RESEARCH ARTICLE

Constructing the Hypertangible Novel: Writing and Design as Process

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Abstract: As the printed book co-exists with the influence of the digital, narratives become hybrid and are transformed into documents in which the content can very easily flow from one form to another. As a result of this, the first decades of the 21st century have seen the emergence of publications that challenge traditionally orthodox reading practices. This article examines the response to the digital development in novels that foreground the material dimension of the narrative and are print-specific. These works do not reject the digital realm but absorb its characteristics and expand the possibilities offered by the material dimension of the book. By analyzing Graham Rawle's *Woman's World* and its process of creation through the collage and cut-up techniques, this article aims to show how design can contribute to foreground the physical dimension of literature in novels with hypertangible qualities. This examination draws attention to design being embedded in the writing process that constructs both material and narrative dimensions. Findings show that these novels can be a product of a 'designwriting' process, in which design serves both as a tool to shape a narrative, and as a process that expands it and creates an object that offers an embodied reading experience. Ultimately, this highlights the importance of physical reading in the age of digital media.

Keywords: book design; creative process; hybridity; materiality; print

1. Introduction

As David Thorburn and Henry Jenkins explain in *Rethinking Media Change* (2004), the emergence of new media activates a complex process in which older technologies

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develop and adapt to the functions brought by emerging media. These two realities influence each other as part of the convergence culture, characterized by a collaboration between media, and in which the functions of the previous analogue technology are reshaped by the more recent digital one. In this context, according to Kiene Brillenburg Wurth (2020), readers inhabit analogue and digital dimensions simultaneously, moving in a sort of continuum that embraces both technologies together. Both the material and the immaterial are part of a feedback loop, in which they are not opposites but points that mediate each other.

The shift from paper to digital format disassembled the fixed primacy of the printed word and generated a lack of physical presence.* Information, which until the second half of the 20th century was thoroughly associated with the physicality of print and paper, lost its dependence on the material medium; and as Alan Liu (2009) notes, immateriality subordinated everything to the digital. Books, films, music, etc., are now documents or files. Texts are documents, Liu explains: "Once we wrote or read books, stories, and poems, that is, but today — no matter the genre — everyone just writes and reads documents" (2009, p. 505). Information, and thus also literary works, have acquired a fluid dimension that can be shaped in any form and direction. Therefore, Liu also argues that documents (and thus texts) are "deformational forms" (2009, p. 505). This means that they are atomized into very small parts, in a digital deconstruction, which makes them very easily prone to change, re-adaptation, and shift from platform to platform. This aligns with Zygmunt Bauman's (2000) position that information, under the influence of the digital, follows the patterns of liquids and gases, and its form is continuously subjected to changes, unable to keep the same shape for a long time. In consequence, documents deform easily and can adapt to any digital shape or platform because of the liquid quality of their atoms, which cannot hold the shape when subjected to stress.

As the printed book co-exists with the influence of the digital, the shift in media and physical presence has a significant impact on narratives, and novels in particular, which are transformed into documents with content that can very easily flow from one form to another. As digital technology develops, the reading of novels (and of books) becomes disassociated from its printed form, and the material embodiment of a document becomes irrelevant. From this perspective, the new conventional novel can be seen as fluid, changeable, and immaterial. Readers can nowadays read a novel simultaneously on different platforms: one can start by reading a book in print, shift to the laptop

* Several authors have reflected on the disembodiment provoked in society by digital media, which evidence that immateriality is one of the experiences brought by digital technology: Boom, 2010; Landow, 1996; Liu, 2009; Plate, 2020; Renfrew, 2003; Tolva, 1995; Wurth, 2020.

screen, continue scrolling on a tablet and finish reading on the constricted interface of smartphones and smartwatches.

Consequently, and according to the convergence culture defined by Jenkins and Thorburn (2004), in the digital age books become complementary to new information technologies. As Irma Boom (2010) argues, books become something else and enable information to be spread in a different way by using their physical potential. Due to this, in the first decades of the 21st century, it is possible to identify an emergence of a type of novel that resists the elasticity and immateriality of fluid reading practices, as Katherine Hayles (2002, 2013) and Jessica Pressman (2009, 2020) have identified when analyzing the transformations in literature that result from the evolution of digital technology. This article addresses this response to digital development and aims to gain understanding of the novels that foreground the material dimension. To describe the fact that these works are born under the digital influence, created with digital means, but nonetheless exist only in print, a term is proposed: 'hypertangible'. The 'hyper-' prefix illustrates the fact that the tangible quality of these novels is enhanced and made possible by the digital realm.

The scope of this article is not to offer a complete definition of this term but, through the analysis of one significant example that foregrounds the materiality of the novel, it aims to explore the concept and gain a deeper understanding of how design can contribute to the integration of materiality and narrative in books that resist immateriality in the digital age. Using *Woman's World* by Graham Rawle (2005) as a case study, this article combines close reading, visual analysis, and material from an online conversation with the author (2023). *Woman's World* is a novel created using cut-up and collage techniques: the author cut fragments from women's magazines from the early 1960s and put them together to compose a new narrative. Although the study is limited to the analysis of one novel, the example was chosen because it is a novel born in a digital context, it uses the materiality of the book to expand the narrative, and illustrates a way in which design can contribute to create hybrid and embodied narratives. Despite its limitations, it serves as an example of "the permeable boundaries between designers and writers", defined by Alexander Starre (2015, p. 171) as a result of the convergence between print and digital worlds.

Woman's World also helps to explore and define the term 'designwriting', introduced to identify the creative process of this type of novels: an active involvement of writers, who think about materiality from the first stages of the writing process and employ design methods along the way. The significance of *Woman's World* for this study is related to the fact that it thoroughly foregrounds the role of design and openly exposes the concept of 'designwriting' employed in its creative process. Findings show that hypertangible novels can provide a vehicle for understanding what reading print means in a digital

era, and that design serves not only as a tool to shape a narrative, but as a process that expands it and creates a unique object that offers an embodied reading experience that also fosters slowness and attention. Finally, it also foregrounds the importance of physical reading in the age of digital media.

2. Context and Specific Terminology

2.1. Defining the Hypertangible Novel

Archaeologist Colin Renfrew (2003) explains that the electronic impulse has replaced the material object that held a central position in the 19th and 20th centuries (i.e., banknotes, newspapers, bus tickets), and that through a process of dematerialization, the physical material reality is disappearing. In consequence, and as a reaction to this, emerges a 'new materialism' that focuses on the increasing importance of material objects and their role in social life. The fluidity and immateriality of the digital dimension have brought a renewed interest in the object, in the physical book. As Liedeke Plate argues, disembodiment of digital content has induced the emergence of a "material turn", which aims "to rethink the role of things in social life [...], in their concrete, material, and physical dimensions" (2020, p. 112–114). Plate also observes that "empirical oblivion has dominated literary studies" (2020, p. 112–114), which mainly focus on the semiotic dimension and pay less attention to the material form. This view matches with Katherine N. Hayles' (2002) viewpoint that materiality has generally been treated as a secondary element in literary studies. However, the material turn also has its influence on literature and design: it opens new ways to rethink the materiality of texts and the act of reading. This is consistent with Bruno Latour's (2005) position, who has studied the agency of objects in depth, and sees materiality as fundamental when performing an action: the physical medium influences and defines the activity.

Therefore, books, as objects that were once invisible because of their essential functional role, become more perceivable. According to Wurth, the book moves from the background into "the role of figure: an object to be seen and encountered in an electric sphere" (2020, p .6). This development has enabled a distancing from the printed book. Information is not dependent on print anymore, and thus it can be looked at from a detached perspective. As George Landow already notes in 1996, the book is not the only existing medium to access content anymore, which means the object does not need to be put completely at its service. Instead, it opens up the opportunity to look at it again, studying and rethinking its value:

> ...we have already moved far enough beyond the book that we find ourselves, for the first time in centuries, able to see the book as unnatural. [...]. We find

> ourselves in the position, in other words, of perceiving the book as technology (Landow, 1996, p .214).

This points to the fact that as books become more visible, they could offer a physical reading experience different to that of the digital. This renewed interest in the physical book is connected to a trend that has developed since the start of the 21st century, and which Jessica Pressman (2009) defines as the "aesthetic of bookishness". In *Bookishness: Loving Books in a Digital Age* (Pressman, 2020, p. 1), "bookishness" is referred to define the creative acts that use the physical dimension of the book within a digital environment. Within this trend there exists a focus on bookbound novels that use their physical dimension as an essential part of their narratives: they include their embodied nature, that which the digital lacks, into the reading experience.

These narratives are characterized by highlighting print qualities through the use of digital strategies: they include characteristics of digital media to enhance the materiality of the printed object and also create an artefact with multimedia qualities (such as the readers' ability to decide what and how to read, the lack of a primary axis of organization, the possibility to combine different narrative elements, etc.). In these works, readers need to manipulate and interact with the printed object in order to complete the reader experience. Novels such as Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000), Steve Tomasula's *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (2002), Salvador Plascencia's *The People of Paper* (2005), Graham Rawle's *Woman's World* (2005), Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts* (2007), Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* (2010), J.J. Abrams' *S.* (2013), Rubén Martín Giráldez's *Magistral* (2017), Vivian Abenshushan's *Permanente Obra Negra* (2019), or Rian Hughes' *XX* (2020) aim to challenge and foreground the role that materiality can play in their reading experience.

It is necessary here to acknowledge that novels that bring materiality to the fore and integrate it within the narrative are not a new thing of the 21st century. These kinds of works have a rich lineage and, although it is beyond the scope of this study to examine all the previous significant literary pieces, it is important to mention examples such as: Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759–1767), Stéphane Mallarmé's *Un coup de dés* (1897), Marc Saporta's *Composition No. 1* (1963), Raymond Queneau's *Cent mille milliards de poèmes* (1961) B.S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1969) or Jacques Derrida's *Glas* (1974) (to name but a few of the most relevant), that already in the 18th and 20th centuries experimented with the materiality of reading.*

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* Artists' books also focus on the materiality of reading and works by Dieter Roth, Bruno Munari, Ulises Carrión, Keith Smith and Alison Knowles (to name but a few) have a significant influence on literary works concerned with materiality. However, due to practical constraints, this article cannot provide a comprehensive analysis of them.

The difference between these pre-digital examples and the novels published in the 21st century is the fact that the latter are created in a digital context, and thus embrace and react to the immateriality and disembodiment brought by it. In contrast to the new conventional reading that can happen across many platforms and media, these novels use the material dimension of the book to create embodied reading experiences that put physicality at the front of the narrative. These works resist the fluidity and immateriality of digital reading practices, and work best on the medium for which they are created: print-specific novels choose to work only in print and resist to be translated into other mediums*. This is achieved by generating a physical interaction of readers with the body of the book and forcing them to rethink the act of reading and of holding the object: for example, in *House of Leaves* readers are meant to turn the book in different directions; in *Tree of Codes,* the die-cut holes create different connections between the pages; in *S.*, the handwritten text on the margins and the loose pieces within the book slow down the reading and force readers to pay close attention to how they hold the object; in *Permanente Obra Negra,* the different sections create an open narrative to be constructed by the reader. These works are built by considering the materiality of the printed object as an integral part of narrative development.

Print-specific novels re-evaluate the conventions of the printed book in convergence with the digital environment and raise questions about the status of contemporary writing and reading practices. They constitute a reaction to the digital realm and also an acceptance. Julia A. Galm uses the term "hyperprint" to define texts that "both utilize and reject the digital by embracing the use of reading strategies and habits that form due to interactions with electronic media, while simultaneously exploring print materiality" (2019, pp. 1–2). The term could broadly be used to define the novels mentioned above, especially the prefix "hyper-" in reference to a "physicality that insists on a more tactile interaction with the reader than either digital or traditional print texts call for." However, due to the fact that these kinds of novels put the emphasis on the resistance to change form with ease and by doing so they foster physical and tangible interactions, this article proposes the term 'hypertangible' to define narratives that foreground the material dimension and create an embodied reading experience that works exclusively in print and resists being translated into an online environment. Besides, as Hayles (2008) states, in the 21st century all literature is computational, not only because the majority of the narratives and texts are written, designed and produced with digital technology, but also because they are thought and developed in a reality immersed in it.

* The majority of the examples mentioned above do not have a digital counterpart; or if they have an e-book version, it lacks some parts that can only be offered by the printed edition (e.g. the loose ephemera in *S.*).

2.2. Designwriting Print-Specific Narratives

In "To write: an intransitive verb?", Barthes (1966) identifies two types of writing roles: the author (*écrivain*), who just focuses on the writing without aiming to take readers anywhere beyond those words, and creating what can be labeled as a passive connection, author-reader; and the writer (*scripteur-écrivant*), who effectively aims to engage readers in an active way and make them part of the text. Thus, the latter is the producer of writerly texts.

The idea of the 'writerly text' can mean different things depending on the context in which it is applied. According to Glyn White (2005), Barthes focuses on the creation of meaning and regards the medium of print as a secondary device. He is not writing about design and does not refer directly to the physical dimension of literature. Yet, the context of this discussion is a consideration of how Barthes' theory could be interpreted as a design situation and what it means in terms of book layout and design. The distinction between passive and active writers and texts can be applied to the context of hypertangible narratives: writers become active agents who not only conceive the narrative as text but also take the material dimension into account.

It is important to recognize that authors (them being *écrivains* or *scripteur-écrivants*) can be involved in the way their texts look, this is not a unique aspect to novels that put an emphasis on materiality. The difference appears to lie in the intention of that involvement. What the writers who concern themselves with the material dimension are striving for is the creation of an active form of reading, one that is intentional and differs from a 'traditional' authorial interest. In this respect and for the purpose of this article, a further distinction seems appropriate in order to include the idea of the design interest, a sublevel to the writerly texts that is more specific to the consideration of book layout and design.

Zoe Sadokierski uses the term "designerly" (2010, p. 3) to define the way in which writers combine words and images, borrowing from the working modes of designers. This definition adds up to a new dimension of these kinds of novels and creates a connection with design methods. However, describing the designerly process as a combination of words and images would be to oversimplify a complex creative process and give it an ornamental signification, which would also transform the writing of this type of novel into a gimmick. In a process of design, there is a need to understand the contingency that the text designers are working with in order to create its graphic dimension. Therefore, authors can explore, in a more integral way, the dynamic idea of the narrative, by concerning themselves with layout and typography. This is in line with Starre's term of "writer-designer" (2015, p. 169), which he uses to describe authors who not only care about the look and feel of the book, but "in their texts, the components

of form, content, and medium converge into a tightly knit signifying structure whose parts cannot be interchanged without altering the overall effect."*

In the novel *Circular 22* (2022), in a section written as an experimental sort of diary†, Vicente Luis Mora explains that his subconscious has been, for two days, thinking about the novel he started "designing" in July and of which he only has some sketches and a rough "design" for several chapters (Mora, 2022, p. 601). This is not a random choice of words. In 2012, Mora already stated that the contemporary novels born in a digitally connected world need not only to be written, but also need to be designed. The term 'design' in this context does not literally refer to the arrangement of images and text of the editorial piece but, using the definition from the *Oxford English Dictionary* (2025), to the "purpose or planning that exists behind an action, fact, or object." This does not mean that writers nowadays need to have a thorough knowledge of graphic and book design to be able to create a novel. The term 'design', in this case, refers to a writing process that looks beyond the mere inscription of words on a paper or digitally, and considers the material level as essential for the development of the novel. This idea is explored in more detail in Section 3, which focuses on the creation process of *Woman's World* and explains the significance design had in the writing process of the novel.

As Mora argues, in novels that are born in a digitally connected world "design happens prior to the text, it means a reflection that goes before the actual writing and develops in parallel to literary creation" (2012, p. 101). Therefore, the introduction of design emphasizes the role of the writer as the active agent who constructs the narrative structure from an integral point of view. The process that combines writing and design strategies may be defined as 'designwriting', a practice in which writers consciously employ design strategies to produce works that consider narrative and material dimensions during the creation process. This connects with Steve Tomasula's claim that "at this early date in the 21st century, it seems that the novel [...] is once again a design problem" (2012, p. 445). Novels in the 21st century with hypertangible qualities appear to reflect the influence that the digital realm has on the construction of literature. As the following sections show, in the process of constructing these works, and

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* There exists scholarship that reflects on the definition and implications of the designer-as-author, such as Rock (1996) and Lupton and Miller (1994). However, the purpose of this article is not to define the role of the designers as authors in these narratives, but to understand how the authors can incorporate design strategies into their writing processes to foreground the material dimension of the work.

† The writer explicitly defines this experiment: "The procedure is simple: a discontinuous writing, held for a month and based on two rules: first, write about the present, about what is happening at the time of the very act of writing; the second rule consists of the fact that what has been written can be corrected, but not retouched" (Mora, 2022, p. 519). All citations of the author included in this thesis are translations from the original.

thus of making the page visible, giving authorial agency to readers and changing the role of the author, the role of design also becomes more relevant and gains importance as a writing strategy.

2.3. Foregrounding the Role of Design

In Section 2.1 it was said that materiality in novels has a rich lineage. Likewise, in most of the novels mentioned in that section, the authors appear to have thought about the materiality of the narrative from the first stages of the creative process. Sterne planned and oversaw the production of every single detail of his *Tristram Shandy* (Curtis, 1935; De Voogd, 1988; Williams, 2021), manipulating every visual device on the page to generate a specific reaction on readers. Saporta was interested in the idea of creating a narrative like an Alexander Calder mobile in which the elements of the structure can move and be influenced by the interaction of readers, and thus wrote *Composition No.1* on unnumbered pages and put them into a box (Knapp, 1976). For B.S. Johnson, the novel was a device for solving literary problems which cannot always be overcome through the verbal dimension but need a visual and embodied outcome to push the limits of the novel beyond conventions (Johnson, 1973). In *The Unfortunates*, he uses the unbound chapters to represent the unreliability of memory. Johnson describes the process in this way: "The key stage is finding the form. That happens between the first idea (the 'Ah!') and the filling-into-sections. Between those two points I work out the form suitable to the material I have in my mind" (Burns, 1981, p. 88).

In the 21st century, novels with hypertangible qualities are very much indebted to previous literary and artistic explorations: they explore materiality and narrative boundaries, and are also a product of an active author involvement in integrating material and narrative dimensions. The difference with the pre-digital novels is precisely that very word: digital. As Mora (2012) argues, writers cannot ignore the digital practices that surround books and reading, as they live surrounded by the influence of screens, social media, visual distractions, etc. Thus, similarly to the authors that in a pre-digital era explored materiality unconventionally by breaking established writing, production or printing ways of their time, 21st century writers may incorporate digital conventions and include them in their narratives to then challenge them, thus creating new print-specific reading experiences.

This is well-illustrated in the case of *Woman's World*. The novel constitutes a relevant example of a hypertangible narrative because it puts design at the centre of the creative process. Even 20 years after its publication, the novel is a significant example of how graphic design is turning out to be "the missing link between medium and content" (Starre, 2015, p. 171). As the next section explains, in *Woman's World* the author acts simultaneously as writer and designer, and constructs the physical dimension of the

narrative while also writing it. Graham Rawle creates a reading artefact where narrative and material dimensions are purposely woven together as one.

Writing a novel is a complex process. Yet, designwriting a novel that brings materiality to the front may demand a greater effort from the authorial figure as it adds an extra layer of participation to the process. It involves thinking about materiality and conceives the physical reading experience from early stages, perhaps even before any words are written, as the construction of *Woman's World* shows. However, this does not mean that for creating these kinds of works a writer needs to have design skills or even knowledge of the process of book design. Not every writer can have an artistic background or the willingness to work with collage as Rawle. Other examples, such as Jonathan Safran Foer's *Tree of Codes* or J.J. Abrams' *S.* show that materiality is present from the beginning of the writing process, although the authors were not involved in their design. In the case of *Tree of Codes,* a die-cut novel born out of another novel, the narrative was constructed as a collaboration between writer and designer (Sara De Bondt), and the work of the latter was fundamental in shaping and expanding its material dimension. *S.* is also a case of collaboration of different creative figures and processes, although it is a big production and is treated as such, with a big team that includes a producer-director, a writer, a production company (Bad Robot), a design firm, external collaborators, publishers, etc. In this case, even if materiality is taken into consideration from the start, design comes 'externally' and is not involved in the process from the very first stages of the project.*

Despite the difference in design processes, the aim of design in the writing process of hypertangible novels is to give specific solutions to specific problems: to integrate the narrative with the material dimension through a designwriting process. *Woman's World* indicates that design is not only a tool to give shape to a narrative, but a process that expands it. By weaving together narrative and materiality, it can create a unique object that offers a particular and embodied reading experience. As Roger Chartier claims:

> .. in contrast to the death of the author, according to Roland Barthes's expression, it emphasizes that the author can play, along with others (the publisher, the printer, the typesetters, the editors) in the always collective process that gives texts their materiality (2004, p. 148).

3. *Woman's World:* Writing and Design as Process

Woman's World recounts the life of Norma Little, a woman from the 1960s who lives in a small British town and appears to have built her character by constantly reading the

* See Ferrer (2024) for an expanded description and analysis of these novels.

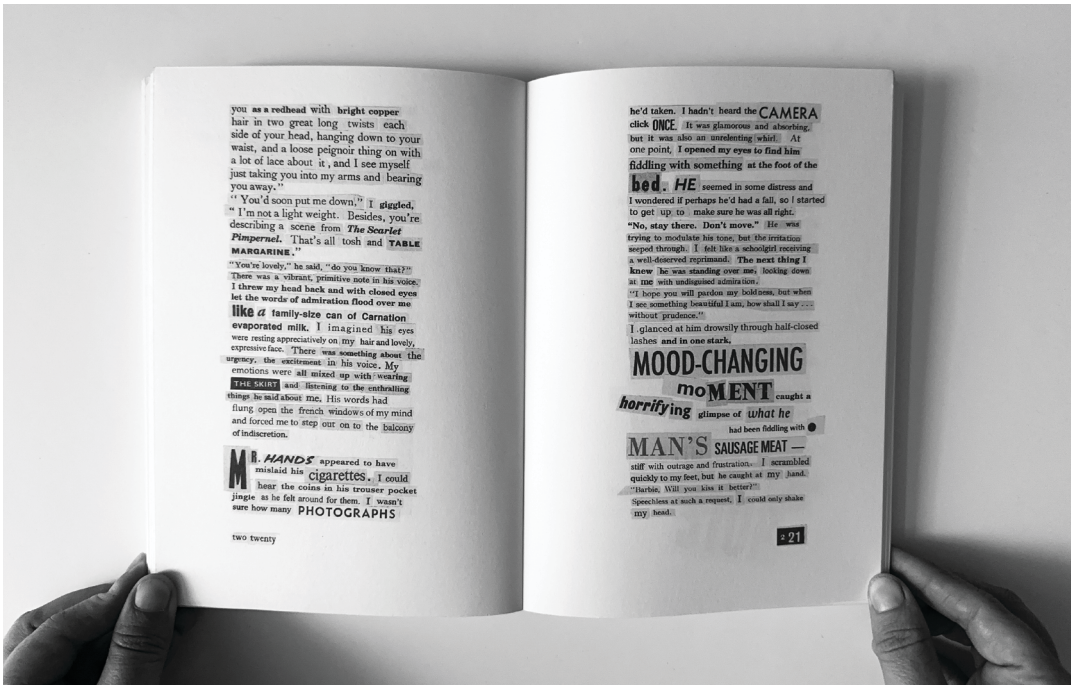

Figure 1. A typical spread from *Woman's World* by Graham Rawle (2005, pp. 220–221).

women's magazines of her time. As Figure 1 shows, this is visually represented in the cut-up and collage techniques used to construct and write the narrative, with actual material from magazines of that time.

The novel is written in the first person, narrated by Norma. As Rawle explains in an unpublished conversation with the author,* "the women's magazines were the perfect pool of material because they have such a strong voice. They are very self-righteous and opinionated, very dogmatic about how women should conduct themselves to be perfect in the world", without mentioning real issues or daily problems. Gradually, as the story develops, it becomes clear that Norma is in fact attached to her brother Roy. Attached, in the sense that she only exists as part of his personality. He is a man trying to be a woman: "Norma is born out of that idea of a woman caught in the shortfall between her own life and the expectations of the magazines." Also, as a man, the only available way for Roy to create a female persona is through the source material of the magazines, which leaves a big gap of information. A gap that is indeed reflected in the cut-up style of the pages, which gives the feeling that thoughts have been left

* Online conversation between the author and Graham Rawle, 11 September 2023. The conversation is unpublished, but Rawle has given his consent to use extracts for the purposes of this research. All direct quotations in this section are citations from the conversation unless otherwise stated.

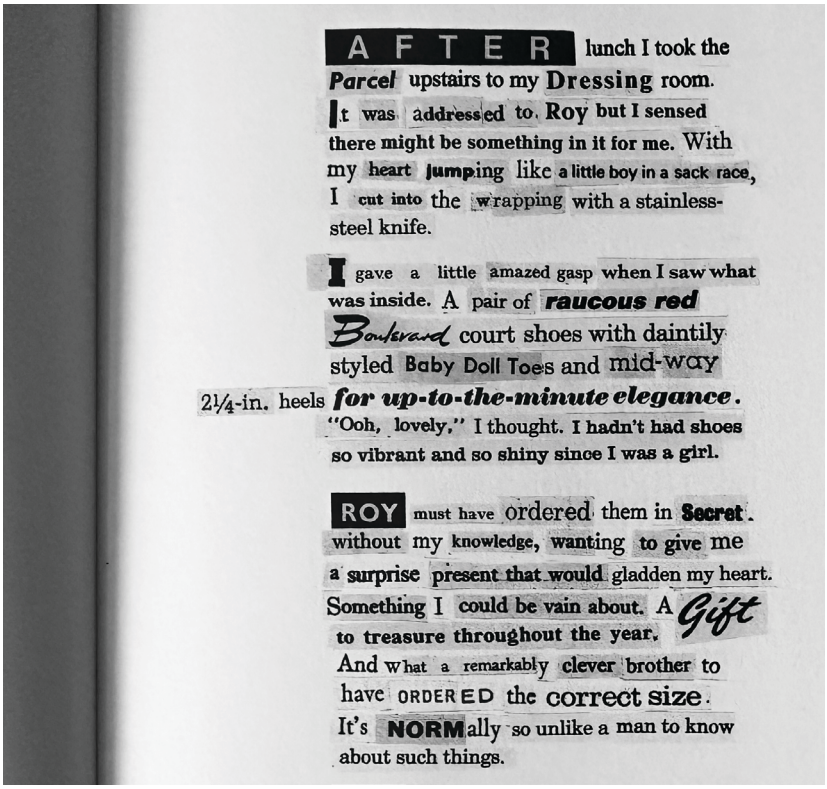

Figure 2. Close-up from *Woman's World* (2005, 23). The collage of the different fragments brings the self-righteous voice from the women's magazines of the time into the narrative.

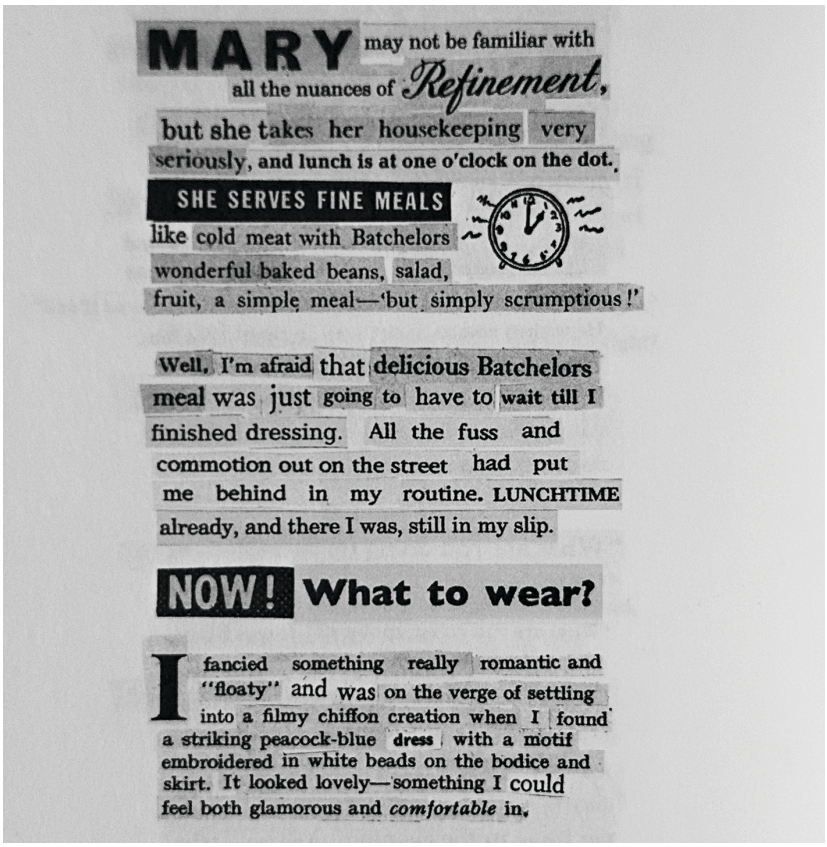

Figure 3. Close-up from *Woman's World* (2005, 18). The novel is made of fragments which are at some points, as the image shows, intervened with single words or elements from other fragments to provide continuity in the narrative.

unsaid and that at the same time contrasts with the triviality of the text, charged with the frivolous tone of vintage advertising. As seen in Figures 2 and 3, the novel plays with the limit between the light-hearted narrative, the informal structure of page composition, and the seriousness of what can be guessed beyond the collaged words. It is important to understand that the novel is not built out of single cut up words, which in a way would have been easier, but from fragments. These consist of entire paragraphs that enable the narrative to adopt the tone of voice and turn of phrases from magazine's articles and advertisements. These fragments eventually needed to be crafted or intervened with single words or elements from other fragments to provide the text with the adequate emphasis and blend it with the narrative.

3.1. Design and Writing *Woman's World*

Woman's World is the product of a complex development that combines narrative and material dimensions, each one simultaneously influencing the other. The idea originates with Rawle's previous work, *Diary of an Amateur Photographer: A Mystery* (1998), which is also built using bits of text and images, this time from 1950s books and magazines:

> I discovered that you could take the text out and make it into his [the main character] voice. [...] He is investigating a murder and using little bits of text that he was finding and introducing that text into his own journal. So he was cutting bits out of magazines and books that he was reading.

In this process, Rawle discovered that these fragments bring a voice over from the time in which the magazines were published, thus generating a deeper connection with the characters and the narrative.

The creation process of *Woman's World* started with the decision to work with women's magazines. The first step after that was to write the manuscript on the computer and, at the same time, to collect bits from the magazines that could be useful:

> Anything I read in the magazines or any typography that was interesting, but mostly things that I knew could have something to do with a scene from the manuscript I started to create as a Word document [...]. As I was writing it, if I found a phrase that I though I could use, I would take whatever original line I had and drop that in. But with a number reference so that the number of [the] reference relates to the actual physical text which is tipped into a series of scrapbooks.

Thus, while writing, Rawle generated a catalogue of fragments that allowed him to reference and consult while developing the narrative. This transformed into another digital document in Word in which narrative and fragments converge: each time he found an appropriate piece from the physical catalogue, he replaced the original text

in the digital document with the one from the magazine. Progressively, the narrative changes and evolves guided by the found text, shifting in ways that could not have been expected when writing the first draft. In this process, Rawle sometimes found it difficult to locate a specific piece from the magazines that fit the narrative, then it became necessary to go back to the draft to understand what the original intention of the narrative was, and adapt it to be able to include the most fitting bits from the catalogue. Initially, Norma and Roy were twins within the narrative, but gradually, in the process of gathering pieces and rewriting, the two characters transformed into the same person:

> Once I realized they were the same person, it was a much better story and also gave much more agency to the idea that he was constructing his story [...], he was plucking the words from the magazines and trying to assemble a narrative. [...] I think at that point I realized the form and the content had become one.

By simultaneously constructing form and content, the narrative evolved and was influenced by the design process that built the materiality.

Even if the gathering of the magazine fragments was manual and handmade, this first part in the creation of the novel was focused on building the digital manuscript. At some point in the process the initial text disappeared from the document and was replaced by the new text from the fragments, with numbers that reference the actual pieces in the physical catalogue (Figure 4). Once the manuscript was reviewed and finalized, the process of building the physical manuscript began. He worked directly, without previous sketching or storyboarding, on one side of loose pages that matched the size of what would be the printed book. He started with just a piece of paper and a column drawn in it to represent the type area. He had not tried to put together the pieces until this moment and so the visual dimension of each page appeared progressively as a surprise for him: "You don't really know what that's going to look like because you don't know all the original source material, you haven't seen it all together, so I could adjust as I went." This approach gave Rawle the creative freedom to play with the position of specific details and choose the best option for each composition and even play and surprise readers by creating an unexpected emphasis on a particular sentence, as Figure 5 shows with the oblique train cutting through the text:

> It was like tiling a bathroom. Really. It's like a mosaic. You just start at the top of the page and you have no idea what's going to happen. Slowly, you start to lay the tiles and you start to see. You start to push things out of the grid, you get a choice.

The last stage of the process consisted of scanning all the pages, which Rawle did himself, and using Photoshop to finalize some details, such as giving a bit more breathing space to some of the text:

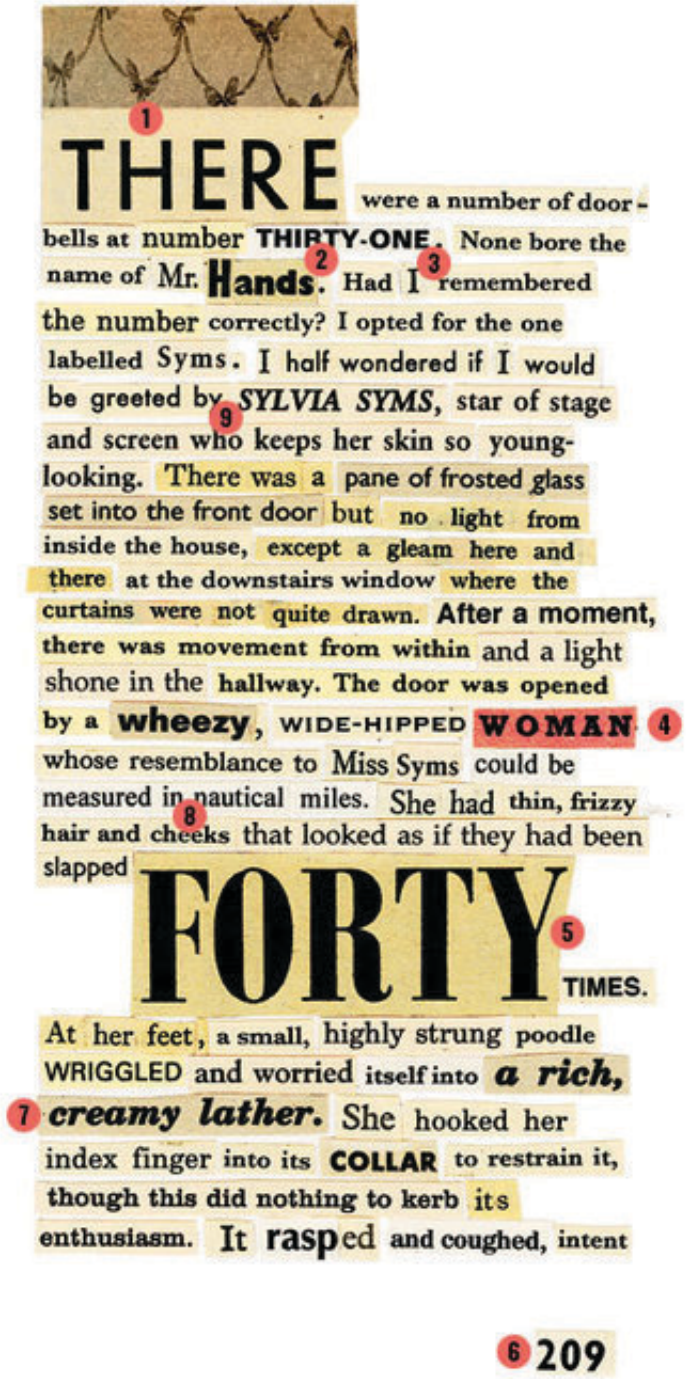

Figure 4. Original collage from one of the pages of *Woman's World* (2005) that shows the variety of colours from the different fragments and magazines. Image provided by Graham Rawle.

Figure 5. Spread from *Woman's World* (2005, pp. 264–265). While Rawle constructs each page, he plays with the composition and experiments with layout options to find the right visual emphasis for the narrative.

> I'm just on a piece of paper. It's very primitive, just stuck down. Later I had to Photoshop some little bits. A lot of the postwar women's magazines use very tiny type and also they set it quite solid and with very little lead.

Figure 6 shows a close-up detail from one of the fragments in which the extra space between the letters and words can be recognized. A deliberate and important decision at this point was to remove the color from all the pages and turn them to black and white. Removing the color meant stripping the pages from a layer of information that does not necessarily add anything to the story, and that could confuse and distract readers rather than foster a close reading:

> The idea was always for the book to be black and white. There was a kind of conscious decision to do that. I think it was for two reasons. When I put it into black and white, I could adjust the contrast so that it just slightly calms down, it's less distracting. The other reason was that it would make the book cheaper to produce.

The purpose of the project was to create a novel and not an artists' book or a unique expensive visual piece. Rawle wanted the novel to work on two levels: one is the fast reading of being engaged with the narrative, and the other is the slow reading and

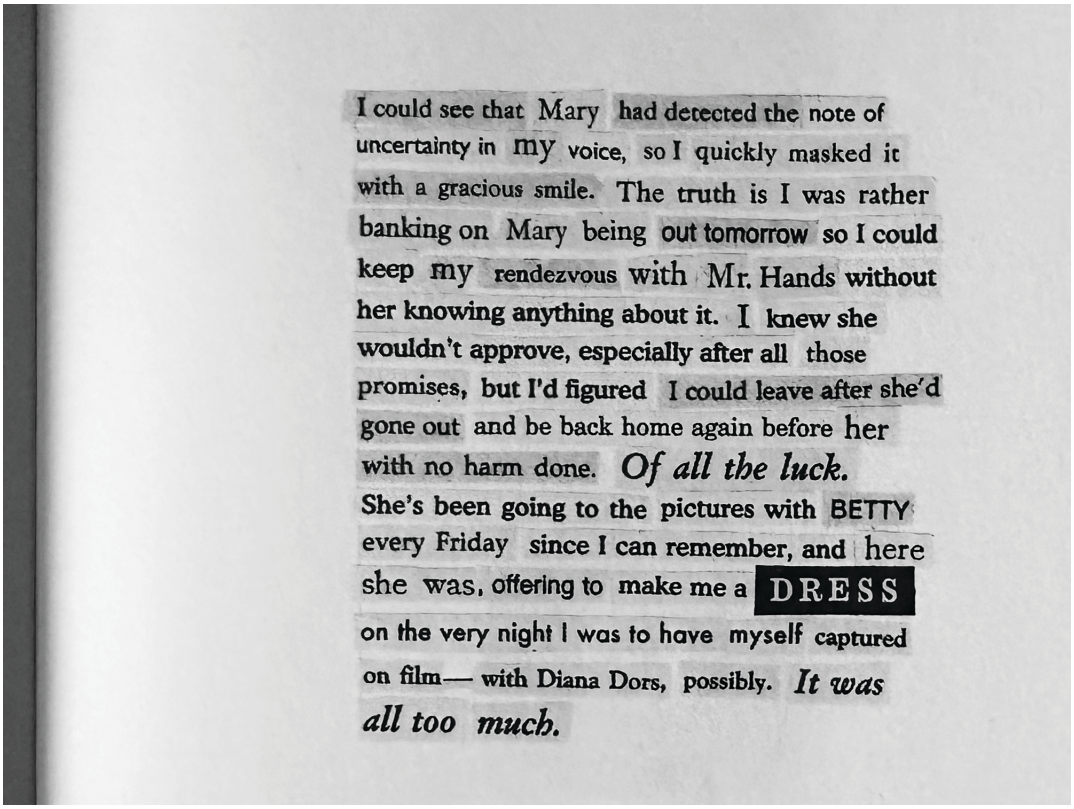

Figure 6. Close-up of page 121 from *Woman's World* (2005). Once the pages were scanned, the author used Photoshop to remove the colour and give more space to some pieces of text that appear too tight.

figuring out how the novel has been created as an artwork and what the source material might have been. The focus was put into creating a work that has a narrative and that can be read rather than just looked at. Therefore, finding a balance between narrative and material dimensions was essential.

3.2. Resistance to Change in *Woman's World*

The creation process of *Woman's World* gives sense to the concept of "deformational forms" stated by Liu (2009, p. 505). This is a hybrid work that combines analogue and digital techniques simultaneously. It starts off as a digital text that is influenced by fragments of print, the digital manuscript is then transformed into a physical document crafted by hand by the author, who scans the resulting pages and brings the document back to a digital format to be finalized and prepared for printing, as the diagram in Figure 7 illustrates. The result is a novel that represents the convergence culture in which analogue and digital media co-exist and influence each other, put to work together through a designwriting process, creating a piece that integrates narrative and material dimensions in a unique reading experience.

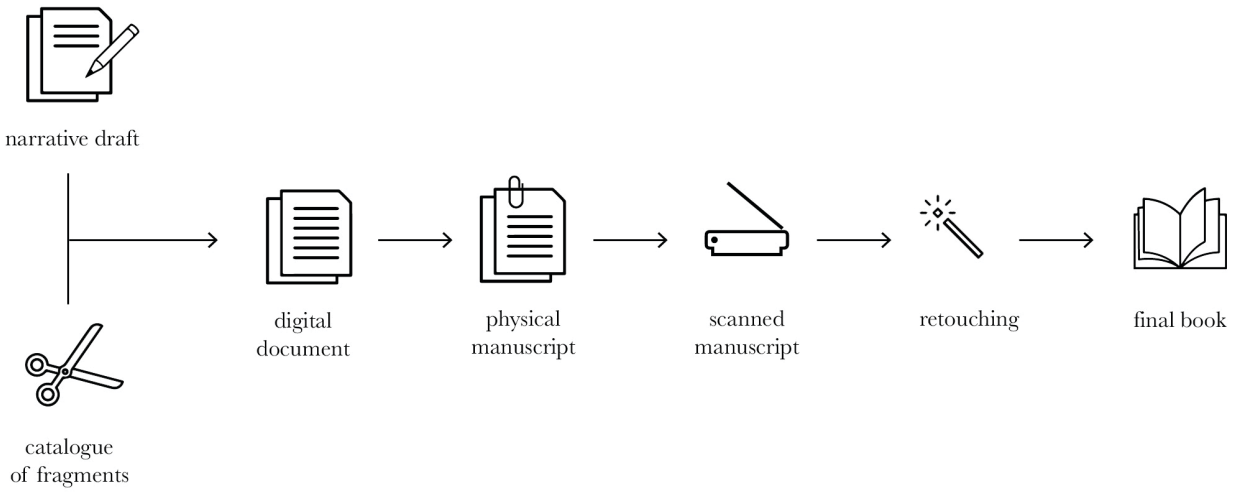

Figure 7. Diagram that illustrates the analogue and digital techniques employed in the creation process of *Woman's World* (2005).

Even if the cut-up and collage technique is not a novelty in the literary arena (as other examples such as William Burrough's *The Nova Trilogy,* 1961–64, or Tom Phillip's *A Humument,* 1970–75, evidence), the creative process of *Woman's World* reveals an intentional choice to prioritize the physical object by combining analogue and digital techniques, which could be considered an essential characteristic of hypertangible narratives. Through the many deformations suffered by the text, at both digital and analogue levels, the outcome is locked into its final form. The resulting pages work as images (as JPEGs even, to make more evident the hybrid nature of the novel), and therefore the text they contain is not fluid or responsive. It does not adapt flexibly to format changes or scaling as a conventional fluid and digital text would do. The text is created specifically to be contained within a defined page format, in combination with other words and layout elements that are also fixed. *Woman's World* is a novel that demands an effort because hinders automatic linear reading. Due to its nature as 'image', it takes a greater effort for the eyes to run through the words on the page (text changes continuously in size, shape, style, etc.), and thus the reading requires a slower pace to take in all the changing details of the page. If adding this to a digital experience through an e-book, the result would be an even more strenuous reading.

At the time of the conversation with Rawle, he was working on a film version of the novel. Rather than directly adapting the book into film, the idea is to adapt its creation process. For this purpose, Rawle uses an archive of clips from film footage to create a collage film. This process makes it problematic at some points to find specific clips that replicate word-for-word the details from the narrative. For example, there is a moment in which the main character breaks the heel of her shoe. The difficulty in

finding footage with the appropriate content (it was never the appropriate shoe or the correct shot), made Rawle understand the need to go back to the original narrative. In order to translate the novel into film, it becomes necessary to go back to the initial idea: rather than looking at the final text, he should look at the intentions of the narrative and see how the shoe moment (to continue with the example) can be replaced by another element that conveys the same sense of tension or despair intended with the original scene.

To conclude, *Woman's World* appears to work mainly in print and resists to move to another medium. The hypertangible quality of the novel can be recognized in the fact that it creates a resistance to change format. To do this, the narrative would have to undergo one more time a process of designwriting, as in the case of the film adaptation (which also means deforming the narrative once more), and thus integrate narrative and materiality specifically for the new medium. Besides, as *Woman's World* demands an attentive reading, it points to another quality of print-specific novels: slowness as a reaction to the speed at which information moves within the digital realm, which is made possible by using design as a writing process and bringing materiality to the front. Novels like *Woman's World* foster slowness and physical awareness, a thing that the digital world lacks.

4. Conclusions

The purpose of the current study was to examine the response to digital development in novels that foreground the material dimension of the narrative. As has been identified, while common narratives are exposed to a deformational status and shift platforms indistinctly, novels that bring materiality to the front make an intentional choice by using print as their primary medium. These novels have a hypertangible quality because they are a product of the digital, and at the same time put the emphasis on the resistance to change form with ease and by doing so they foster physical and tangible interactions. This reaction to hybrid and fluid reading practices comments upon the immateriality of information, the fast-paced virtual environments, and the permanent connection to digital devices. Today print is a choice, and the authors of these novels choose to put it at the front in order to integrate narrative and material dimensions as one, generating embodied reading experiences that cannot be obtained on any other medium. They represent a statement of the essential role print can still play in literature.

The article is limited to the study of one novel, *Woman's World,* which presents the characteristics previously described. Notwithstanding this limitation, the case study offers insights into print-specific novels that bring materiality to the front as both a response and acceptance of the new forms of reading and writing resulting from the

convergence of analogue and digital worlds. Rawle's novel uses the intricacy of the collage to build a visual narrative that hinders automatic reading. It forces readers to pay attention not only to the words but also to the page and the book. Reading it requires a slower pace to absorb all the changing details on each page. It fosters slowness and physical awareness, and emphasizes this aspect as a counter-reaction to the speed at which information moves within the digital realm.

The analysis of the case study also contributes to provide further understanding of the role of design in the writing process of novels that use their materiality to expand the narrative. Certainly, design has always been a part of the editorial process, but rather 'invisibilized' and generally at the service of the printed content. The fact that novels like *Woman's World* require design methods and professionals to integrate narrative and materiality speak about the significant part design plays in them. This foregrounds Mariano D'Ambrosio's claim that "the development of new digital printing technologies gives the writers easier access to explore the countless possibilities of page design, while also make it less expensive for the publisher to actually put to print such [explorations]" (2018, p. 87). Likewise, novels with hypertangible qualities appear to point as well to a shift from the side of the writers, who, in order to build integrated and embodied narratives, need to include materiality and design within the early stages of their projects.

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