that allegedly have higher

14 Sterne (2003) negates the concept of high fidelity altogether. He argues that the idea a reproduced sound could be faithful to an original one rests on false logic. "Copies would not exist without reproduction, *but neither would their originals*" [original emphasis] (p. 282). Rather, he suggests, the discourse of high fidelity emerged with the desire to sell sound playback machines and in tandem with a philosophy that regarded sound recording as a mediated environment.

15 A brief technical description of wear and tear as it affects tape is included in the Commentary, (see figure 6.12). While the explanation specifically refers to videotape, audiotape suffers similar deterioration through demagnetisation.

16 Sangild (2007) defines the glitch as a "minor malfunction or spurious signal, often related to a system or an electronic device." (p. 258). Bates (2004) adds that a glitch is "that which betrays the fidelity of the musical work – the skipping CD or record, the mangling cassette tape, the distorting PA system" (p. 277).

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and higher fidelity, but new technologies have merely introduced new glitches, and the end result is that we cannot help but be exposed to non-intentional sounds. (p. 275)<sup>16</sup>

He suggests that it is just these non-intentional sounds, coupled with the particular sonic environment in which the recording is heard, that make each playback one-of-a-kind.

While Bates (2004) is referring to glitch music that incorporates sounds produced by worn or defective media, I suggest that his argument may be applied to Miss Naomi's *Interview*. Wear and tear, as a degenerative process, alters the audiotape by introducing non-intentional sounds, thereby subtly changing the listener's experience each time she plays the interview. Also, whereas the discourse of high fidelity seeks to obscure or minimise the apparatus of its conveyance, wear and tear foregrounds its materiality and therefore its temporality.

Hegarty (2003) argues that tape as a form expresses the "human belief in life as an accumulative narrative," (para.

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4). The spool, he suggests, is a metaphor for the core around which one's existence collects, a linear narrative that grows as it proceeds to the end. Shadowing this narrative, however, is the possibility of a fragmentation, cutting and breaking, a metaphor for death.

The tape, however, carries the promise of a continual loop, with death a break in that, rather than something coming. Tape does not have the tragic being-unto-death as an explicit part of its working, and instead signals decay and/or disruption. (para. 15)

The sounds of wear and tear, particularly as they collect through repeated playing, imply both life and death. Wear and

tear heralds the inevitable progression to wearing out, but not just yet, as the tape keeps playing one more time. Over and over it unspools and spools until a fatal weakness in the tape brings about the unexpected, surprising end.

### The book

*The experience of a book is unique among the arts in that it offers us a tactile relationship.* (Clark 1991, p. 10).

Birkerts (1994) notes that from childhood books have kept him enthralled. He recalls,

A page was a field studded with tantalizing signs and a book was a vast play structure riddled with openings and crevices I could get inside. This notion of hiding, secreting myself in a text was important to me – it underlies to this day my sense of a book as a refuge. (p. 35)

Though he does not specifically mention the worn and torn, I believe they are implied here. A new book with its pristine cover and crisp pages is a delight in its own way. However, it is just one of many, a copy the same as all others on the book shop's shelf. A used book becomes one-of-a-kind as it travels. It is not born with a unique set of fingerprints like a human being but gains them on the journey through its particular pattern of use.

Ruecker (2002, 2006) found in his survey of devoted readers that books become like friends and ones that have been read again and again acquire a level of comfortableness

for the reader. The author Edgar Allan Poe (1844) writes of the pleasure he encountered on a listless, rainy day when he dipped into the books in his library. The notes he had written in the margins of the texts entertained him. “While the picturesqueness of the numerous pencil-scratches arrested my attention, their helter-skelter-iness of commentary amused me” (p. 484).

Yet the significance of wear and tear as it relates to the book may run deeper. Orbán (2007), writing about Art Spiegelman's (2004) graphic novel, *In the Shadow of No Towers*, notes that the framing pages and covers contain “stickerlike layers of foil” (p. 75). The foil makes these surfaces vulnerable, causing the pages to attract wear and tear, and “the scratches inevitably left by use become part of the image, the disappearing of the image through wear and tear reappearing as the material object's visible history” (p. 76). The author argues that this wear and tear, along with the tactility of the book's other raised surfaces, offer an opportunity to see differently. The reader is invited to set aside the Western ideal of equating seeing with “optical visibility predicated on an ideal of abstract illusionistic space” (p. 76) and to consider touch instead.

Pallasmaa (2005) argues that our tactile sense profoundly shapes our encounter with the world. He says, “The eye is the organ of distance and separation, whereas touch is the sense of nearness, intimacy and affection. The eye surveys, controls and investigates, whereas touch approaches and caresses” (p. 46). I suggest that wear and tear, although it may abrogate the smoothness of a polished cover, enhances our encounter with the book. The tactility of its distressed texture may, as Orbán

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(2007) argues, encourage us to realign our sense of sight with our sense of touch.

### Newspapers

*People don't actually read newspapers – they get into them every morning like a hot bath (McLuhan, as quoted in Rogaway, 1969, p. 26).*

Pallasmaa (2005) further suggests that each of our senses is an extension of the sense of touch. “Even the eye touches: the gaze implies an unconscious touch, bodily mimesis and identification” (p. 42). Perhaps this co-mingling of sight and touch explains some of the pleasure that may be derived from reading the newspaper. It is not an eyes-only experience but one that also depends on tactility for its enjoyment.

Barnhurst (1991) alludes to this with his questioning of what our experience might be if we could again encounter the newspaper like children before they learn to read. He writes,

Instead of events and ideas, the page would be the sum of its musty smell and taste, the crackling sounds it makes, and its significant link to our parents. Somewhere in our earliest memories, we retain this sensual and emotional tie to the newspaper form. (p.108)

Flavián and Gurrea's (2007) research study argues that individuals equate reading a newspaper with entertainment to a higher degree than they do reading news online. The

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authors suggest that this may be due to readers' traditional associations related to the newspaper's “format and situations of use” (p. 806). While they do not elaborate, I argue that format and situations of use imply an engagement with the materiality of the newspaper itself not possible with online reading. There is satisfaction in spending a Sunday morning lazily leafing through a newspaper in bed or over a cup of coffee at a cafe.

Similarly, interacting with *No Such Luck's* news clippings is an opportunity for pleasure that extends beyond the eyes' absorption with the content of the story. The old, yellowed paper feels thickened with age. Curling at the edges, rough and dry to the touch, it suggests the skeletons of dessicated autumn leaves. The front page rustles with stiff import as if the newsprint, indignant with its lowly status, is conjuring the alchemy of sun, oxygen and time to invoke its latent beauty. The clippings may engender playful engagement. They can be dealt like cards, splayed in the hand like a fan, or laid out in a rows. Like Edensor's (2005c) appreciation for the tactility of industrial ruins (the crunch of glass underfoot, the feel of decaying matter) handling the clippings may foster a sensual experience.

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## WEAR AND TEAR, OLD MEDIA, AND MATERIALITY

*No Such Luck*'s artefacts are instances of old media technology and, as I have suggested in the previous section, it is their worn and torn aspects that form part of their appeal. Building upon that notion here, I discuss ways in which old media forms may be regarded as significant in their own right, rather than only in relationship to new media.

### Different names for old media

Parks (2007) labels as residuals the used media hardware that has been accumulating since television was introduced. Residual media linger or persist despite their status as waste products of the media and information society. Löfgren (2009) equates old media with dead media, the abandoned technology such as VCRs, tape recorders, video game consoles, and TVs that hide in attics, garages, desk drawers, and cupboards, while Jackson (2009) defines newscasts and daily newspapers as legacy news media.

Wilson and Jacobs (2009) suggest that media and cultural theorists committed to a “digital orthodoxy” advocate describing mass media as heritage media. This designation positions the components of mass media as “remnants of the past in the present” (para. 1) or as curiosities and even impediments to the future that new media intends to make possible. By comparison, Lawson-Borders (2003) suggests

that old media is another name for traditional media such as magazines, newspapers, television, cable and radio. New media, by contrast, includes computers and the internet.

Uncovering these names for old media proved helpful to my research. It highlighted the challenge of thinking about *No Such Luck*'s media forms outside the context of new media and prompted further exploration into ways old media has been differentiated from new media.<sup>17</sup> For example, Sterne (2007) suggests that the simplistic designations ‘old’ and ‘new’ conceal the ever-shifting nature of the terms. He argues that the definition of new media underwent a shift in the latter half of the twentieth century. Previous definitions assumed that new media forms replaced old ones, such as the telephone supplanting the telegraph. Today, however, another construction of new also exists, one that references only changes of design and function within a medium.

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17 For clarity's sake, I will adopt Lawson-Borders's (2003) term old media. Her delineation between old and new media refers more to the mode of transmission rather than to the media form itself, however it is still useful for categorising *No Such Luck*'s artefacts. These artefacts are generally media forms prevalent before the popularisation of the online distribution of content made possible by computers and the Internet.

### Old media were once new

Merely grouping a selection of media forms together and calling them old, masks their unique and distinctive histories.<sup>18</sup>

Gitelman and Pingree (2003), discussing media regarded as new between 1740-1915, suggest that to study new media does not necessarily mean to study today's new media. Like Duguid (1996), they believe that examining what we might now call old media is a culturally important task. They write,

When we forget or ignore the histories of each of these new media we lose a kind of understanding more substantive than either the commercially interested definitions spun by today's media corporations or the causal plots of technological innovation offered by some historians. (p. xv)

Parks (2007) argues that the separation of media into old and new results in "reductive bifurcations", a simplistic differentiation within which lurks "an idle acceptance of capitalist logics (such as structured obsolescence) used to regulate the life cycles of electronic and computer hardware" (p. 33). McNamara (2006) and Shapley (2009) argue that new media is assumed to bury other discourses and erase whatever medium has been reclassified as old.

<sup>18</sup> Every media form represented in *No Such Luck* has been considered at one time or another an artefact of state-of-the-art technology. To mention three:

The letter - According to Adams (2007), it was new media circa 500 BC in Greece and Persia. Written by the powerful, the letters were delivered by messengers who embodied the projected presence, or *parousia*, of the sender.

The book - Lucien Febvre (1976) argues that in the late fifteenth-early sixteenth centuries the book was one of the "most potent agents at the disposal of western civilisation in bringing together the scattered ideas of representative thinkers" (p. 10).

The audiocassette tape - *Billboard Magazine* (1967), calling it a 'cassette rampage', predicted that by the end of 1967 there would be four million audiocassette tape players and 13 million music cassette tapes on the market and that those numbers would more than double by 1969. The audiocassette represented an advance on the LP, because of its portability and was marketed as delivering superior sound quality.

Lister, Dovey, Giddings, Grant and Kelly (2003) challenge this viewpoint. They argue that it fails to consider ways in which new media have made significant contributions to social and cultural change. Instead it reduces them to an ideological trick or a myth, the product of “evil capitalist scams” (p. 3). However, the authors suggest that in one definition of its usage, new (as in, the most recent) media contains ideological connotations. They say,

These connotations of ‘the new’ are derived from a modernist belief in social progress as delivered by technology. Such long-standing beliefs . . . are clearly being reinscribed in new media as we invest in them. New media appear, as they have before, with claims and hopes attached; they will deliver increased productivity, educational opportunity and open up new creative and communicative horizons. Calling a range of developments ‘new’, which may or may not be new or even similar, is part of a powerful ideological movement and a narrative about progress in Western societies (p. 11).<sup>19</sup>

Gitelman and Pingree (2003) argue that there exists an unreflective association of technology and linear progress. They suggest that media tends to mediate our conception of the past. “In part, we forget what older media meant, because we forget how they meant” (p. xiv). Postman (1993) cites the influence of computer technology on strengthening the modernist trope that technological innovation is synonymous with human advancement. Barbrook (2007) argues that a technological utopia is forever just over the horizon but never actually appearing. Ideology continually reshapes projections in which new media contribute to the revolution of modern living.

In contrast, I suggest that producing a project such as *No Such Luck* in old media may trouble assumptions about new media and progress. By including a discussion of the materiality of old media, I am highlighting how our physical engagement with it informs our interaction. The old media artefacts are part of the narrative, not merely conduits for content. They cannot be so easily exchanged or replaced when newer media come along.

19 Duguid (1996), using the term supersession, suggests the imperative to discount past technology in favour of present forms long predates modernism. Supersession is the idea that new technologies vanquish or subsume their predecessors.

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE  
MATERIALITY OF OLD MEDIA  
TO NO SUCH LUCK

Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that materials contribute to semiosis. The media of production are themselves building blocks for signification.<sup>20</sup> They say,

Texts are material objects which result from a variety of representational and production practices that make use of a variety of signifier resources organized as signifying systems (we have called these ‘modes’), and a variety of ‘media’, of ‘signifier materials’ – the surfaces of production (paper, rock, plastic, textile, wood, etc.), the substances of production (ink, gold, paint, light, etc.) and the tools of production (chisel, pen, brush, pencils, stylus, etc.). (p. 216)<sup>21</sup>

Doane (2007), like Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), acknowledges the material basis of media and suggests that a medium’s potential and limitations are entwined, with both contributing to meaning. She writes, “A medium is a medium by virtue of both its positive qualities (the visibility, color, texture of paint, for instance) and its limitations, gaps, incompletions (the flatness of the canvas, the finite enclosure insured by the frame)” (p. 130).

If then, the material forms of old media contribute to semiosis, one might ask what they might be saying, and why might it be important to listen?

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First, choosing to focus on materiality draws attention to writing as a design practice. It foregrounds the conscious decisions made to explore *No Such Luck*’s artefacts as physical objects and the ways they might articulate meaning integral to the polysemous novel. Second, challenging the designations of old and new with regard to media creates a space for different considerations to emerge. In the context of this research, this would be the materiality old media, and in particular, notions of wear and tear.

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20 Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that in the present era texts may be produced in one medium and received in another. This suggests that the surfaces and substances of reception also contribute to meaning. This division is significant to this research because the production and reception media for this project differ. In general the artefacts for *No Such Luck* were produced using the tools of digital media but were reproduced for reception in old media.

21 Kress (2010) and Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) argue that signs in their materiality are embedded in their particular culture and time period and therefore are neither global nor a-historical in their meaning. Cultures make use of the materials available to them when creating texts and do not exhaust all their semiotic potential.

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## THE POLYSEMOUS NOVEL IN RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER FORMS

The polysemous novel shares several characteristics with other forms such as transmedia narratives and multimodal novels. Like the polysemous novel, transmedia narratives present the story in different media, are told non-linearly, and contain no single text that includes all of the information necessary to comprehend the story. Multimodal novels, while usually associated with the book rather than multiple media forms, make use of different semiotic modes (typography, layout, images and colour) to tell their story, as does *No Such Luck*.

As this chapter has demonstrated, it may be a consideration of materiality that most distinguishes the polysemous novel. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) have suggested that the material form of a text contributes to its meaning. With the polysemous novel, I have taken their argument a step further to suggest that material form should not be separated from the meaning of the story. Its physicality intrudes upon the text, conjures or disrupts other discourses, and extends the narrative through memory and imagination.

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*No Such Luck* has been produced in old media in order to investigate how the artefacts' physical form might influence the articulation and interpretation of the text. However, this is not to suggest that the polysemous novel is limited to expression in old media. A digital polysemous novel may be possible if the materiality of the artefacts that deliver the content are acknowledged and their contributions to the narrative interrogated. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) hint at one way to undertake such an investigation. They argue that the mode of reception in which we encounter media, whether it is the wall of a cave or a glass screen, contributes to semiosis. Exploring what the computer monitor might be saying as we read a digital text may serve as a beginning.

## Conclusion

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The design of *No Such Luck* has been influenced by the concepts of polysemy and wear and tear. Like purposeful polysemy as articulated in advertising discourse, this novel has been structured to encourage diverse and even conflicting interpretations. Its non-linear nature may be understood as inculcating the first layer of polysemy. Rather than imposing a linear sequence, it allows the reader to enter the text at any point. As a consequence, one's subsequent interaction with the artefacts shapes one's conceptualisation of character and plot.

The intersection of non-linearity, narrator, and narrative level adds another layer of complexity to the novel. The character Jill Beth Sorenson fulfills the function of fictive-designer, which, like Genette's (1980) concept of the fictive-author, places her as an intradiegetic-homodiegetic narrator who organises the reader's negotiation of the text. Her strategic position draws attention not only to which stories have been included in *No Such Luck* but also to those that she might have left out. The gaps register as polysemy, reminding the reader yet again that one cannot know all of the story.

The conflicting journalistic discourses of objectivity and partisanship speak to a discrepancy relating to what may be regarded as truth. Presented as discourses adhered to by the white (objective) and African-American (partisanship) press, they point to a deeper schism. Beyond competing points of view, they raise questions about voice and power as exemplified in the contrasting testimonies of Jill Beth Sorenson and Naomi Mays.

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Materiality may also serve as a locus of polysemy when the reader engages with the novel's artefacts as physical objects. More than mere holders or keepers of content, they may disrupt the narrative by engendering unrelated involuntary memories or by acting as catalysts to imagination that drive the story into new and unexpected directions.

The designation of what constitutes old media shifts as technology continues to develop. Nevertheless, however it is defined, wear and tear as an expression of the materiality of old media is worthy of investigation.

Wear and tear is a centuries-old phrase whose meaning encompasses the routine distress objects experience during the course of their usage. Although it is often associated with obsolescence, this chapter has attempted to demonstrate that wear and tear can also act as a conduit for excess meaning, thereby allowing different understandings of old media to emerge. These new understandings are grounded in an everyday aesthetic that encourages a gradual rather than a sudden shift in perspective. Like modern-day industrial ruins, used items manifesting wear and tear may present opportunities for aesthetic pleasure. *No Such Luck*'s audiocassette, book, and newspaper clippings act as examples of how an engagement with the material qualities of ordinary objects may suggest other insights outside the discourse of obsolescence.

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Finally, the polysemous novel's point of difference from similar works, such as the multimodal novel and transmedia narrative, hinges on the argument that its material form is a critical component of the narrative. As Chartier (1995) suggests, how a text is materially rendered affects its interpretation. The scroll, the codex, and the computer all require new rules of engagement.

Now that the ideas significant to the shaping of *No Such Luck* have been explained, it will be helpful to explore the theory, processes, and methods that underpin the research design.





C H A P T E R

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*R e s e a r c h*  
*D e s i g n*



## Introduction

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The system of inquiry I have used is specifically designed for a creative production PhD project. This project originates in and emanates from my creative practice as a designer.<sup>1</sup>

Scrivener (2001) argues that a creative production PhD project is one in which the production of an artefact (in this instance a polysemous novel) lies at the core of the practice. This composite text acts as both the site and embodiment of the research. Furthermore, he suggests that in a creative production PhD project, the creative work is not subordinated to or separated from the research activity. “The artefacts arising from the [creative production] research cannot simply be conceived as by-products or exemplification of ‘know-how’. Instead, they are objects of value in their own right” (para. 4).

In addition, Scrivener (2000) argues that the primary goal of the project is not to solve a pre-determined problem. Rather, he suggests, “the work can be described as a response to a set of on-going issues, concerns and interests expressed through one or more artefacts” (para. 14). Hamilton and Jaaniste, 2009 and Scrivener (2000) however, assert that the issues explored stem from (and reflect) a cultural context that the artefact evokes. Mäkelä (2007), Scrivener, (2002) and Scrivener and Chapman (2004) suggest the artefact produced is an exploration and manifestation of the issues, concerns, and interests encountered during its production.

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<sup>1</sup> By designer, I refer to one who designs information as communicative texts. In this definition, the term encompasses the creative writer, the graphic designer, and the producer of the physical text.

## *Research Design: A system of inquiry*

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Instead of adopting a methodology, which may suggest a systematic investigation into a singular, stable question requiring established processes and procedures, I employ in this thesis the concept of a research design. I use the term research design because it more accurately reflects the approach implemented for addressing the creative and technical problems I encountered during the research. In this regard one 'designs' one's approach to research as an emergent and responsive process. Scrivener (2000) argues that often research in a creative production PhD resists simplification to a single problem or solution. Wood (2000) asserts, "the designer's task is usually a tangle of 'wicked problems' rather than a series of linear, finite questions" (p.54). Accordingly, the system of inquiry discussed in this chapter consists of protocols that are contextualised by parameters specifically developed for the project.

### CLARIFYING AN APPROACH TO KNOWLEDGE

Before effectively engaging with the 'data' my practice produced, it was essential to understand what the knowledge I was pursuing looked like. Webb and Brien (2008) suggest that research, such as that conducted in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities, often still relies on a model of knowledge that expects answers to questions such as, "what can be seen?; what can be demonstrated?; what can be argued?" (para. 5). Scrivener and Chapman (2004) note that

in such research the work of practice is seen as an outgrowth of thought. They suggest, "In this sense, praxis is largely about bringing means to bear in order to achieve a known end, i.e., to solve a problem or answer a question" (para. 38).

According to Webb and Brien (2008) underlying such an approach to knowledge acquisition is a theological structure that believes the researcher, through her study will arrive at a kind of truth whose source is an external authority that is in some sense, God. The authors equate this deity to Barthes "Author-God" who serves as the originator or source for a single theological meaning. It is this commitment to singularity and to the validation of this external authority that frustrates, truncates, and overly simplifies the work of the practice-based researcher. It fails to take into account the fact that practice-led research, "tends to be less systematic, less easily reduced to an interpretive framework, less likely to offer its findings in a transparent mode and less susceptible to rational argument" (para. 6).

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As an alternative approach, Webb and Brien (2008) suggest that the designer rather than “God” may be the locus for knowledge and interpretation. Instead of seeking facts validated by external authority, they suggest one open one’s self to new insights that result from an acceptance of uncertainty and ambiguity.<sup>2</sup> The authors’ point is not that reason should be eschewed but that the drive toward proof might be replaced by a contextual and subjective exchange between the artist and the work.<sup>3</sup>

#### KNOWLEDGE IN THE CONTEXT OF CREATIVE PRACTICE

In the process of this research inquiry I suggest that any knowledge I seek arises out of my encounter with the making of the polysemous novel and, in turn, becomes the polysemous novel. Knowledge evolves as the creative process proceeds. Mäkelä (2007) argues that it is the artefact’s making that determines the direction of the research process. She states that, “Without the artefact, there is just the assumptive theory, which is separated from the actual process of making” (p. 159). In other words, the knowledge contained in a creative production project is the artefact.

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Such a position aligns with Scrivener’s (2002) statement that in a creative production project the purpose of the research is not to generate new knowledge in the conventional sense where the artefact acts as a vehicle for knowledge acquisition. Rather, the research’s intent is to generate novel apprehensions by undertaking original creation. Apprehensions, “in the sense of objects that must be grasped by the senses and the intellect” (para. 46) offer us ways of seeing situations from new perspectives.

Scrivener (2000) states, “the creative production, as an object of experience is more important than any knowledge embodied in it” (para. 14). In this regard, the intent of the artefact is to contribute to human experience. In an update of his position, Scrivener does not rule out that it might be possible to understand the artefact as knowledge: “when it is transformational in the sense of opening up new modes of working and expression” (personal communication, July 26, 2010). Yet he reminds us that an artefact is never limited to mere knowledge acquisition; rather, the effective art work transcends knowledge to offer humankind meaningful experiences.

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2 Webb and Brien (2008) state that the designer adopts what the poet John Keats describes as “Negative Capability”: that condition ‘when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason’ (para. 8).

3 As Gray and Malins (2004) assert, the artist understands that “Knowledge is negotiated – inter-subjective, context bound, and is a result of personal construction” (p. 21).

## Designing a research framework for developing the polysemous novel

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Practice-based research projects can be quixotic undertakings. They may be guided as much by the intuition and idiosyncratic work habits of the designer (Combrink and Marley, 2009) as by pre-established problem statements and objectives. The researcher must be prepared for the research to take off in unexpected directions (Mäkelä, 2007) and for being confronted by problems that do not have pre-existing formulas for resolving them (Ings, 2006). Scrivener (2000) asserts practice-based research is characterised by complexities generated by change that arises during the undertaking of the research. The goals and priorities of the researcher may alter as the research journey progresses, new interests may arise or existing avenues of inquiry may expand and contract or disappear altogether. Yet the researcher welcomes such a journey because, as Combrink and Marley (2009) suggest practice-based research can produce unanticipated results, which suggest myriad possibilities are available to the researcher.

Combrink and Marley (2009) also suggest that regardless of the approach taken, it must be comprehensive, contain an implicit structure, and have the “theoretical depth to at least serve as a framework in order to guarantee sufficient rigour” (p. 185). Implicit in their statement is the acknowledgement that various approaches are acceptable; the researcher is limited neither to a pre-determined theoretical position nor to a set of methods. The structure cannot become a straitjacket that impedes progress or stifles creativity. Mäkelä (2007) suggests that a research frame is not dependent on specific methods; its purpose is to enable the artist to engage in practice-based research.

Given the unpredictable nature of practice-based research, one might ask, “What would be the characteristics of a system of inquiry that would be useful for explicating this current research project?” One needs to keep in mind that the priority, regardless of the twists and turns the research might take, is the preservation of the clarity of the polysemous novel. Without a coherent story, the arefact fails to achieve its purpose as a communicative text. Any framework used must have this pragmatic goal at its core as well as the facility for encouraging creative discovery.

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4 Avieson (2008) states that the quote, which was originally attributed to Eco’s publisher, Bondanella, was in truth written by the author, who later admitted to penning the words himself.

5 A discussion of tacit knowledge follows in the section titled Protocol 1.

6 Ashliman (2008) explains that *Stone Soup* is a traditional folktale told in many different countries including France, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany, Ireland and the United States. The core story involves a beggar who persuades a farm wife to furnish him with ingredients to make his soup, whose primary ingredient is a stone, or alternatively, a nail or an axe.

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THE METAPHOR AS AN  
ARTICULATION OF THE  
SYSTEM OF INQUIRY

Avieson (2008) writes that on the book jacket of the Italian version of Umberto Eco's novel *The Name of the Rose*, the publisher noted Eco's belief in the metaphorical power of fiction. He says,

If he had wanted to advance a thesis, he would have written an essay (like so many others that he has written). If he has written a novel, it is because he has discovered, upon reaching maturity, that those things about which we cannot theorize, we must narrate. (Avieson, 2008, para. 1)<sup>4</sup>

As this quote suggests, narrative can be used as an effective tool for conveying meaning. Given that narrative lies at the core of this creative production project, it is worthwhile investigating how certain narrative devices, particularly metaphor, might be used to develop the exegesis. Avieson (2008) suggests that scientists and authors alike incorporate metaphor into their writing because it can often convey ideas and concepts more effectively than detailed description.

Hawkes (1972) defines metaphor (from the Greek word *metaphora* meaning "to carry over") as a linguistic device used to attribute aspects of one object to another. Metaphors allow for a transference of signification, often in a poetic way.

Gray and Malins (2004) state that metaphor creates shared meaning and is useful in research as an analytical strategy. Nonaka, Toyama and Konno (2000) attribute to metaphor another function, which is to facilitate the externalisation of tacit knowledge.<sup>5</sup> "When tacit knowledge is made explicit," they suggest, "knowledge is crystallised, thus allowing it to be shared by others, and it becomes the basis of new knowledge" (p. 9).

Accordingly, in this exegesis the use of a folktale is an appropriate means for articulating a system of inquiry designed for a research project whose content centres on fiction writing. Incorporating *Stone Soup* allows meaning to be inscribed metaphorically. It employs narration to explain pertinent protocols integral to the research design and articulation of the project.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, it reinforces the notion of the creative practitioner whose research is centred in practice. By using the folktale as a method for explicating ideas relating to research design, I am, as Avieson (2008) suggests, connecting creative and theoretical works, and thereby presenting "different aspects of the same face, pointing to the same idea, but from different angles" (para. 7).

I will begin by recounting the folktale *Stone Soup* and then explain the applicability of the text to the research design of a creative production project. Following this, I will discuss the protocols and parameters used for framing the research.

## STONE SOUP

Once there was a clever vagabond who in fat times and lean, kept himself well fed with only the stone in his pocket to help him. One day, just as he'd done in many other times in many other villages, he knocked on the front door of a farmhouse.

"Go away!" the farm wife called out. "My husband isn't home and I have nothing for you. We are poor starving farmers who can barely manage to feed ourselves."

The vagabond hid a smile. He'd seen her husband and knew his belly to be as big as a gristmill's water wheel.

"Well," he called out, "then it's most fortunate I chose your door to knock on today. You are in desperate need of my soup stone. It will make you the best meal you have ever eaten!"

Intrigued, the farm wife opened the door a crack. "Soup from a stone? How is that possible?"

The vagabond thrust the stone forward. "All I need is a potful of water and a fire...."

The farm wife's mouth began to water, for in truth though she was an excellent cook, she was a lazy woman. The thought of an easy meal made by another delighted her. She threw open the door and invited him in.

Before long, the soup stone was lying at the bottom of a boiling pot of water.

"Ahhh, what a delicious aroma," said the vagabond as he gestured to the farm wife to join him over the fire. "But how much better it would taste if we helped the soup along

with a bit of salt and barley. That is, if you have some to spare." The vagabond made a sad face, pretending that he had believed the farm wife's tale that she was poor and underfed.

"I'm sure I can find some," the farm wife said and hastened away. She returned from the cellar with salt and barley, which the vagabond added to the pot.

"Now let's try it," the vagabond said.

He dipped his soup into the pot and tasted it, but came away surprised. The barley flavour wasn't as strong as he was used to. He asked the farm wife for more and she immediately ran off and found some.

"Mmmmm, much better!" the vagabond cried after he tasted the soup with the extra barley.

The farm wife's belly rumbled. "Surely it will be ready soon?"

"Not yet," the vagabond said.

The farm wife opened her mouth to protest but the vagabond offered her a taste of the soup instead. "See for yourself, what does this soup need?"

She took a sip, rolling the liquid across her tongue to ponder the flavour. "It needs...turnips and carrots."

"Oh, but you don't have any," said the vagabond, downcast.

"But I do!" the farm wife cried. Once again she hurried off to the cellar to return a minute later with an armload of turnips and carrots. For good measure she brought mushrooms, beetroot, and celery too.

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She made to throw them all into the pot, but the vagabond stayed her hand.

“No, no. Not all at once and not everything, or you’ll spoil the soup.”

The farm wife leaned over the pot and watched as the vagabond dropped some of the carrots and mushrooms into the boiling water but set aside the beetroot and celery.

She had never smelled anything so wonderful in all her life. If they didn’t eat soon, she believed she might die of hunger.

The vagabond tasted the soup many times, comparing it to soups he’d made in the past and strategising how he might make it better. He tried a pinch more salt, a little more water and a few extra vegetables. He even tried dampening the fire so the soup wouldn’t boil too quickly, suspecting that this might enrich the flavour. Finally, after one last taste, he declared the soup needed just one more ingredient.

“Some chicken, I do believe, and then it will be time for our feast.”

The farm wife needed no further encouragement. She dispatched the chicken she was saving for supper into the pot.

“Ahhhh, now indeed it is soup!” cried the vagabond and directed the farm wife to set the table.

Just as they were sitting down, the farm wife’s son appeared. As lazy as his mother and with an appetite as big as his father’s, he had smelled the soup from far off in the field and hurried home. The vagabond sensed immediately that this young man

might take more than his fair share of the soup and reduce his portion to almost nothing.

“Another pot for the fire!” he cried, “let’s show your son the magic of my stone.”

The farm wife, eager for her boy to think her clever, hung a smaller pot of water over the fire. She brought vegetables, seasonings and another chicken and again the vagabond made soup, slipping his stone into the second pot as he had the first. Yet this time, because the pot was smaller, he altered the proportions.

“Now before we eat, you must compare the two,” the vagabond said, “to see if both pots of soup are as good as each other. If not, I will try again until I get them just right.”

However, both mother and son agreed that except for a needing a few more carrots the soup in the second pot tasted as good as that in the first. Immediately the vagabond added the carrots and finally, the three of them sat down to eat.

Between them, they emptied both pots, not a morsel was left, not one single drop.

“You were right,” said the farm wife as she pushed away her empty bowl, “that is the best meal I have ever eaten and all because of a stone.”

The vagabond rinsed off the stone and returned it to his pocket. “Thank you. And the next time I am passing through, I will stop again. The stone never makes the same soup twice. And each one is better than the last.”

## Creative Practice Paradigm

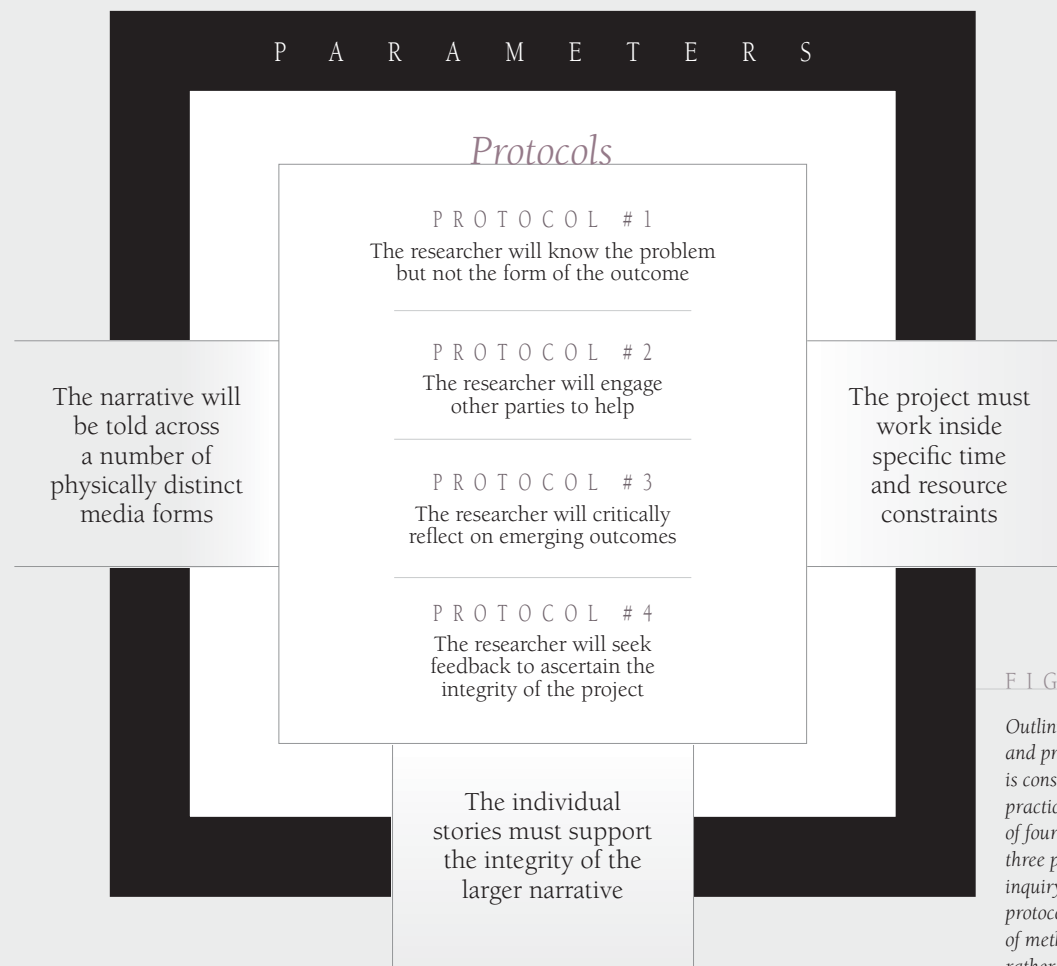


FIGURE 5.1

Outlining the project's parameters and protocols. The system of inquiry is constructed within a creative practice paradigm that uses a set of four protocols that operate inside three parameters intended to focus the inquiry and promote discovery. The protocols allow for the implementation of methods as the research progresses, rather than relying on a pre-determined set of procedures.

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## HOW PROTOCOLS HELP STRUCTURE THE RESEARCH

Metaphorically we may regard the vagabond as a practitioner who wishes to engage in a creative production project. The stone represents his idea and the requested potful of water and fire his platform for creation. He brings to the farm wife's door his talent for making soup and his previous experience in doing so.

Immediately he is faced with uncertainty. He cannot simply follow a recipe as he does not know what ingredients will be available. How then shall he proceed? Mäkelä (2007) suggests that in a situation such as this he would confront the situation with the structure of a research frame rather than with a prescribed set of methods. Although the vagabond is not sure of the recipe, he knows he can rely on certain protocols that have worked for him in the past. (We are confident of his previous success by the fact that he has managed to consistently feed himself and therefore has not starved to death.)

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### The four protocols

He approaches the problem with four protocols:

- » He will know the problem but not the form of the outcome
- » He will engage other parties to help him during the process
- » He will critically reflect on emerging outcomes
- » He will seek feedback to ascertain the integrity of the project's hypotheses.

These protocols provide him with a potential structure. They factor in real world considerations that Gray and Malins (2004) note are characteristic of practice-based research. The protocols allow for flexibility in confronting the questions or problems that arise from practice.

Once inside the farm wife's house, the vagabond faces a problem. How will he make his soup from unknown ingredients? From past experience, he understands that there is more than one way to make stone soup. As Mäkelä (2007) states, "There is no preference for one set of methods over another, since finding multiple solutions is regarded as an asset, not a weakness" (p. 160). Yet his soup preparation is not random; he does not merely throw the ingredients into the pot. He chooses a method appropriate to his situation.

To elicit the farm wife's cooperation (and later her collaboration) he asks her first for the simplest ingredients (salt, barley and butter) and moves on to ones that may be less accessible (vegetables and potatoes) culminating in the most distinctive (a chicken). The requirements of the soup are determined by its developing form. He does not work from a recipe but from a reflection on the emerging nature of the

design. He tests it, evaluates its current state and hypothesises about what might improve it through a process of trial and error.

In this regard, the vagabond is responding to what Mäkelä (2007) suggests is the “dynamic relationship between the research context, question, method and audience” (p. 160). If any one or more of these factors shift, then the methods chosen may need to shift as well. That is why the method, rather than being pre-determined before research begins, becomes the last variable to be considered. In the soup-maker’s case, the research context changed when the farmer’s son came home for lunch. In light of the new information, the vagabond returned to an earlier stage of his soup-making process. To have enough soup for three, he added more water and then tested it to determine which of the other ingredients he also needed to add.

As a result of the vagabond’s flexible work methods, he is able to respond to the dynamics of instability, and the soup is enriched in a manner he could not have predicted when he entered the house.

Having outlined the broad metaphorical constructs in this story, it is useful at this point to discuss the parameters of the stone soup system of inquiry in relation to the current project.

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## HOW PARAMETERS ACTIVATE PROTOCOLS

An analysis of the folktale *Stone Soup* demonstrates how developing protocols to guide one’s practice is an effective way of designing a research inquiry into the often unstable realm of creative practice. Protocols allow for flexibility in the selection of methods while facilitating a certain openness to change.

Protocols are a response to principles that underpin a research project. However, the activating of protocols generally requires parameters. Although at the outset of this project I did not know the nature of the final outcome (as a physical artefact), I was aware that I was addressing certain narrative considerations that might lead me to strategically explore the potentials of a polysemous novel.

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### The three parameters

Accordingly, I established parameters that might be open to renegotiation, but at the outset would enable me to establish the limitations of the inquiry while allowing for the maximum opportunity for discovery.<sup>7</sup> The research design was guided by three limitations:

- » The narrative would be told across a number of physically distinct media forms
- » The individual stories must support the integrity of the larger narrative
- » The project must work inside specific time and resource constraints.

Having established the four protocols and three parameters for the research project, and framed the inquiry as creative practice, it was necessary to consider the methods adopted (in the manner of the *Stone Soup* metaphor) that might help to explicate what was to become a multi-faceted inquiry.

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<sup>7</sup> Kleining & Witt (2000) advocate implementing research designs that maximise opportunities for exploration and discovery. They suggest that the researcher is to remain open to new concepts whilst engaged in research and be prepared to renegotiate the research framework if the data challenges preconceptions.

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### PROTOCOL 1

#### KNOWING THE PROBLEM BUT NOT THE FORM OF THE OUTCOME

Intrigued, the farm wife opened the door a crack.  
“Soup from a stone? How is that possible?”

The vagabond thrust the stone forward. “All I need is  
a potful of water and a fire . . .”

A discussion of this protocol centres on two concepts: Schön’s (1983) notion of the practitioner’s repertoire and Polanyi’s (2009) concept of tacit knowledge.

### The practitioner’s repertoire

Schön, in his seminal work *The Reflective Practitioner*, (1983) maintains that it is within the domain of practice that the practitioner carries out research. Instead of merely applying theoretical knowledge to solve problems, past interactions are brought to bear on present issues. The practitioner does not face a new situation as if with a blank slate. Rather, a wellspring of experience underpins the practitioner’s ability to engage with diverse problems as they arise. Schön (1983) defines this as an engagement with repertoire. He says,

When a practitioner makes sense of a situation he perceives to be unique, he sees it as something already present in his repertoire. To see this site as that one is not to subsume

the first under a familiar category or rule. It is, rather, to see the unfamiliar, unique situation as both similar to and different from the familiar one, without at first being able to say similar or different with respect to what. The familiar situation functions as a precedent, or a metaphor, or – in Thomas Kuhn's phrase – an exemplar for the unfamiliar one. (p. 138)

Schön (1983) also suggests that in “seeing this situation as that one, one may also do in this situation as in that one” (p. 139).

In essence, what Schön (1983) is saying is that the practitioner is able to carry out her work, even though it contains unfamiliar elements. Like the vagabond facing a unique soup-making opportunity, the practitioner accesses the knowledge and wisdom gained through the completion of earlier projects. Schön (1983) draws a parallel to the jazz musician who expresses a feel for his material and can call upon a wealth of experience when he improvises.

Although I had never designed a polysemous novel before, as a fiction writer I recognised familiar elements upon which I was able to build the project's content. The novel, no matter its content or form, requires an attention to plot, characterisation, composition, and language. Adapting this knowledge to the construct of the polysemous novel platform meant drawing

upon earlier storytelling experiences and skills as well as implementing strategies to supplement them.<sup>8</sup> Like Schön's (1983) practitioner who builds up his repertoire through experience, I have learned what to look for and how to respond to what I find.

### Tacit Knowledge

Schön's (1983) notion of the practitioner's repertoire is underpinned by the concept of tacit knowledge. Polanyi (2009) summed up the concept by stating that, “we know more than we can tell” (p. 4). Polanyi (2009), Johannessen, Olaisen and Olsen (2001), Lam (2000), Mead (2007), Niedderer and Imani (2009), and Nonaka et al. (2000) all suggest that tacit knowledge is highly personal, abstract, often difficult to express or convey in language, and is grounded in experience. Nonaka et al. (2000) also state that tacit knowledge includes subjective insights, intuitions, and hunches, and is “deeply rooted in action, procedures, routines, commitment, ideals, values and emotions” (p. 7).

8 For example, creating the audio narrative *Miss Naomi's Interview* involved both the familiar skill of crafting a story arc and the unfamiliar demands of structuring the text for the ear rather than the eye.

Mead (2007), in a discussion of Polanyi's concept of 'tacit intimation', accentuates the experiential dimension of tacit knowledge, stating that it is a competence built up gradually after years of immersion and indwelling in one's specific field of study. In stressing the contribution of communities of practice that furnish norms of practice that the researcher tacitly draws upon he says,

It is from our experience of such sustained, disciplined, and collaborative immersion, or indwelling, that we come to sense that we are located within a "heuristic field," and . . . are proceeding along a 'gradient of discovery' that guides us – although not infallibly, still for the most part reliably, fruitfully, and therefore in the right direction – for achieving deeper and more comprehensive understanding (or 'comprehension') and discovery. (p. 303)

In my research, I draw upon tacit knowledge acquired through decades of immersion in complementary fields of journalism, fiction writing and design. At a deep level they have shaped the way I tell a story. Rather than having to make explicit every storytelling decision, I am able to rely upon tacit knowledge while in the process of creating a story. Schön (1983) terms such action as knowing-in-action where the act itself reveals an intelligence or an intelligent decision.<sup>9</sup>

- 9 As an example from my novella, *Came Tumbling After*, I offer a description of the cancer that afflicts Sylvia Gordon:

Her mother's illness lived in their house like an unwelcome guest. Aurelia called the cancer 'Jones', and her days were measured by how Jones treated Sylvia Gordon.

*Can't come over, J.B., Jones had her puking all night.*

*She's got the pillow over her head again. Must be another one of Jones's headaches.*

*Jones made her cry.* (Williams, 2010g, p. 25)

I cannot describe (make explicit) the process by which I decided to equate Sylvia Gordon's cancer with an unwelcome guest. The text simply wrote itself on the page and I decided that it 'worked'. Considering the text later, I can see how the passage contributes to the narrative, it conveys aspects of Aurelia Gordon's character. It succinctly outlines the depth of the intrusion of illness on the Gordon household and offers a compelling metaphor for cancer. Yet before I composed the text, I did not think through these features nor outline the goal of what I intended to write. Such decisions occurred on a tacit level.

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### The deep structure of tacit knowledge

Aligned to the kind of tacit knowledge built up within a community of practice is a more diffuse form that is affected by a broader range of influences. Sela-Smith (2002) suggests that there is an internal tacit dimension within the individual where personal knowledge resides. Within this dimension, meaning, feeling, and experience combine to craft deeply held beliefs about how the world operates and about how to operate within the world.

In my own research, I interpret this view of tacit knowledge as informing not so much the how of what I write, but the what. Although my years of writing experience have shaped my writing style, the themes I write about have been influenced by my earlier, deeper, and more pervasive personal experience. I was a child in the American South during and just after the Civil Rights era. Racism, tense racial relations, and social upheaval marked this period. Outside of my conscious awareness, I absorbed, interpreted, and made judgements about the environment in which I grew up. My reservoir of tacit knowledge about a childhood lived within the confines of a racist society informs my polysemous novel in ways that reflect an accumulation of unique experiences.

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### PROTOCOL 2

#### ENGAGING OTHER PARTIES

#### TO HELP DURING THE PROCESS

The farm wife opened her mouth to protest but the vagabond offered her a taste of the soup instead. “See for yourself, what does this soup need?”

She took a sip, rolling the liquid across her tongue to ponder the flavour. “It needs...turnips and carrots.”

#### Collaboration as a research method<sup>10</sup>

Understanding that it would result in a better outcome, the vagabond seeks the collaboration of the farm wife, drawing upon her expertise as a cook to improve the soup.<sup>11</sup> For this research project, I recognised that it was essential to supplement my skills with those of others who could provide additional expertise.<sup>12</sup> Without their collaboration, it would have been difficult to extend the polysemous novel beyond the print platform; the media form that lies within my realm of expertise.<sup>13</sup>

#### *Benefits of collaboration to the research process*

Hargrove (1998) suggests that often collaboration is an outgrowth of an individual's desire to realise a goal or solve a complex problem that is deeply meaningful but not achievable without assistance. John-Steiner (2000), Odling-Smee (2005), and Stein (1994) all suggest that in collaborative processes one reaches out for assistance in order to take advantage of

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the skills of others. Yet the benefits of collaboration extend far beyond the pragmatic. Hodge (2009) notes the effect of collaboration on film projects, suggesting that a rich interaction amongst those involved may result in a more compelling artistic vision.

Barbour, Ratana, Waititi and Walker (2007), Hargrove (1998), Hodge (2009), John-Steiner (2000), Storey & Jourbert (2004), and Whitelock, Faulkner & Miell (2008) all suggest that collaboration fosters risk taking, which brings a richer resolution and expands the possible. John-Steiner (2000) argues that the power of collaboration lies in the ability to share the risks, which prompts participants to take more chances. She suggests the capacity for risk taking is nurtured by the trust that evolves in successful collaborations. Barbour et al. (2007) suggest that “relationships involving trust, respect and support are important to the processes of collaboration and to the wellbeing of the collaborators” (p. 52). Thus one might argue that collaborative approaches to creative research enrich both the emerging artefacts and the participants who contribute to them.

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- 10 The argument may be made that all creative works are collaborative. Littleton and Miell (2004) suggest that creativity is a social act. John-Steiner (2000), referring to the ideas of L.S. Vygotsky, states, “creative activities are social, that thinking is not confined to the individual brain/mind, and that construction of knowledge is embedded in the cultural and historical milieu in which it arises” (p. 5). She, as well as Barbour, Ratana, Waititi & Walker (2007), Ellegood (2010), Lind (2007), and Stein (1994) all challenge the myth of the lone artist as sole locus for creative inspiration. As Lind (2007) phrases it, what has passed for individual endeavour is often simply unacknowledged collaboration. “This is especially true for many male artists who have been able to rely on more or less invisible support from surrounding women” (p. 16).
  - 11 Barbour et al. (2007), state that collaboration “involves a group of artists working together to create or achieve a common purpose, such as producing performance events, exhibitions or research” (p. 51). They suggest that it is implicit in the collaborative process that it be non-hierarchical, include varied perspectives or artistic mediums, and involve shared understandings and goals. Although this project was instigated by me, rather than a group of individuals, the collaborative processes I participated in were non-hierarchical arrangements carried out to achieve a common purpose. We shared common understandings and goals and contributed knowledge from various realms of expertise.
  - 12 To complete the various artefacts that comprise the assembled narrative, I made use of the skills of professional technicians and craftspeople (including sound recording engineers, photographers, printers, a video camera operator, a lighting professional, a digital effects technician, and a graphic designer) as well as actors and a co-writer for the audio script, *Miss Naomi's Interview*.
  - 13 Seeking external feedback is not an abdication of the designer's position as the locus for knowledge and interpretation as discussed earlier in this chapter. The designer, rather than an external authority, remains the final arbiter of changes and modifications to her work. Supervisors, co-workers, and peers act in an advisory capacity.

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*Critical engagement with the project*

DeFreitas (2004) asserts that the interactions between collaborators in a creative practice context may foster the project's development and enhance its quality. She suggests the collaborators each bring a unique sensitivity to the processes and materials at hand, and the interplay of new insights resulting from the artists' differing perspectives promotes "a deeper level of discourse and analysis" (para. 2). In recognition of this idea, Littleton and Miell (2004) (specifically addressing writing collaborations) suggest that collaborators bring to their work a complementarity of sensitivities, that may combine to open a shared space that shapes the collaborators' writing in unforeseen ways.

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PROTOCOL 3

CRITICALLY REFLECT  
ON EMERGING OUTCOMES

"Now let's try it," the vagabond said. He dipped his soup into the pot and tasted it, but came away surprised. The barley flavour wasn't as strong as he was used to. He asked the farm wife for more and she immediately ran off and found some.

"Mmmmm, much better!" the vagabond cried after he tasted the soup with the extra barley.

The vagabond tasted the soup many times, comparing it to soups he'd made in the past and strategising how he might make it better. He tried a pinch more salt, a little more water and a few extra vegetables. He even tried dampening the fire so the soup wouldn't boil too quickly, suspecting that this would enrich the flavour.

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## A REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

While in the midst of his soup-making practice, the vagabond tastes the result and reflects upon how he might alter or improve it. He experiments with his ad hoc recipe, responding to unexpected outcomes, manipulating variables and testing hypotheses as he goes along.

Similar to the vagabond, the practice of reflection enables the designer to evaluate aspects of the research as it develops. Nehring, Laboy, and Catarius (2010) suggest that “reflection and reflective practice emerge as close examination of one’s own thought and behavior, learning from experience, and an experimental disposition toward ongoing activity” (p. 400).

While undertaking this research, maintaining “an experimental disposition” necessitated a calibre of reflection that could tolerate high levels of ambiguity. The questions that arose because of the shifting nature of the novel’s structure required an openness to and acceptance of change. If decisions about the narrative were closed down too early then levels and layers of polysemy might be closed down prematurely as well. Designing a project that spans thirty years necessitated considered reflection about the gaps in the story as well as the nature of the artefacts’ physical form and material condition.

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## REFLECTION IN AND ON ACTION

Schön’s (1983) notion of reflection-in-and-on-action informs processes of reflection in which I engaged whilst developing *No Such Luck*. He suggests reflection often occurs while the practitioner is in the midst of practice. He says,

If common sense recognizes knowing-in-action,<sup>14</sup> it also recognizes that we sometimes think about what we are doing. Phrases like “thinking on your feet,” “keeping your wits about you,” and “learning by doing” suggest not only that we can think about doing but that we can think about doing something while doing it. (p. 54)

In other words, the practice of reflection may take place while one is immersed in the act of creating. Yet it is not limited to only the creative ‘making’ space itself. It is also necessary to step back from the research and reflect upon it more deliberately, what Schön (1983) labels reflecting-on-action. This distinction implies a considered review, usually separated by a longer period of time, although his distinction between reflection-in and on-action may be regarded as ambiguous.<sup>14</sup> He admits that there may be situations in which reflection-in-action extends over a greater timespan and that the length of time varies depending on the activity and context.

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<sup>14</sup> Schön (1983) defines knowing-in-action as “a kind of knowing that does not stem from a prior intellectual operation” (p. 51). Gray and Malins (2004) states that this type of knowing is dynamic, a “knowing how rather than knowing what” (p. 22).

Yanow & Tsoukas's (2009) discussion of reflection provides a more nuanced account of the process I undertook during my research. They resolve the confusion between reflection-in and on-action, placing them at opposite ends of a reflective practice continuum. The difference between them is judged by the degree of disturbance (what Schön terms surprise) that the practitioner encounters when confronting a problem. Their interpretation of reflection offers an explanation for the range of responses I implemented when surprised while creating *No Such Luck*.

#### A PHENOMENOLOGICAL APPROACH TO REFLECTION-IN-ACTION

Yanow and Tsoukas (2009) summarise Schön's approach to reflection-in-action as consisting of four aspects:

- » routinized action
- » encounter of surprise
- » reflection
- » and new action.

They critique, however, the cognitivist traces in Schön's treatment of reflection:

Yet despite his emphasis on practice and experience, Schön's work is bounded by a certain cognitivist orientation...he nonetheless clings to the notion that actors come to know the world primarily through thinking about it, converting experiences into mental maps of an outside world. The role of such representations of external realities is the hallmark of cognitivism. (p. 1343)

Taking a Heideggerian phenomenological approach, Yanow and Tsoukas (2009) contend that such a cognitive stance ignores the manner in which practitioners are embedded in their practice and how they experience the world by being absorbed in it. They call for a model of reflection that transcends cognition as the sole basis for human response in practice. Such a model allows for improvised reactions that may spring from non-rational sources and are influenced by the rules of practice the individual has absorbed from her community of practice.<sup>16</sup>

#### A focus on surprise

Schön (1983) states that surprise is a reaction to a situation that has fallen outside the practitioner's ordinary range of expectation. He says,

The practitioner allows himself to experience surprise, puzzlement, or confusion in a situation which he finds uncertain or unique. He reflects on the phenomena before him, and on the prior understandings which have been implicit in his behavior. He carries out an experiment which serves to generate both a new understanding of the phenomena and a change in the situation. (p. 68)

However, Yanow and Tsoukas (2009) argue that his definition is incomplete and expand it by suggesting that reflection-in-action is spurred by surprise that originates from the materials of practice that lead the practitioner to improvise as a response to the surprise. To them, surprise is delineated by the degree of awareness (or disturbance) it provokes in the practitioner. In this regard, they reference Heidegger's concepts of 'malfunction', 'temporary breakdown', and 'total breakdown'.



FIGURE 5.2

*Examples from the photographic database. Keeping digital files of common objects, landscapes, and interior and exterior settings assisted in scene descriptions. Pausing to search for and reflect on possible choices caused temporary breakdowns in my focus on writing the text.*

16 Rather than adhering to Schon's (1983) view that improvisation is an on-the-spot occurrence generated by the individual, Yanow and Tsoukas (2009) contend that improvisation relies on training absorbed in some form of collective or group; a community of practice. Improvisation as experienced by the practitioner features an engagement in the moment with the materials at hand: "The practitioner reflecting-in-action is focused on what he or she is in the midst of doing, much as improv actors are in 'dialogue', in the moment, with the available tools and materials . . . and the surprises these generate" (p. 1346).

17 Yanow and Tsoukas (2009) offer an example of a temporary breakdown that shifts from deliberate coping to involved deliberation. An individual searches for her reading glasses. Initially, the glasses are part of her subsidiary awareness. Her focal awareness is on a task that has completely absorbed her attention. She reaches for her glasses, but not automatically finding them in their usual place, must pay greater attention to the search. However, as the authors note, the search takes place amidst the individual's absorption in the task at hand.

### Malfunction and temporary breakdown

Malfunctions may be seen as momentarily startling, but the practitioner is able to almost immediately adjust and resume the present activity. On the other hand, temporary breakdowns, Yanow and Tsoukas (2009) suggest, mark "the beginnings of a detached intentionality" (p. 1352). Responding to them requires more considered reactions. They may be either 'deliberate coping' or 'involved deliberation'. The difference between the two is a matter of degree rather than kind. Deliberate coping requires the practitioner to pay attention to the task at hand. In this process, what might have been subsidiary to awareness becomes the focal point of attention. Involved deliberation requires an even greater shift in focus.<sup>17</sup>

My experience of temporary breakdowns while writing the novella, *Came Tumbling After*, consisted of pausing from writing in order to use a dictionary or thesaurus, restructuring paragraphs, conducting online searches for background detail, or accessing the digital database of photographs I kept on my computer to aid in the composition of scene setting. Figure 5.2 shows photographs from the database that helped me describe Nosuch Luck's property in an early draft of the novella:

On a crisp winter morning Nosuch Luck's house appeared ordinary to Jill Beth, not at all an epicenter for 'the creeps'. A ragged row of spider plants in hand-painted pots sat on a row of weathered bricks beside the front door.

While still focused on the writing, the photographs demanded my attention; I shifted my focal awareness to include an appreciation of their detail. Yet my attention may be more accurately described as divided. I alternated between conducting trial and error experiments involving devising the correct wording and looking at the photographs to glean more details.

### Total breakdown

Yanow and Tsoukas (2009) stress that the practitioner's ability to remain immersed in the task at hand when encountering a malfunction or temporary breakdown ceases in the face of total breakdown. Rather than being absorbed in the flow of practice, total breakdown requires the adoption of an analytic attitude instead of a practical one. The practitioner must step back and examine the problem's individual components in an attempt to make sense of the problem. Such an approach more closely resembles the notion of Schön's reflection-on-action, with its emphasis on retrospection. Or, as Yanow and Tsoukas (2009) describe it, a total breakdown "instantiates a separation, in time and space, between two spheres of activity" (p. 1360). The practitioner is separated from the flow of creative endeavour and is keenly aware of the task of problem-solving.

### Resolving an incident of total breakdown through analytic reflection

Total breakdowns while writing *Came Tumbling After* required that I step away from the text and contemplate changes to it that I couldn't resolve whilst in the ordinary process of writing. These tended to be larger, structural problems that involved the plot of or concerned the relationship of the novella to the larger polysemous novel.

Early in the the writing of *Came Tumbling After*, I needed to dramatise the protagonist Jill Beth Sorenson's decision to travel home to investigate the disinterment of Aurelia Gordon's body. Such a major decision required a significant catalyst. I therefore invented the character Sam Tressler who rang her to give her the news. To convey the drama of the event, this new character needed a strong motivation for enlisting Jill Beth's help.

It was Sam who contacted me. I didn't recognize his voice when I picked up the phone at the newspaper on that rainy morning late in March . . . . It took a minute for my ear to recalibrate before I could strip away the distress from his tone. The bodies are coming up out of the ground, Jill Beth. You've got to do something.

He spoke as if we were continuing an exchange interrupted by no more than twenty minutes rather than twenty years. I last talked to Sam on the night Aurelia died. Afterward, we avoided each other with the studious meticulousness of the guilty. (Williams, 2010g, p. 11)

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Guilt, as Jill Beth recognized, spurred his phone call. To make his reason for phoning plausible, and to explain the degree of his distress, I needed to make him as culpable as Jill Beth. Yet, now I was left with the problem of how to embed him in the novella's narrative. He could not remain merely a minor character who disappeared after he served the purpose of moving the plot forward.

To work out his place in the novella, I engaged in analytic reflection while I developed the plot. Periodically, I separated myself from the world of the story and took notes in an online journal in which I broke down his character into its component parts. The intent of such scrutiny was to spur my imagination, giving it fodder for plot development.

Who is Jeff?<sup>18</sup> Is he happy? I've thought of him a 100 different ways. They all seem like stereotypes. The drunk, the insurance salesman, the teacher, the happy family man. Divorced. Single, loser, what has he made of his life . . . . JB [Jill Beth] went forward and stuck up for the little guy. Jeff retreated – gave up what he loved, couldn't see himself going on in tennis. Punishing himself. Became a dentist. Stayed inside, punishing himself. Day by day – in the little room, inside.

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The reflection continued over months as the plot developed. I returned to the musings in my journal, adding to them until I had fitted Sam Tressler into the narrative as a plausible character who regretted his involvement in Aurelia Gordon's death. His humiliation at the hands of his father in front of his friends at a bar causes him to blurt out that Aurelia is pregnant by a black man. His revelation, which contributes to her murder, leaves him with a guilty conscience that explains his extreme distress over her disinterment twenty years later.

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18 Sam Tressler's original name in the novella was Jeff Thompson.

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PROTOCOL 4

SEEKING FEEDBACK TO ASCERTAIN  
THE INTEGRITY OF THE PROJECT

“Now before we eat, you must compare the two,” the vagabond said, “to see if both pots of soup are as good as each other. If not, I will try again until I get them just right.”

However, both mother and son agreed that except for a needing a few more carrots the soup in the second pot tasted as good as that in the first. Immediately the vagabond added the carrots and finally, the three of them sat down to eat.

A literal interpretation of this protocol would be to say that the proof of the pudding is in the eating. The vagabond recognises that the validity of his research process will be evaluated to a great extent by the quality of his finished product. How then does he ascertain the integrity of his endeavour? To help answer this question he solicits feedback from the farm

wife and her son who in this situation are reliable judges. He listens to their critique and makes adjustments, considering them in light of his own subjective judgement informed by his expertise as a soup-maker.

It must be reiterated that the “truth” the vagabond seeks is neither eternal nor fixed but limited and contextual. Ings (in press) states that designers understand that there are usually many ways to resolve a given problem and that they “generally seek successful solutions rather than ‘correct’ answers.” By extension, Wood (2000) suggests that designers, in solving problems, are not attempting to prove defined truths. Rather, they are reacting within a context that requires informed judgements to situations that seldom manifest stable or certain answers to significant questions.

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## THE VALUE OF EXTERNAL FEEDBACK AND CRITIQUE

Given the complexity of this research that included designing texts and producing physical artefacts that ranged across different fictional formats, soliciting feedback was an essential part of the creative process. It facilitated the internal coherence of the assembled narrative and allowed for the surfacing of issues regarding consistency, structure, and continuity. It also provided a balance to the perspective I contributed to the research.

Gray and Malins (2004) suggest that insider knowledge such as that which I brought to the project may enhance its credibility and establish the trustworthiness of the research. However, the authors suggest being an insider also has its disadvantages. Preconceptions and the inability to maintain an open mind may influence results. To counter these limitations, they suggest soliciting support, feedback, and advice from other professionals. “In seeking the views of others, which will inevitably be subjective, we can develop inter-subjective views, which are less likely to be one-sided” (p. 23). They add, however, that “keeping a critical view of your research at all times is essential” (p. 23).

In essence, just rigorously applying the research methods used in protocols 1-3 may not have been enough to guarantee the quality of *No Such Luck*. The inclusion of feedback by those capable of judging was a necessary check-and-balance intended to strengthen the final outcome. It was intended to counteract any tunnel vision and blind spots that arose from an intense engagement with the work. As Ings (in press) notes, “Without some form of external feedback, purely self-referenced processes can result in designs that fail to explore a wealth of available options or fall short of their communicative potential.” Such interaction with peers, supervisors and other professionals allowed for the opportunity to re-evaluate the work in the context of their critique.

The use of external critique permeated all phases of the research. Drafts of *No Such Luck* were developed in conjunction with the author Tina Shaw who served as script editor. Feedback concerning early drafts of its structure was offered by my supervisor, Dr. Welby Ings, during sessions in which we brainstormed timelines, plot points, and character development. He also acted as an advisor concerning the graphic design of the newspaper, the *Munnville Star-Post*, making type and image suggestions to more clearly establish the paper as a product of the 1970s. Graphic designer Tatiana Tavares acted as a consultant on the novella, *Came Tumbling After*, offering recommendations for its design and layout.

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A draft of *No Such Luck* was circulated amongst a group of readers with post-graduate educations (including two individuals with PhDs and an associate professor of law) selected for their knowledge of fiction, and their ability to offer a considered analysis. Changes they suggested prompted narrative and character revisions to enhance clarity across the different media forms as well as technical changes to the audio and videotapes.

Early drafts of the research were presented (and critiques solicited) at several conferences including the 2009 *Art. Media. Design Writing Intersections* conference in Melbourne, Australia and the 2010 *New Zealand Women's Studies Association Conference*. A paper based on aspects of the research design was included in the Proceedings of the 2010 *New Zealand Women's Studies Association Conference*. Dr. Frances Nelson provided insightful feedback on the critical framework. Personal communications with scholars Stephen Scrivener and Theo van Leeuwen influenced the development of ideas central to this research.

## Conclusion

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The construction of this project's research design has been shaped by two significant perspectives. Because the undertaking is situated as creative practice (as design) the inquiry does not seek to pursue objective truth that might be validated by an external authority. Also, the creative practice research responds to emergent creative and technical issues as they arise, necessitating the use of a flexible research framework rather than a methodology that relies on pre-determined, set methods.

The power of narrative to convey meaning provides the link between the creative aspect of this project (the production of a polysemous novel) and the description of the system of inquiry. The use of the folktale, *Stone Soup*, draws upon the ability of metaphor to convey ideas, invoking storytelling as a device to complement analysis. *Stone Soup* tells the story of the four protocols that inform the methods used.

The protocols ensure the internal consistency and coherence of *No Such Luck* while also offering an opportunity for feedback from knowledgeable supervisors, colleagues, and peers. The first protocol takes into consideration the practitioner's knowledge built up through a repertoire of experience and tacit knowledge. Tacit knowledge includes the subjective insights, intuitions, hunches, and other difficult-to-articulate ways of knowing that inform the practitioner's approach to the research.

The second protocol considers the concept of collaboration. Collaboration, which may have its origins in a pragmatic desire to accomplish a goal, offers many benefits to the researcher.

It may result in a more compelling artistic vision, promote a deeper level of discourse and analysis, foster risk taking, and expand the possible.

The third protocol, which centres on reflection, focuses on the degree of disturbance (surprise) the practitioner encounters when confronting a problem. Malfunctions are responded to without breaking the flow of practice while temporary breakdowns require more attention, moving the problem from subsidiary to focal awareness. Total breakdowns force the practitioner to confront its individual components in an attempt to resolve the problem.

Finally, the fourth protocol stresses the need for external evaluation. The practitioner possesses insider knowledge and experience that contributes to the efficacy of the project. However, preconceptions, particular points-of-view or creative blind spots may truncate the development of the research. Calling upon the expertise of others introduces different perspectives that may enhance the project's creative outcomes.

In summary, the research design for this creative production PhD project attempts to place the evolution of the artefact at the centre of the process. Making and the discovery that ensues proceed in tandem supported by a flexible system of inquiry.

Having explained the research design, an investigation into its application in the next chapter will be useful for disclosing how the polysemous project took physical form.



C H A P T E R

6

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C o m m e n t a r y



## Introduction

As a work of fiction, *No Such Luck* is a fabrication. As it is a designed polysemous novel, the fabrication extends beyond written language to include material form. This commentary recounts a number of deliberate processes used to transform what were creations of modern, digital technology into artefacts meant to simulate old media.

<sup>1</sup> The *Lakeland Ledger* is the daily newspaper for Lakeland, Florida. During my childhood in the 1960s-70s, Lakeland was a town of approximately 30,000 people. The *Ledger*, a broadsheet, averaged 32-64 pages and was typical for small town newspapers in its mixture of local, state, and national news coverage. It was owned by the New York Times Media Company.

<sup>2</sup> Kerning refers to the fine adjustment of space between individual characters in a line of writing. The aim of kerning is to visually equalise spaces between letters so that the eye moves easily along the text. Leading refers to the amount of space created between lines of text. Closer leading fits more text on a page, but decreases legibility.

## Designing the newspaper clippings

One of the media forms used to construct the novel is the newspaper clipping. These clippings appear as news articles from the *Munnville Star-Post* and the *Atlanta Afro News-Leader* (as a photocopy). These papers represent the respective voices of a white smalltown newspaper from the 1970s, and a black broadsheet from the same era. The fictitious *Star-Post* was modelled on my hometown paper, the *Lakeland (Florida) Ledger* as it appeared during this period (figure 6.1).<sup>1</sup>



FIGURE 6.1

*Comparison of The Lakeland Ledger (left) and The Munnville Star-Post (right) newspapers. The fictitious Star-Post was designed to simulate the modified column format popular with regional US newspapers in the mid 1970s. In the pursuit of a slightly more conservative aesthetic I have employed a higher level of standardisation in terms of font differentiation, leading, kerning,<sup>2</sup> and layout.*

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DESIGNING THE  
MUNNVILLE STAR-POST

While my experience as a journalist had given me a solid foundation in composing news stories, I wanted to gain a deeper understanding of how a smalltown Southern newspaper might report the murder of a white young woman allegedly committed by an African-American man.

In particular, I was interested in uncovering how crime and African-Americans were reported in the *Lakeland Ledger* in the 1970s. My experience growing up in the South led me to believe that I would confirm what I knew intuitively, that journalistic racism existed in this period.

Before undertaking a close reading of articles from the time, I gathered information to help me interpret the structure, tone, and slant of the news stories I read. I focused on research that would help me interpret how crime was reported in the news at the macro story-structure level and in relation to syntactical or sentence structure.

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## HOW CRIME IS REPORTED IN THE NEWS

Sacco (2006) states that news reporting distorts the relationship between crime and legal control. Law enforcement agencies are depicted as more effective in controlling crime than data suggests; the police are cast as the central actors while other branches of the criminal justice system are generally less visible. Criminal events are considered most worthy of reporting soon after they occur. The crime narrative is shaped by the demands of news production, such as periodicity, and the police serve as credible and easily accessed sources. Sacco (2006) says,

News stories are most useful to news organizations when they are gathered easily from credible sources; for this reason, policing agencies have become the principal suppliers of these stories. In short, relationships involving news organizations and policing agencies allow the collection of news about common crime to be routinized in a manner that uses the resources of news agencies efficiently. In addition, the public view of the police as apolitical crime experts imbues police-generated crime news with authority and objectivity. (p. 30)

Richardson (2007) suggests that the need for objectivity in reporting has led journalists to rely on the voices of the establishment (such as the police), and these are interpreted as authoritative sources. Newspaper discourse is shaped by those powerful and organised enough to elicit media attention.

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A survey of *Ledger* articles of the period confirmed a prevalence of crime stories that focused on police involvement. Often the law enforcement personnel quoted were the primary, and many times the only, news sources referenced: (“Murder, abduction”, 1975); (Bachrach, 1977); (Betz, 1977); (Herring, 1977); (Hylton, 1972); (Ledger Staff, 1975a); (Ledger Staff, 1975b); (Oldt, 1976); (Roth, 1978); (Weiss 1978a); (Weiss 1978b); (Weiss 1978c).

Usually the article’s lead established the authority and objectivity of the account by including a reference to law enforcement.

### Arson Suspected In 6 Fires; 1 Arrested

There have been six fires in the past five nights on North Lake Reedy Drive and firemen and sheriff’s investigators here suspect arson in all six cases (Betz, 1977, p. 2B).

### Ski-Mask Escapee Marshall Still At Large

Larry Marshall, 18, a member of the notorious ski-mask gang, which terrorized central Florida for a 10-month period, is still at large after escaping from the Lake County Jail with another man Tuesday night.

“No further word has been received from law enforcement officials involved in the search for the two men,” a Lake County Sheriff’s Department spokesman said (Herring, 1977, p. 3A).

### Sheriff Calls for Citizen Help in Manhunt for Clever Rapist

Polk County Sheriff Louie Mims is asking residents east of Lake Parker and north of U.S. 92 to help track down a clever rapist who has attacked 10 women in the area since August 1975 (Weiss, 1978a, 2B).

I used this strategy in my fictional article series, positioning Doak County Sheriff Melvyn Wright and his staff as the authoritative sources for news about the murder of Aurelia (Reely) Gordon and the pursuit of her alleged killer Nosuch Luck. (In articles regarding the fire in which Aurelia Gordon's body was discovered, I substituted fire officials as authorities).<sup>2</sup> For example, in the article, "Girl's Death Sign of Fresh Ski Mask Terror?" (Williams, 2010a) I led with a reference to the Sheriff's Office:

Last night the Doak County Sheriff's Office issued an all-points bulletin to area law enforcement agencies for the apprehension of Henry Louis 'Nosuch' Luck. Described in the bulletin as a 55 year-old black male, he is between 5-foot-10 and 5-foot-11 and weighs between 160 and 170 pounds. He was last seen driving a yellow 1969 Ford pick-up. He is armed and considered dangerous (n.p.).

In the article titled, "Child of Prominent Doctor Named as Murder Victim on North Side" (Williams, 2010b) Sheriff Wright is the sole source for information about how Dr. Andrew Gordon learned of and responded to his daughter's death. The reader receives the information second-hand; Dr. Gordon's actions are filtered through the sheriff's recounting of the events.

Sheriff Wright said they discovered Miss Gordon's identity when he received a call at home from Dr. Gordon last night. Dr. Gordon became worried when his daughter did not return from visiting friends. He contacted several of her schoolmates but no one had any idea about her whereabouts, Wright said (n.p.).

The examples noted here were also designed to reflect at the syntactical level how power and authority were positioned in the newspaper articles I studied. Fowler (1991) notes that the placement of persons as subjects or objects in sentences reveals their relationship to power. He says, "Characteristically, people with authority are treated as subjects (semantically, agents), while those with less power occur as objects" (p. 98). Similarly, status may be conferred by verb usage, with the powerful being active 'makers' of the world, while the disfavoured are "likely to be associated with pejorative or at least low-status verbs and adjectives" (p. 98).

<sup>2</sup> Druckenmiller (1978) and Ledger Staff (1978) provide relevant examples.

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In my writing I chose sentence constructions that positioned law enforcement personnel and other authorities as agents who acted eg. the Sheriff's Office issued an all-points bulletin. Sheriff Wright, discovered Miss Gordon's identity (although in fact a more accurate statement would have placed him in the less powerful object position: Dr. Gordon told Sheriff Wright; or, even less powerful, a passive construction: Sheriff Wright was told by Dr. Gordon.) Conversely, low-status individuals were depicted as being acted upon through passive sentence construction, and verb choice reflected their lack of power.

Luck was to be transported back to Doak County to face charges he murdered Aurelia Jane Gordon, 17. He was accused of shooting her in his home and then attempting to cover up the crime by setting fire to his house and fleeing (Williams, 2010c).

---

#### MANIFESTING RACISM

Two series of articles in the *Ledger* stood out for their racist subtext. Both centred on crime and highlighted the racial tension between whites and African-Americans. The first concerned a series of robberies and assaults carried out by the ski-mask gang, a group of African-American young men who invaded the homes of rural whites over a ten-month period in 1975-76. The second involved a white male teacher who was accused by an African-American girl of rape. Outrage that her word was enough to have him arrested was a theme in the series. I used these articles to shape my reporting style and incorporated some of their narrative elements into my fictional account of Aurelia Gordon's murder.

For example, African-Americans are othered in the headline, "Teacher Rape Charge: Blacks Cast Doubt on Dismissal" (Thompson, 1977). In the article itself, the crowd that gathered to protest the dismissal of charges is described as 'black citizens' and referred to later simply as 'blacks'. White authorities are given names and titles, eg., School Superintendent Homer Addair, or Gene Lyons, Supervisor of Pupil Accounting. The lone African-American referred to by name is given a descriptor, "NAACP member Otis Williams", rather than placed in context according to title and occupation.

Richardson (2007) argues that the names applied in news discourse shape the way in which people are viewed. "We all simultaneously possess a range of identities, roles and characteristics that could be used to describe us equally *accurately* but not with the same *meaning*" (p. 49). The contrast in naming of African-Americans and white people

in this article hints at a bias that privileges white authority. I repeated such bias in the article titled “Blacks Agitate Over Investigation” (Williams, 2010d) using the designation black citizens and only using a low-level descriptor, committee member, for the NAACP representative. White sources are given names and titles.

Similarly, Herring (1977) writes that the ski-mask gang members were “notorious”, carried out “terrorist attacks” and were “taking part in raids” (p. 3A). In contrast, in an article about the town where one of the ski-mask gang members was held in jail after an escape, a *Ledger* article describes the white residents as “rural, ‘down home’ Alabama people who farm peanuts, some corn and harvest a little lumber. It is also Gov. George Wallace’s county and its citizens, like their leader, believe in law and order” (Engh, 1977, p. 1A).

I adapted sections from this article for use in the fictitious, “Luck Runs Out For Fugitive in Alabama,” (Williams, 2010e) juxtaposing the town’s predilection for law and order with the “belligerent” inmate believed to be the fugitive Henry Luck. I used a similar approach in the article, “Girl’s Death Sign of Fresh Ski Mask Terror?” (Williams, 2010a). The purpose of the article was to reference the racist sentiments expressed in such articles as the *Ledger*’s ski-mask gang series. Common to both narratives is the theme of African-American men preying upon innocent white citizens.

3 The inverted pyramid refers to the tradition in objective print journalism of putting the most significant and recent information first in a news story and then filling in with less relevant detail as the story continues. Doing so allows for quick and easy cutting of material from the bottom of the story when space is at a premium.

# INCORPORATION OF AN AFRICAN-AMERICAN NEWSPAPER INTO NO SUCH LUCK

*The Negro reporter is a fighting partisan.  
He has an enemy. That enemy is the enemy of his people.  
(Percival Prattis, the executive editor of the Pittsburgh  
Courier, as cited in Washburn, 2006, p. 9).*

Recognising the potential for providing *No Such Luck* with a different perspective than one afforded by the white press, I studied African-American newspapers from the 1970s (figure 6.2). The intent was to create an article in the fictitious *Atlanta Afro News-Leader* that referenced the partisan style popular in some African-American news stories. Harris’s (1977) article “Water shortage may cost city: Official singing ‘I Wish it Would Rain’” offers an example. The author laces a report of Baltimore’s looming water shortage with commentary that injects a singular point of view into what could have been a straightforward recitation of facts and statistics. Harris’s lead forsakes the traditional inverted pyramid<sup>3</sup> advocated for news stories and adopts a more lyrical approach:

In bygone days, Motown’s tall, talented Temptations rode high singing the sorrowful my-girl-has-gone classic “I Wish It Would Rain.”

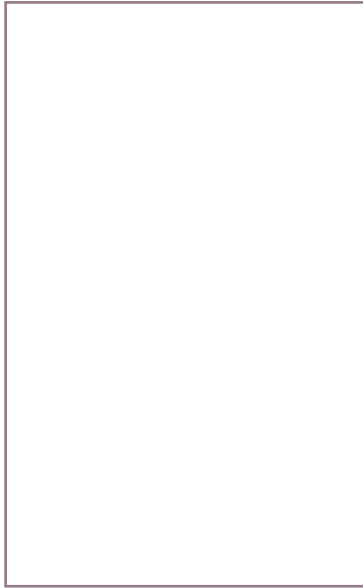


FIGURE 6.2

*The Baltimore Afro-American. Indicative African-American newspaper from the mid-1970s, used as a model for the eventual design.*

These days, motivated by a longing of a different color, Baltimore city water officials are humming that same melody. And apparently for good reason: the city's three reservoirs are suffering from the water blues after two years of below-average rainfall. (p. 6)

Later in the article, the author describes the potential for low spring rainfall as an occasion when "the rain pulls up lame" (p. 6). He describes Baltimore's Water Supply Division chief Kretzschmar as at turns "sober" and "confident" and notes that "this latest chapter of Baltimore's water story is just starting" (p. 6).

In the article I wrote, "Relatives Won't Cancel Memorial Service for War Veteran Shot Dead by Police" (Williams, 2010f), I attempted to emulate this style by injecting a specific, sympathetic tone into the story. There is no attempt to distance the author behind a screen of objectivity. My intent was to underscore the bias in the white news articles that documented Aurelia Gordon's murder by asserting that Nosuch Luck was an innocent man. The article also reveals a significant plot point not included in the *Munnville Star-Post*.<sup>4</sup> Nosuch Luck's body, which was to be shipped back from Alabama where he was killed, never arrived home.

<sup>4</sup> I intended the white press's silence on the matter of Nosuch's missing body to speak loudly about its news priorities. The paper may have been covering up the fact that law enforcement officials knew the dead man was not Nosuch.

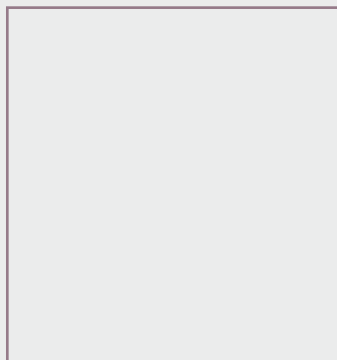


FIGURE 6.3

Hand-drawn and simulated hand-drawn marks in newspapers. This figure compares marks created by hand in the Lakeland Ledger in the mid 1970s (top) and those digitally reproduced in the Munnville Star-Post (bottom). These marks are the signs of the manual nature of newspaper construction. Newspapers like the Lakeland Ledger were laid up using typeset material, photographs, and illustrated material. This content was cut up and glued onto blue lined layout boards. In this process often trim marks, registration marks, and glue stains inadvertently remained and appeared in the final offset print.

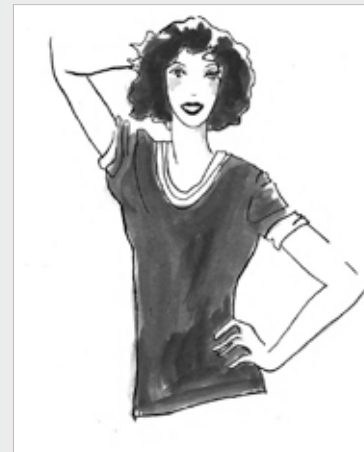
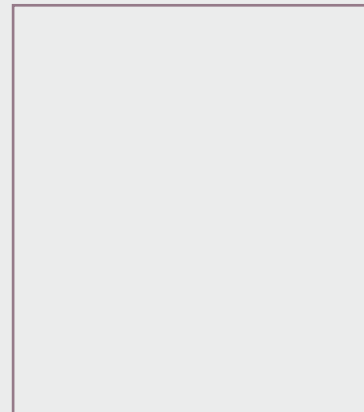


FIGURE 6.4

Signifiers of the 1970s. Hand rendered illustrations (usually for clothing store advertisements) were common features of the Lakeland Ledger (bottom) on page 2 during the mid 1970s. The introduction of images that referenced this era helped to reinforce the period authenticity of the Munnville Star-Post (top).



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## GRAPHIC DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS: LAYOUT AND IMAGE REPRODUCTION

When approaching the design of the *Munnville Star-Post*, I assumed that the availability of desktop publishing software would make it easy to replicate a newspaper from the mid-1970s. However, the propensity for digital design software to eliminate imperfections made manifest by the human hand required that I re-introduce imperfections and idiosyncrasies characteristic of publications produced before the widespread implementation of desktop publishing (figure 6.3, opposite page).

Accordingly, I experimented with making uneven and broken lines, gaps, random ink blotches and off-kilter text, apparent in the *Ledger* during 1975-1978. Experiments involving hand-drawn elements that were scanned into the computer proved unsuccessful. They retained a bitmapped look usually associated with digital design.

In designing the *Munnville Star-Post* as an indicative mid-1970s publication, I incorporated and designed ads that signified the era (figure 6.4, opposite page). These were adapted from actual newspaper advertisements or composed in the style of the period and inserted into the layout.

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### Image reproduction

Before the implementation of desktop publishing, halftone screens<sup>5</sup> were used to simulate continuous tone imagery in publications such as newspapers. The advent of digital design made them superfluous. However, for authenticity in the news clippings it was necessary to reproduce not only the halftone screens but also the often coarse variations in their texture. Accordingly, it was necessary to manipulate the size of the halftone pattern filter across a variety of elements and where necessary introduce additional texture via film grain filters (figure 6.5).



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FIGURE 6.5

*Simulating halftone screen variations. Examples from a series of experiments that manipulated dot pattern and film grain in order to simulate the halftone screens common in newspapers during the mid 1970s. The distinctive coarseness in the final newspaper prints is a feature of this period that was to be replaced by the late 1970s with more refined technological solutions.*

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5 Halftone screens use a series of dots to simulate a continuous image such as a photograph and were produced using contact screens precisely placed on unexposed film.

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## INTRODUCING WEAR AND TEAR TO THE PRINTED NEWS CLIPPINGS

The signature feature of old newspapers is their yellowed appearance. No matter how authentic the design of the newspaper clippings, if they do not look old, they fail to signify the intended era (figure 6.6). Fortunately, it is easy to age newsprint, which contains a high lignin content as well as cellulose, which is more often associated with paper production. Lignin, when exposed to air and sunlight, become less stable and the lignin darkens, turning the paper yellow. In contrast, higher quality white papers are put through a chemical process which separates out the lignin, therefore arresting the change in colour.

I placed the clippings in the sun for varying amounts of time. This provided a more authentic result than applying tinted dyes to them. With light damage the texture of the paper breaks down and the paper becomes recognisably brittle.



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FIGURE 6.6

*Aged newspaper clippings. Using offset printing technology, the newspaper clippings were printed together on single A2 sheets of newsprint and then cut up into their separate stories. To suggest the absent owner of the clippings, I was slightly haphazard in my cutting style and in some instances tore them. The intent was to emulate the casual way in which people often remove articles from newspapers.*

*Offset printing involves the transfer of an inked (offset) image from a plate to a rubber blanket and then to the paper or other printing surface. Not only did using an offset printer allow me to achieve double-sided prints, it also permitted the use of inks that would break down on the newsprint in authentic ways.*

The audio interview: Designing Miss Naomi’s Interview

In designing this artefact, I collaborated with Berlinda Tolbert, an actress based in Los Angeles. Berlinda served as co-author of *Miss Naomi’s Interview* and also acted the part of Naomi Mays. Our 18-month collaboration was carried out over the phone and via the Internet. She brought to the project more than forty years of experience acting in film, television, and theatre as well as her personal experience growing up as an African-American in a racially segregated city in the South. In our collaboration, Berlinda was able to draw upon memories that spanned pre and post-Civil Rights-era America and utilise the speech patterns, accent, turns-of-phrase, and colloquialisms familiar to her from childhood.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO REFLECTION

At first I envisaged that Berlinda’s role would be limited to assisting in adapting the language of the script to fit the requirements of the character. She would suggest changes that reflected the word choice and speech patterns of an African-American woman of modest education raised in the South. However, I quickly learned from our discussions about the limitations of my narrative. I wrote for the eye and the internalised voice. Berlinda, because of her experience as an actress and her knowledge of how to shape character for public performance, was aware of the requirements necessary for an audio production.

Her probing questions and requests for director’s notes on her performance of the evolving script prompted my engagement with the character of Naomi Mays on a more critical level.

EXAMPLES OF ADAPTATIONS TO THE SCRIPT

Table 6.1 juxtaposes a segment of the original print version of the script to the final recorded version. The comparison makes manifest differences in the core areas of characterisation and structure.

TABLE 6.1

ORIGINAL SCRIPT	RECORDED SCRIPT
IT WAS SEPTEMBER. I REMEMBER EXACTLY BECAUSE MAMA HAD JUST GIVEN BIRTH TO MY BABY BROTHER, HECTOR, AND THAT’S WHY I HAD TO GO WORK FOR MIZ ALLEN – TO TAKE HER PLACE WHILE SHE STAYED HOME AND NURSED HIM. HE WAS SO PUNY AND DOING POORLY. I WASN’T BUT THIRTEEN YEARS OLD. AND I WAS LITTLE – SCRAWNY LIKE A TEN YEAR OLD, MAYBE.  (WILLIAMS, 2008).	NAOMI: Well, now...I was just a scrawny little thing. In fact as child I thought my first name was scrawny, my middle name was little and my last name was thing. I was called “scrawny little thing” so much I thought that was my birth-given name. Now that’s the truth. But my whole... I mean, my real name is Mary Naomi Mays.  You want me just keep on talking?  Interviewer: Yeah, just tell me about yourself.  (TOLBERT & WILLIAMS, 2009).

In this comparison one may note how the audience is introduced to the child Naomi. The recorded version has been restructured to conjure a vivid image of her physical presence in the listener's mind, which adheres to principles of effective radio drama.<sup>6</sup> "As it is impossible to see any radio character before they speak, it is very helpful to have immediate identification by sex, accent or age (McInerney, 2001, p. 122). The adult Naomi faces the additional task of giving life to her childhood self who is not present as a speaker and therefore not recognisable as a voice in the drama. Berlinda emphasises her size, which promotes sympathy for the child Naomi, the "scrawny little thing" who must do the work of an adult and who later suffers at the hand of Mr. Allen.

The recorded script adds an interviewer in order to frame the story. Naomi has someone to react to, rather than just speaking as if into a void. The interviewer stands in for us, the audience. We are aligned with him as we are drawn into Naomi's story, and, as the tragedy of her experience unfolds, he responds to the pathos of her tale in a manner that underlines her dignity.

## THE INCITING INCIDENT AND MAJOR DRAMATIC QUESTION

Although she does not have experience as a screenplay writer, Berlinda (perhaps because of her work as an actress) intuitively knew to adapt a screenplay writing technique to *Miss Naomi's Interview*. She added an inciting incident to the story. According to (McKee, 1999) the inciting incident arouses the audience's curiosity and commits them to seeing the action through to the end. In this instance, it concerns a statement made slightly later in the recorded script about Betty Allen's influence on her life, and it foreshadows the brutality that follows.

Yeah, just at the tender young age of thirteen, Betty Luck Allen stole my childhood, forced me into a nightmare that I was unable to wake from for most of my life (Tolbert and Williams, 2009, p. 4).

As with the inciting incident, Berlinda created the obligatory scene that McKee (1999) suggests is "an event the audience knows it must see before the story can end" (p. 198). In this work it is the revelation that it is Betty Allen and not Naomi who is responsible for the disappearance of the silver salad fork. Betty appears in the yard after Naomi's finger has been chopped off. She holds in her hand the missing fork, which marks the climax of the story.

<sup>6</sup> While *Miss Naomi's Interview* was not created as a radio drama, the principles of writing for the ear that inform radio productions were influential in its development.

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## REPRODUCING THE AUDIO INTERVIEW

In a similar manner to the work involved in reproducing the newspaper, the audio interview required research and experimentation in order to discover the best means for retrofitting digital files to old media. Equipment or software for converting analogue signals into digital files is readily available. Finding equipment that works the other way requires more of a search. However, for the audiotape, once the piece of equipment was located, (the Sony TC-FX 211 stereo cassette deck) the conversion to an analogue signal was straightforward. What proved more difficult was finding cassette tape shells that matched the look of those produced in the 1970s (figure 6.7).



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FIGURE 6.7

*Comparison of cassette tape shells. In contrast to clear shells that became more indicative of 1990s recordings, black and white shells (bottom) were common in the 1970s and 1980s.*

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## PRODUCING THE SOUNDS OF WEAR AND TEAR

*Miss Naomi's Interview* was originally produced as a digital recording in a sound studio in Los Angeles. As such, the sound reflected none of the degradation that might be expected from a cassette tape dating from 1972. To introduce wear and tear, I first worked with Marshall Smith, a sound designer and engineer affiliated with The Sound Room in Auckland. We applied sound effects to mimic the scratchiness of an old tape. Yet the effect made it difficult to understand Naomi, especially for a non-American audience not used to her accent.

However, I discovered that merely downloading the digital file to the analogue cassette tapes resulted in a decay in quality. It helped achieve the worn sound I was after without compromising the clarity of Naomi's voice.

To further enhance the scratchy quality of the tape (and to solve the problem of using cassette shells that matched those from the 1970s era) I recorded over used tapes. However, even after I taped over them three times, the music originally recorded could still be faintly heard in the background. To solve this sound bleed problem, I sourced a de-magnetiser and erased the tapes. Then, to achieve the subtle levels of authenticity I was after, I began again by recording the hiss of the tape recorder onto each side of the cassette before taping the interview onto them.

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## LABELING THE CASSETTE TAPES

In this artefact, the plain paper cassette tape label serves two purposes. Both are intended to reinforce that the recording is part of a local, low-budget endeavour (perhaps an oral history project) rather than one intended for mass production. The paper label is meant to imply that the tape has been reproduced on a previously used, erased cassette that requires a replacement label.<sup>7</sup> However, the typewritten (rather than handwritten) text is meant to signify a level of professionalism a step above the homemade. Because the cassette was ostensibly recorded in 1972, well before the era of desktop publishing, the label would not have been run through a printer to produce the text. I typed it on a manual typewriter. Evidence of the tape's creator was introduced by inserting a typing mistake and correction into the label's copy. I slightly discoloured the label with tannin dye and left it in the sun to age slightly.

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<sup>7</sup> The paper labels used are authentic (not created for this project). They are a generic design I sourced from Sound & Video Services, Waiuku, New Zealand, that had an old supply on hand from its days in the tape duplication business.

## Designing the WCFN TV news video clip

A discussion of the design and manufacture of the WCFN TV news clip may be divided into decisions made at pre-production, production, and post-production levels.

### PRE-PRODUCTION

In order to write a convincing TV news story, I needed to adapt my writing style from print to broadcast journalism. To do this, I closely studied a wide range of American TV news clips. I focused on news broadcasts that aired during the mid-2000s, the time period that coincided with the news clip I created. The news segments were generally thirty seconds or less. This meant that I needed to write in a much more succinct style than I was used to.

The other stories I wrote, those that framed the discovery of Nossuch Luck's body, were adapted from actual news scripts. I selected scripts with visuals that could realistically be shot around Auckland, as a location that needed to stand in for Central Florida, the location of the TV station, WCFN.

I directed the four news stories (studio and field footage) that comprised the original WCFN news broadcast. (One was deleted from the sequence in post-production). The Auckland cinematographer Mairi Gunn served as the camera person. She shot the video footage with a Panasonic AG-HPX370 (P2) digital camcorder using the DVC Pro HD codec setting. The microphone used for the field footage was a Rode NTG-2 condenser shotgun mike. The studio microphone was a Tram TR-50 Wired Lapel Mic.

### Rising gas prices WTIC - FOX61 Morning News (2008b)

This actual news segment acted as the model for the rising gas prices story used in the project and provides an example of the research undertaken to craft credible field footage. The 37-second news segment consisted of nine shots, each lasting on average 3.5 seconds. I studied them to better understand composition and camera angles as well as to become familiar with the types of shots indicative of such a news segment.

I then took photographs at a nearby petrol station that resembled those in the Fox newscast. Because I needed to disguise the fact that my location was Auckland, New Zealand, I had to avoid filming automobiles that showed their right-hand drive, backgrounds that revealed vehicles driving on the left, New Zealand license plates, and petrol readings displayed in litres rather than gallons (figure 6.8).



FIGURE 6.8

*Petrol station photography experiment. A number of photographs were taken at a local petrol station to determine if it was possible to manipulate video camera angles so that the location might suggest central Florida rather than New Zealand.*

My analysis of news broadcasts from this period was useful in helping me design a number of studio shots (later deleted in post-production). I was particularly interested in American news clips that featured one anchor in front of a chromakey backdrop and only one camera (figure 6.9.). This was necessary because I was seeking to simulate a broadcast from a smalltown TV news station. This same sense of a local production was applied to my logo (sting) design and to the presentation of the frontwoman. Although appearing professional, the broadcast required some restraint so it did not mimic the higher production design values of comparative presentations from US-wide networks of the period such as CBS or Fox.

## PRODUCTION

Originally, I planned to feature an actor as a newsreader in the broadcast (figure 6.10). This would be supplemented by cutaways to field footage. I shot the sequence with the newsreader in front of a chromakey backdrop on the University campus. We used the Panasonic AG-HPX370 video camera because the high definition (HD) format would provide better resolution for the post-production task of replacing the green background with computer graphics.



FIGURE 6.9

*American news anchors in front of chromakey backdrops. These one-camera setups with anchors centred in front of the camera served as references for the WCFN TV news studio footage.*

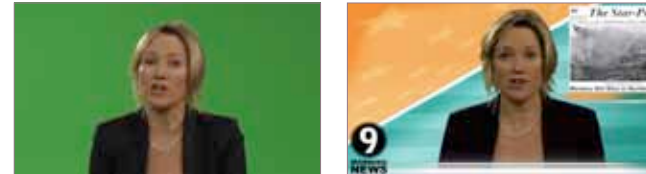


FIGURE 6.10

*Chromakey studio footage. The actor was filmed in front of a green screen reading the news (left) and graphic elements were inserted during post-production (right). Here a distinct attempt was made at designing a regional network aesthetic. These stations rarely employed graphic designers so the generic 'slickness' of the presentations seen on Fox and its equivalents was replaced by a less resolved aesthetic. Thus we note chromakeying has a more obvious crop (especially around fine hair) than is found in footage from studios where access to more expensive software (and budgeted postproduction time) contributes to more seamless integrations. In a similar manner make up, hair and lighting were designed to emphasise a regional, less 'corporate' aesthetic.*

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## POST-PRODUCTION: ABANDONING THE CHROMAKEY BACKDROP

However, the green screen room was not designed for live audiotaping. Its cavernous space produced unacceptable sound quality that Marshall Smith, the sound engineer from the Sound Room, could not fix in post-production. Rather than re-shoot the newsreader segments, I adopted a different strategy. I re-recorded the newsreader's voice at the Sound Room and dropped her voice over the edited field footage.

This approach was a common news show protocol of this period. It is evidenced in the WTIC Fox 61 Morning News (2009) broadcast. During the first decade of this century, news items were often separated by computer graphics rather than by a studio shot of the news reader. The news reader presented the story in voice-over instead of appearing on screen.

This approach was useful because it accentuated the fact that this was a clip of a news broadcast, the result of a viewer specifically choosing to record a brief segment from the TV that featured an item of interest.

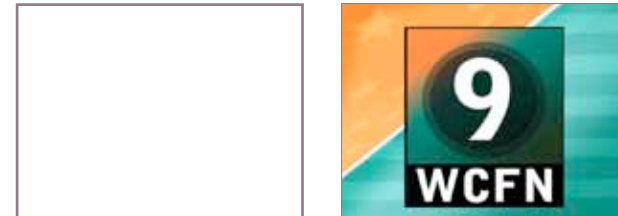
## EDITING THE NEWS AND INSERTING DIGITAL GRAPHICS

I used the digital video editing software package Final Cut Pro to assemble the newscast. I originally edited the piece to include three complete news stories as well as the story about the discovery of Nosuch Luck's body. However, upon review I edited the broadcast down so that the Nosuch Luck story was framed by two news story fragments. Doing so kept

the emphasis on the true point of the narrative rather than distracting it with competing texts.

I worked Chris Howlett, a digital design student, who used Adobe Aftereffects to design the graphics package that accompanied the video clip. He created a look consistent with a morning news programme and used colours (green and orange) that echo Florida's traditional image of palm trees, surf and citrus (figure 6.11). He also created the split-second diagonal wipe and sound effect that covers the jump cut in the field interview.

The sound designer Marshall Smith produced the one-second audio news sting to accompany the rotating WCFN cube that appeared between stories.



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FIGURE 6.11

*TV news digital graphics comparison. To emulate the appearance of digital graphics used to introduce news stories on broadcast television, (left) a graphic element (right) was created using AfterEffects. The graphic spins as a cube with an accompanying audio news sting.*

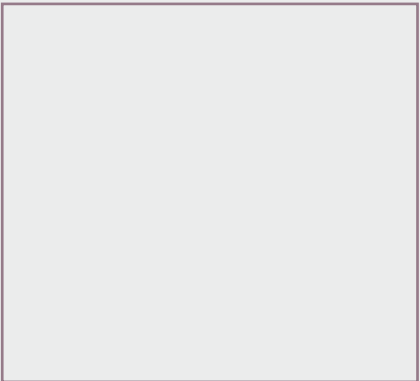


FIGURE 6.12

*Wear and tear visible on a still from imported analogue footage. This indicates a loss of clarity due to demagnetisation. A number of factors contribute to the deterioration of VHS recordings. Heat causes expansion and contraction of the tape base. This leads to warping and shedding of the magnetic material. In addition, dust, dirt, smoke, and oil can cause abrasion that wears the magnetic material from the base. Magnetic fields (speakers, motors, amplifiers, telephones, computers, and televisions) may also cause partial erasure and/or tape noise as they interfere with the tape's magnetic patterns.*

*Frequent playing of recorded material eventually stretches the tape and wears off the magnetic data. Lower end analogue formats, such as the VHS tape used in this novel, degrade faster than other formats. Wear and tear becomes visible in a number of ways. These include fuzzy or snowy images, blank spots, static or thin lines across the screen, faded, distorted, and uneven colour. With deterioration the colour becomes brownish, then pinkish, and finally colourless.*

## CREATING THE VHS TAPE

Creating the VHS tape required simulating wear and tear on the digital footage. The intent was to suggest a videotape that had been used to record the WCFN TV News clip over a snippet of existing material. Similar to the production of the newspaper and audiotape, the challenge was to make a pristine copy of the text appear as if it was actually recorded on old media. A second challenge was finding a means to copy the finished digital file to an analogue VHS tape. It is far easier to locate hardware that converts analogue videotape to digital media. However, once I located a DV/AV converter, I was able to begin.

I transferred different analogue film and TV footage to the computer and edited it together with the WCFN TV news clip. The intent was to find footage that was not too old or decayed, as it would be difficult to create a matching level of deterioration in the news clip. After experimenting with different clips, I chose footage from the American television programme *Friends* (figure 6.12).<sup>8</sup>

Through experimentation with the video filters available in Final Cut Pro, I introduced visual 'noise', distorted, flickering lines, and slightly desaturated colours. The desaturated or faded look simulates how colours decay over time on video. Figure 6.13 contains two screen shots from the TV news clip that compares the before/after footage.

I also introduced ghosting near the end of the news clip. In this process, I overlaid the news clip with *Friends* footage, which I reduced to nine percent opacity, and desaturated the colour. The result appears to be a bleed through of the older material.

To imitate deteriorating sound quality, I laid down an audio track of TV hiss, keeping it to a level that didn't interfere with the news reader's voice. The noise also acted as a continuity device between the *Friends* footage and the news clip.

Despite my attention to detail, I could not predict how the news clip would appear on different TVs using different VCRs. I tested the recording on analogue as well as digital and HD screens. The results varied, with the large-format HD screens producing the poorest quality images, as their high-quality resolution emphasises flaws. Older or worn VCRs also tended to produce inferior video and audio quality.



FIGURE 6.13

Comparison of an original and a manipulated news clip. Originally recorded in HD, the quality of the WCFN TV News clip in the novel required manipulation in order to simulate a deteriorating VHS tape. The still shot at left shows the original quality. The image on the right reveals degradation achieved by using digital filters.

<sup>8</sup> *Friends*, which ran on American broadcast television from 1994-2004, is popular in syndication in the United States as well as abroad. I selected it as a signifier of the era.

## The photograph

Barthes (1977) argues that photographs are never merely denotative, a purely objective rendering of reality. They contain connotations that reflect ideological and aesthetic choices, among other considerations, made by the photographer. The photographs shown in figures 6.14 and 6.15 reflect such choices. They are constructions that have been designed to signify particular eras and modes of picture-taking.

Originally, the photograph to be included in *No Such Luck* was to be a picture taken of the character Naomi Mays at the grave of her cousin, Nosuch Luck, in 2008 (figure 6.14). Accordingly, it was constructed as an amateur snapshot (although the photograph was taken by a professional photographer) that references present-day colour digital photography. Naomi's simple dress, rigid posture and scowling expression were meant to signify her never-fading anger over Nosuch's death as well as resistance to being photographed.

FIGURE 6.14

*Naomi Mays at Nosuch Luck's gravesite (not used). I used Photoshop to erase the original name on the gravestone and substitute the details for Henry Louis (Nosuch) Luck. The picture was meant to suggest a snapshot taken by an amateur. However I engaged a professional photographer for the shoot because I was seeking specific light treatments indicative of the location in which the novel occurs. Several locations were scouted to find a cemetery that might suggest the story's central Florida location.*



However, after all the components of *No Such Luck* had been completed, it was determined that the narrative had moved on from this original conceptualisation. In terms of plot, the Naomi Mays photograph was not needed. The 2007 WCFN TV News clip announces the discovery of Nosuch's body in the Channel Swamp, which makes the photograph redundant. Also, depicting Naomi Mays in a photograph undercuts the power of the audiotape, *Miss Naomi's Interview*, in which the listener visualises her appearance only through her voice. Instead, a different photograph was introduced. This one (figure 6.15) drew upon signifiers suggesting an earlier time period and introduced the idea of the fragment into the novel.

#### WHO IS THE MAN IN THE PHOTOGRAPH?

By rendering the subject anonymous, and thereby prohibiting closure, the photograph serves as a narrative fragment, and therein lies its potency. Glowacka (2000) argues that the fragment challenges “the hegemonous discursive strategies of continuity, causality and fullness of representation, it fissures the unified narrative and points to its underlying gaps and absences” (p. 50). In the context of the larger polysemous novel, I suggest that the photograph as a fragment reinforces for the audience that they can never know all of the story.



FIGURE 6.15

Portrait of an anonymous man. These are staged photographs of a model posing as a light-skinned African-American in the 1940s and the 1950s. The one on the left was modified for use in *No Such Luck*.

The changes in clothing act as signifiers for the different timeframes, as does the 1945 Chevy truck, (which is appropriate for either era.) The photograph on the right, circa 1950, was not chosen as the clothing, while authentic to the time period, could also be mistaken for a more modern, retro look.

The truck is meant to reference a left-hand drive vehicle. Therefore, in the final design of the photo, I worked with graphic designer Tatiana Tavares to ‘Photoshop’ in a steering wheel sourced from the photo of a similar truck. Another alternative would have been to flip the photo so that the model appeared to be standing in front of the passenger-side door. However, this angle was preferred, so the steering wheel was introduced.

Identifying details were left off the back of the photograph to leave in doubt the man’s identity. His light complexion and age hint that he could be either of the brothers Nosuch or Jack Luck. In producing these images we used a 50mm lens with shallow depth of field (F-stop 4.5) in order to blur any background foliage that might suggest New Zealand rather than Florida.

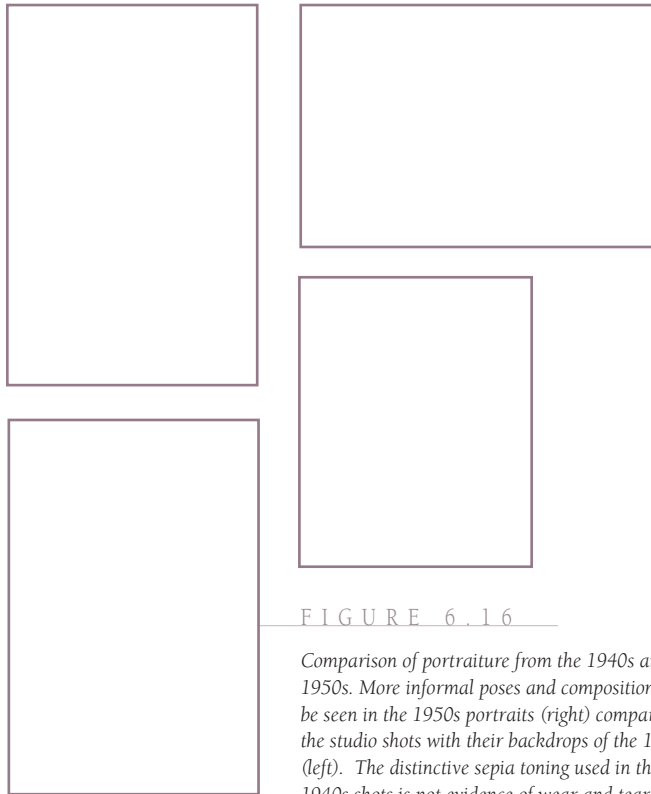


FIGURE 6.16

*Comparison of portraiture from the 1940s and 1950s. More informal poses and composition can be seen in the 1950s portraits (right) compared to the studio shots with their backdrops of the 1940s (left). The distinctive sepia toning used in the 1940s shots is not evidence of wear and tear. It was a deliberate treatment of the period used to give the photograph a warmer tone and enhance its archival qualities. In these prints silver sulfide has been employed to convert the metallic silver in the print to a sodium sulfide compound. This makes the print considerably more resistant to the effects of environmental pollutants such as atmospheric sulfur compounds. This is why the 1950s photographs (which do not replace the metallic silver in the emulsion) evidence higher levels of image decay.*

## THE PHOTOGRAPH'S AESTHETIC

Since the photograph of Naomi Mays was meant to be a snapshot, it was far simpler to execute than the second photograph. The photograph of the unidentified man was purportedly taken before mid-century. Because I did not know specifics about photographic conventions and representations during this period, it was necessary to look beyond the ethos of the snapshot.<sup>9</sup>

Accordingly, I began by searching for images of African-American men in American online databases and archives. Many of the photographs I encountered were taken by photojournalists or other professional photographers, suggesting a documentary slant rather than portraiture.<sup>10</sup> Broadening the search, I located portraits on websites dedicated to American vernacular photography. Many of these were studio portraits with backdrops. However, by the early 1950s, it became evident that there was an increase in more informal portraits (figure 6.16).

<sup>9</sup> Kotchemidova (2005) argues that film manufacturing and processing giant Eastman Kodak greatly influenced amateur picture taking throughout the twentieth century. The company was an advertising pioneer in its association of pleasure with consumption, marketing photography as play. Kodak taught amateur photographers to take snapshots on holidays and special occasions and to emphasise their subjects happiness and wellbeing. Kodak "avoided associating photography with sadness, work, and the humdrum of everyday life. Instead it focused on vacation, leisure and pleasure" (p. 9).

<sup>10</sup> However, these photographs were useful for gathering information about hairstyles and clothing.

I selected the style of the informal portrait from the 1950s but directed a shoot of the model dressed in 1940s attire, as signified by the fedora and white shirt. (This is similar to the dress of the man seated in the studio portrait referenced in figure 6.16.) The look of the informal portrait allowed me more freedom in terms of camera placement, because it permitted mid shots rather than full-length poses. Like the studio portraits, I kept the serious facial expression and awareness of the camera that suggested the photograph was not a snapshot. Rather, it was someone's serious attempt to capture the man's essence as well as his likeness. We see here a form of direct address; a kind of knowingness without a context. It is the tension between these states that opens the image up to diverse levels of interpretation.

#### MAKING THE PHOTOGRAPH LOOK OLD

In order to create the look of the old photograph (figure 6.17), I worked with graphic designer Tatiana Tavares to digitally manipulate the image. I was interested in the potential of sepia tones evidenced in the studio portraits, as in figure 6.16. Therefore, we simulated fading and discoloration to imitate wear and tear that an old photograph might experience from sun damage or improper handling. I added scratches to an early print with a pin, scraping away bits of the emulsion. This was then rescanned and retouched.



FIGURE 6.17

*Test prints. Different treatments of the photograph were produced as test prints to determine an appropriate colour range.*

## *The novella: Came Tumbling After*<sup>11</sup>

This section focuses on the development of *Came Tumbling After*. It discusses the crafting of the novella's literary style as well as the technical decisions that informed the book's design and production.

### L I T E R A R Y   D E S I G N

The literary design of *Came Tumbling After* is informed by three factors: Jill Beth Sorenson's career as a journalist, the influence of certain texts, and the novella as a literary form.

#### *Journalism and writing style*

One reason I chose to make Jill Beth a journalist was so I could draw upon my own past writing experiences when crafting the novella. Like Jill Beth, in the early 1980s I learned how to write like a journalist trained to value short sentences, the use of action verbs, and the avoidance of unnecessary adjectives, adverbs, and jargon.

Knight's (2010) advice, although he is writing in the present day, is applicable for journalists of Jill Beth's era. He sums up the writing style I was emulating in two short sentences: "The true beauty of English is its ability to make the writer or speaker sound honest. The way this works is to use short, Anglo-Saxon words and usages that form the core of the language" (p. 29).

While I took liberties with this style, as this was a novella rather than a news story, the principle is clearly evident in the design of the narrative's mode of discourse. The description of Reely Gordon at the beginning of Chapter Two serves as an example: "The freezing cold bent Reely's hands into claws. She took turns jamming one into her pocket while steering her ten-speed with the other" (Williams, 2010g, p.5).

The character description centres on action, as conveyed by forms of the verbs 'to bend' and 'to jam'. The first sentence is only eight words long, while the second is under the maximum of nineteen that I was trained never to exceed. The only qualifier is the gerund freezing to modify (and thereby emphasise) the noun cold. In an effort to be precise as well as descriptive, the word ten-speed has been substituted for bicycle. It references the mid-late 1970s, when such bicycles were popular among teenagers.

11 The title *Came Tumbling After* references the nursery rhyme, *Jack and Jill*. It implies the author Jill Beth Sorenson's metaphorical fall after she stumbles upon the secret that leads to her friend's death. Jack is also her real father's name. The nursery rhyme suggests both their bond as father and daughter (once, long ago, they were together as part of a family) and the broken relationship that ensued when Jack left her mother and left Jill Beth behind. The text for the nursery rhyme reads: *Jack and Jill went up the hill to fetch a pail of water. Jack fell down and broke his crown and Jill came tumbling after.*

### *Influential texts*

*Came Tumbling After* may be read as a fictionalised version of Jill Beth's personal experiences. For inspiration I drew upon texts that blur the lines between fact and fiction, such as Jorge Semprun's *The Cattle Truck* (2005) that fictionalises his Holocaust experience. Semprun's treatment of time is non-linear. The backbone of the novel's timeline is his five days jammed inside a cattle truck on its way to Buchenwald. However, he allows the narrative to wander backward and forward in time according to theme. While *Came Tumbling After* is more orderly in its travel through time, the twin narratives are meant to talk back to each other over the span of twenty years that elapsed between them.

The novella was perhaps most influenced by the adult genre fiction known as amateur detective mysteries. In these stories, it is conventional for the plot to revolve around an individual who is caught up in events that compel them to investigate a mystery, usually a murder. As they are neither private detectives nor police officers, they do not approach the crime from the point of view of professional law enforcement personnel.

Easy Rawlins in *Devil in a Blue Dress*, (Mosley, 1990) serves as an example.<sup>12</sup> An unemployed African-American World War II war veteran in East Los Angeles, he agrees to find a missing woman for money. The plot then evolves into a murder mystery. Jill Beth, unlike Easy Rawlins, initially has a more personal attachment to the situation she is thrust into. However, both characters undertake a journey that involves piecing together clues to solve a mystery. Congruent with the style of amateur detective mysteries, Jill Beth layers the narrative with accumulative detail, pulling it all together in the last pages of the book.

Finally, I considered books and articles written by Chicago newspaper columnists I was familiar with from my time living in that city during the 1980s-90s.<sup>13</sup> These served as reminders for me to keep Jill Beth's prose succinct, simple, and more in the vein of genre fiction than literary fiction. I believed this style to be more suited to her training as a journalist and inclination as a first-time author of fiction. Chicago newspaperman Mike Royko's (1988) biography of Mayor Richard J. Daley informed the tone of Jill Beth's first-person narrative. His writing style fused non-fiction with a passionate commitment to the underdog, a character trait I transferred to Jill Beth.

12 Mosley's character Easy Rawlins developed over the ten-book series into a proper detective, although originally he was an amateur. The Easy Rawlins mysteries are noted for foregrounding many of the issues African-Americans faced in Los Angeles from the 1950s onward, which was another reason for my interest in them.

13 I situated Jill Beth as a journalist in Chicago from 1978 until her death in 2011.

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## THE NOVELLA AS A LITERARY FORM

The fiction writer Richard Ford (1998) argues that among American writers the most agreed-upon characteristic of the novella is its intermediate length. Positioned between the short story and the novel, it is adjudged to be more than 15,000 words in length but shorter than 50,000. However, Bartlett (2005) suggests that there are additional identifying characteristics. The novella draws upon features of the short story and the novel to distinguish itself. Like the short story, it aims for intensity but given its longer form, has room for expansion, like the novel. Bartlett suggests,

A novella's unique ability to focus (intensity) on an idea and elevate (expansion) its significance (amplification) while remaining brief (brevitas) enough for the work to achieve a concentrated overall impression (compression) distinguishes the novella from other fictional forms. (p. 51)

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*Came Tumbling After* exists within the framework of the larger polysemous novel. Therefore, it was necessary to write a compressed, streamlined narrative that positioned Jill Beth as the catalyst for Reely Gordon's and Nosuch Luck's death. Doing so juxtaposed her personal point of view with the more impersonal newspaper articles. Her wounded voice allows the reader to step inside of history.

In keeping with the novella's emphasis on focus, *Came Tumbling After* eschews well-developed subplots. In 1997, Jill Beth had one purpose, to find out why Reely's body was not properly re-interred when it was dug up from the cemetery. The 1977 narrative is slightly more diffuse in order to establish characters, yet it also avoids venturing into subplots. Had it been novel length, deeper explorations of Reely's relationship to her father, Drew, might have been explored. A longer story may also have included the subplot that explained her pregnancy (a mystery concealed in the novella) or developed a romance between the teenaged Jill Beth and Sam Tressler.

## BOOK DESIGN - AESTHETICS

*Came Tumbling After* was designed to emulate a paperback printed by a small independent publisher in the United States during the mid-1990s (figure 6.18). Jill Beth's publisher, the (fictional) Pecan Press is located in Atlanta, Georgia, which marks it as a publisher interested in Southern regional fiction such as she produced.

With this artefact, I again collaborated with graphic designer Tatiana Tavares to create an aesthetic indicative of such publications. Together we researched book layouts, typefaces, papers, and bindings from the 1990s before making decisions about the novella's final appearance. We discussed in detail certain indicative layouts of the text as well as the publisher's logo. Figure 6.19 shows some of the different Pecan Press logo designs considered, while figure 6.20 (next page) includes examples of a range of cover designs considered but eventually rejected.



FIGURE 6.18

1990s-era book covers. A comparison of book cover designs by small American presses. An analysis of book covers created in the 1990s revealed a variety of styles, from simple two-colour designs to more elaborate four-colour ones. The range indicated differing levels of sophistication in graphic design, perhaps reflecting the budgets available to the presses.

Similarly, small presses manifest differences in the quality of text layout and proofreading. This is a feature of many titles from small presses as they normally use single proofreaders (who in some cases are the publishers or the editor). As an extension of this, once a novel is returned from the graphic designer, budget concerns mean that it is often not rechecked for typographic inconsistencies like widows, leading irregularities, and hyphenation issues. Accordingly, in designing the distinctive nature of *Came Tumbling After*, I employed some variations in the quality of text layout and proofreading.

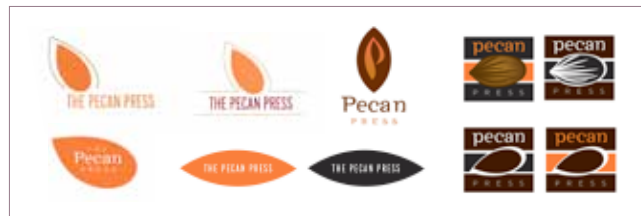


FIGURE 6.19

The Pecan Press logo. The design alludes to the state of Georgia's (where the publisher is located) status as the 'pecan state'. Historically, Georgia has been known throughout the South for its prolific pecan crop. Therefore, referencing the pecan reinforces the press's position as a publisher of Southern authors.



FIGURE 6.20

*Came Tumbling After* book cover designs. The design brief included instructions to suggest the novella's twin narratives (1977 and 1997). In addressing this, the designer divided the cover into two distinct regions. The design on the right was eventually selected. In line with the budgets allocated for the production of this form of cover, no special colours, embosses, or dieforms were employed in the design. By referencing type in the top half of the cover, both the author's career as a journalist and her written account of her own story are suggested. In addition, in signaling the two eras in which the story takes place, the rusted scratch marks contrast with the orderly reversed-out type. This serves to suggest both the tragedy and chaos that results from Reely Gordon's murder. It was a deliberate design decision not to reference nursery rhymes in any way, as this might confuse the intended signification of an adult story by implying the presence of young children in the text.

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## BOOK DESIGN: TECHNICAL DETAILS

The book is a slightly modified B format mass market paperback (MMP). B format MMPs measure 130mm x 198mm, while *Came Tumbling After's* measures 140mm x 200mm.

The choice to publish it as an MMP reflects Jill Beth's status as a first-time author with little name recognition. MMPs are small, non-illustrated, and inexpensive to produce. If the book does not sell well, the publisher can easily recall it and have it pulped or remaindered to mitigate against the bad investment.

Both the book's text and jacket were printed on a Xerox 7000, which is a digital colour press designed for printing onto stock between 60 and 300 gsm. The book's text is printed on 80gsm stock indicative of the period. The book jacket is printed on 280gsm board in full colour and is laminated on one side. The laminate is gloss rather than matte, again a common choice of the period.

## *Jill Beth's Letter*

In this section I will discuss decisions that were influential in crafting the text of Jill Beth's letter. I will also discuss choices made concerning the letter's material design.

Adams (2007) argues that the personal letter, although in decline, remains significant for its distinct characteristics. Unlike other forms of relational communication, the sender and receiver are separated both temporally and geographically. Yet the letter somehow retains the presence of both correspondents. It does so, Adams (2007) suggests, by invoking the "here and now" of both parties. On the other hand, it also invokes absence because it reinforces the separation of the writer and reader. The author suggests,

The very reason that presence is such an important part of a private letter is precisely because of the separation or absence from a friend or loved one...

Without this absence, there would be no reason to focus on establishing presence as intently as do the writers of personal letters. (p. 188)

Incorporating this notion of absence and presence, I designed the text of the letter to indicate a relationship of particular closeness, in that Jill Beth addresses it to "My Dear Friend". In the letter, we learn that she is dying and therefore this is the last communication her friend will ever receive. The paradox of Jill Beth's absence and presence becomes apparent. The letter reader knows she is dead (absent) but the text was written while she was alive (present). Jill Beth's here and now, forever frozen in the letter, calls out to her correspondent, and therefore to the reader.

I reinforced Jill Beth's absent presence by including a smudged fingerprint on the envelope. It signifies her corporeality, that there remains a trace of her existence in the world, although she no longer exists.

### M A T E R I A L I T Y

The letter is written in pencil on a 11.5 x 17 cm off-white 260 gsm, deckled card folded along its long edge. The paper itself is mould made, wove, 100% alpha cellulose and acid free.<sup>14</sup> The matching envelope is 12 x 18 cm, cut edged and gummed. I chose this stationery for its simplicity and rich texture. It injects a quiet, sober note into the letter. The use of graphite pencil rather than pen signifies Jill Beth's preference as a journalist to take notes in pencil, a habit she carried over into her private life.

14 Mould made refers to a paper-making technique that involves the transfer of wet paper pulp from a cylinder mould to felt stretched onto wide belts. The felt absorbs most of the water present in the paper. Pressure is then applied by the cylinder onto the felt in order to eliminate the rest of the water. The pressure also stamps the felt's grain onto the paper, giving it its distinctive texture.

## *Designing the Housing for No Such Luck*

The box designed for this novel serves a similar purpose to a book cover. A book cover operates as a gateway between the reader and the world of the story. It may reference the story through its design (in its combination of typography, colour, and images). However, at its most fundamental level, the book cover's function is to hold the book together. It organises pages that are attached to its spine, and thereby signals to the reader what is part of the book and what is not. It also ensures that pages are not lost or incoherently re-ordered.

The housing for *No Such Luck* also acts as a gateway to the world of a story, narrated through seven artefacts. Like the book cover, its practical function is to protect and to keep elements of the novel together. As a physical containment it demarcates the world of the novel from the pre-existing world of the reader. We understand that what is not in the box is not part of the collection.

### AESTHETICS AND MATERIALITY

I constructed the housing in collaboration with Auckland artist Rachel Young. The housing was designed to reference capped archive boxes from the middle of the last century. These had metal corners to minimise damage caused by continuous use. The construction was crafted from 3mm De Halm bookbinding board and covered with Wibalin black covering paper.

The nameplate and the metal corners were attached with rivets and distressed to appear warped and dented. The metal was burnt and oiled to produce the distinctive tarnished texture. The novel's title card was set in 14 pt Carbon Type (Vic Figer,

2004), and subtly coloured so it complemented the deeper tones of the tarnishing.

To create the interior I worked with Auckland bookbinder Louise James. The housing was designed to hold the novel's artefacts securely but not in a manner that might appear overly prescriptive. I designed a false base so the audio cassette would be held firmly and the VHS would not move unnecessarily when the novel was being transported. This was necessary because constant movement causes unwanted wear and tear to magnetic tapes as they move against cassette heads.

Because the texts in the novel had been carefully pitched at a level of wear and tear necessary for a specific construction of damage, I needed to design an interior to preserve the fictional 'authenticity' of the distress. The internal housing also enabled me to maintain exterior proportions of the container while presenting the texts to the reader in a relatively immediate and 'contained' fashion.



FIGURE 6.21

*The box that houses No Such Luck's artefacts. To add another level of cohesion to the project, I included a box purposefully designed for the novel. Doing so helped define the artefacts as a greater unit, as the polysemous novel itself, rather than as a loose collection of things.*

*This image shows the false bottom included in the box's interior with its cut-out that makes room for the audiocassette to stand upright.*

## *Conclusion*

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Disguising the artifice necessary to produce 'old' artefacts involved extensive research and the help and cooperation of numerous experts. Digital technology, while making it easier to design the texts (and simpler for me as the designer to do more of the work myself) in some cases made it harder to produce authentic-looking, sounding, and feeling texts. Software is engineered to eliminate imperfections, not produce them. A straight line demarcating the edge of a newspaper advertisement is always straight. The computer, unless directed to do so, does not err.

Introducing traces of human craftsmanship and wear and tear into these artefacts taught me a lesson about the wonder and complexity of ordinary life. A great deal of the originality of this project lies in its insistence that the ordinary be looked at and looked at again until it can be seen with fresh eyes. Its reference point is not the new or the modern but the familiar and the every day. The mundane objects that surround us right now have stories to tell. If we listen, they will speak.







7  
C H A P T E R

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*P r o j e c t  
R e f l e c t i o n*



## Introduction

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*It is no coincidence that many ancient poetic and historical texts do not have climactic endings. They simply fall silent, leaving the impression that there is always more to say. (Bolter, 1991, pp. 85-86)*

No tale can ever be fully told. The gaps are as much a part of the story as the text that is included. The silences create the spaces where the audience may choose to dwell and wonder, “what if?” In the same way, an exegesis tells some of the research story but never all of it. Regulation word counts and resource constraints limit its scope and truncate the discussion of the insights and outcomes that continue to evolve. As a result, this chapter is not meant to be a conclusion that signals the last word on the thesis. Instead, it offers a reflection upon some aspects of the project that suggest possibilities for further research.

## THE DISCOURSE OF WEAR AND TEAR

The research into wear and tear had a pragmatic beginning. I was seeking a way to address the materiality of the artefacts that would explain their distinctive function as components of a story that had already begun to accumulate a life. My investigation into the meaning of wear and tear, an ordinary term whose significance has ramifications beyond its common, every day use, enabled me to explain ideas like obsolescence and excess meaning. Moreover, I was interested in the way that wear and tear possesses its own aesthetic and troubles capitalism’s trumpeting of the new.

As the thesis concludes it opens doors to further research that might engage the constructs of wear and tear as a means of reconsidering notions of decay. I am at this point interested in questions like when might unnoticed wear and tear become repugnant decay, and how might this tension support the development of future designed novels?

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## EXTENDING THE FORM OF THE POLYSEMIC NOVEL

Although a non-linear narrative, it was helpful when first conceptualising *No Such Luck* to use chronology as its organising principle. Its core structure relates to points on a timeline that pertain to the murder of Reely Gordon and Nosuch Luck. Spanning thirty years, the murder narrative shifts over time. Chronologically, it begins with the *Munnville Star-Post* newspaper's narrative that frames Nosuch Luck as the murderer of Reely Gordon. It ends with the VHS news clip and the discovery of Nosuch's decayed remains in a swamp, thereby clearing him of the murder. Left unresolved is the identity of the real murderer and the identity of the father of Reely Gordon's unborn child.

Additional research might uncover other systems useful for designing a polysemous narrative. Geography, for instance, could serve as the hub from which the story extends. A literal application of the geographical theme could mean the incorporation of physical locales as story sites. A graffitied wall is drawn into semiosis, its textures and surfaces become part of the tale. Like *No Such Luck*'s artefacts, the street art sparks memory and imagination, or perhaps even participation. The wall, a canvas, beckons.

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An alternative story structure could interweave new and old media forms. Orban's (2007) invitation to see differently through a tactile engagement with a text could serve as the catalyst for exploring possible tensions between digital and non-digital surfaces of reception. Crafting a polysemous novel that emphasises the differences between an engagement with a text on screen and on paper could be used to investigate the ocularcentric paradigm that privileges sight over other senses.

#### DESIGNING NEW WORKS

Inherent in this discussion about directions for new research is the assumption that the research will be approached from a design perspective. Acting as a story designer means trialling ways to speak that include languages other than the spoken or written word. It also means foregrounding the materials of semiosis, as these are also tools that help to tell tales. Asking questions, whether about wear and tear, materiality, polysemy, or a subject yet to be determined, creates opportunities to craft narratives that are brought to life in and through the physical world.

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This thesis has articulated one such approach. Among other outcomes, it has revealed my appreciation for our sense of touch. Finding ways to draw tactility into storytelling has significantly changed the manner in which I view both literature and myself as an author. As we understand literature as a complex system of designed links between artefacts and narratives, I suggest we not only enhance the potentials of creative 'writing' but also the richness of storytelling as a cultural form.

A polysemous novel is a complex undertaking. It taxes one's ability not only to orchestrate meaning on many levels but also to make it cohere into a dynamic that is both fixed and mutable. Perhaps therefore it is fitting to end with the words of the cultural anthropologist, Mary Catherine Bateson (1994):

Wherever a story comes from, whether it is a familiar myth or a private memory, the retelling exemplifies the making of a connection from one pattern to another: a potential translation in which narrative becomes parable and the once upon a time comes to stand for some nascent truth. (p. 11).

Crafting this polysemous novel, *No Such Luck*, marks my endeavour to tell a story in a new way. In doing so, I have undertaken my own translation of one particular fiction that, it is hoped, inclines the reader to a novel appreciation of some aspect of truth.





08

C H A P T E R

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*R e f e r e n c e s*



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