Textual Bodies
Modernism, Postmodernism, and Print
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Many have commented on the unusual appearance of modernist novels, but few have bothered to examine what part is played by the unusual typography, paginal arrangement, and binding in the works themselves. Examining Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*, Stein's *Tender Buttons*, Joyce's *Finnegans Wake*, and William Gass's *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife*, Michael Kaufmann shows how these writers exposed the printed surface of their works and eventually made the print a part of the fiction itself.

Earlier English novels always presented themselves as printed artifacts—letters, diaries, logs—but by the nineteenth century, writers played down the physical form of the novel, positing the book as a space for tale-telling and not of reading. Print was simply the transparent medium that delivered the tale. In the twentieth century, modernist writers were aware that print had been subtly shaping language and consciousness, so they felt the necessity for exposing the printed page. To make readers aware of the print itself, modernists broke up the conventional arrangements of the page and the book.

Kaufmann shows the gradual opening of the "iconic space" of the novel from Faulkner and Stein to Joyce and Gass. Stein breaks with the conventional arrangement in *Tender Buttons* to split the husk of "meaning" that words had acquired through use. Her apparent nonsense turned out to be the only way she could find to make sense. Faulkner and Joyce employ a more conventional paginal arrangement, but bring their narra-

tives into the space of the page. *As I Lay Dying* speaks itself, physically enacting the narrative. The enactment calls attention to the printed surface and shows the composed rows of interchangeable type comprising the narrative. In *Finnegans Wake* Joyce overuses the conventions of print until they become visible as conventions. Readers see fully the various textual spaces of the book—*alphabetic, lexical, paginal,* and *compositional.* More spectacularly, the paginal space becomes narratival space: the printed characters on the page *are* the fictional characters.

The final novel studied, Gass's *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife*, meditates on its fictions, especially the fictions of its physical form, its body. Gass uses the textual space of the novel with a thoroughness similar to Joyce's. The book, the wife, sounds a simultaneous delight and despair at the form that gives her the little body of language but which also encloses her bodiless voice in a skin of print.

Recognizing the printed body of the modernist text as one of its defining features, argues Kaufmann, helps define high modernism, and identifies the modernist strain of some writers considered postmodernist.

For Cyndi
and the girls

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Introduction: Print and the Novel

The Printed Body of the Novel

"I'm only a string of noises after all—nothing more really—an arrangement, a column of air moving up and down" says Babs, the "wife" in William Gass's *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife*.[1] But the arrangement we see is a pattern of wavy letters set in black on a rough gray page. Since this lonesome wife is *in* the book, "authors" the book, and *is* the book in which we read that same passage, her observation touches on her odd constitution, her "verbicovisuality" as Joyce describes it in *Finnegans Wake*, and the odd printed voices that books are. She points out the contradiction between the silent printed lines of words on a page and the bodiless column of air expressed from our mouths in speech. Practiced readers are so accustomed to print that they tend not to consider the contradiction. The wife in the novel laments our blindness to her singularly printed body. "The usual view," Babs continues, "is that you see through me" (WMLW 46). The lonesome "author" points out our tendency as readers to ignore the printed page before us for what it "says." She fears that we are only interested in her for her mind, the information she holds.

Certainly, most authors do encourage their readers to "see through" the printed bodies of their works. "The spatiality of English texts," W. J. T. Mitchell writes, "is normally backgrounded."[2] Roman Ingarden, writing of readers' sense of the printed text while reading, comments that "in reading a printed text the individual letters and verbal signs do not have individual qualities for us; they simply do not matter." To attend too closely to them "would disturb us in reading." The nakedness of the printed page is too shocking to acknowledge; readers must pretend it is something else: "The verbal body of the book is

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simultaneously grasped as an 'expression' of *something other than it-self.*"[3] Ingarden's formulation proves the lonesome wife right. We do see through her, ignoring her "body" to stare straight into her "mind."

Strict attention to the physical form of the novel, in other words, runs counter to much of novelistic tradition and most of critical tradition. Authors do not want the printed bodies of their books to be gawked at, and designers help ensure that they are not. The best design, according to modern principles, should read clearly, automatically, the print serving only the meaning of the words. Such a concept of book design attempts to make print into a sort of "lucid" medium, a medium that suppresses its own presence for its content. In such a system of design, readers usually see the printed body of a book only when some irregularity—a misspelling or a broken character—calls their attention to it. They see imperfection but not careful design. They have been trained not to see print, but to see what it "means." The print seems to carry its information neutrally; it serves merely as a conduit for the information.

Readers, for their part, prefer not to be bothered with what they think of as merely the physical envelope of the novel. They want to get at the narrative events, so when they hold the book they pretend not to see the printed words but the events themselves. Readers gaze straight through the physical reality of the black print on the white page, the heft of the volume in their hands, to the more malleable "reality" of the fictional world in the novel.

The body of the book is treated as a shameful necessity that readers must look past even while staring at it. They must pretend to look through its flesh and into its soul. The printed page that they hold is not to be perceived as the paper and ink it is, but as something else—the events described by the narrative. The page forms a transparent window, opening up on what it describes.

Many modernist works, however, flaunt their bodies and invite the stares of their readers. They make it difficult or impossible for the reader to see through them. They show their printed bodies for what they are: print and paper. Though few novels call attention to their printed forms as much as Gass's *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife*, a great many works of the twentieth century disrupt, to one degree or another, normal print conventions. Such works are METATEXTUAL: they "show" themselves and comment physically on their material existence in the way that metafictional works comment on their fictiveness.[4] Metatextual works break up the print rectangle of the page and make the physical form of the book "visible" to expose print conventions and the effect of print on language. Typography, footnoting,

paginal arrangement, and chapter organization, all take on different visual configurations. The printed form of the work becomes part of the narrative, so that finally—in works like James Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* and William Gass's *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife*—the narrative occurs not on the "other side" of the page but directly in front of the readers' eyes on the surface of the page itself.

Since the works do comment on themselves, some may assume that the works I describe are simply metafictional. There is, obviously, a connection, but while all metatextual works are metafictional, not all metafictional works are metatextual. *Don Quixote*, for example, reflects on its existence as a text when the unnamed "second author," in Part I, finds Cid Hamete's notebook in the marketplace (after the archival material relating the Don's exploits ended in mid-story) and can continue the narrative. Similarly, in Part II we learn of the popularity of Part I and meet a character from a spurious continuation of *Don Quixote* by one of Cervantes's imitators. The objective existence of Part I is used in Part II to "prove" the existence of the "true" fictional characters over the "false" fictional characters. But such events are more metafictional than metatextual. The physical body of the text plays no visible part in the episode; it is only referred to. Though we see the fictionality of *Quixote*, we do not see the physical body of the book.

Metatextual books emphatically assert their print and paper bodies. For a work to be metatextual, it is not enough for the author to comment that the printed words on the page compose the book. Such comment may make us realize we are reading a work of fiction, but it does not make us see the page and the conventions guiding its production much more clearly. Often writers may not even directly comment on the text—Stein (in *Tender Buttons* at least) and Faulkner never or only rarely do so. What *is* necessary is that the authors force us to *see* that the book is composed of print and paper constructed according to established conventions: our attention must be drawn to the materiality of the book by the manipulation of its body.

We cannot avoid seeing the physical form of the book in the large point at the end of the "Ithaca" chapter in Joyce's *Ulysses* or the hand drawings in II.ii of *Finnegans Wake*. They confront readers in the same way as Faulkner's coffin shape and textual gap in *As I Lay Dying* or Gass's flowering asterisks in *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* with a disruption of normal practice, signs announcing that they are printed signs. By such a definition John Barth's "Menelaiad" with its layered quotation marks is metatextual but "Echo," though obliquely commenting on the fictional process, is not metatextual, at all.[5] Simi-

larly, Barth's *Chimera* refers to its existence as a manuscript and a book, but is rarely (only in its last line) metatextual.

Metatextual books and their authors protest that seeing the body of novels, print, as a neutral medium that merely contains information ignores the effect print has on language and meaning. High modernist writers intuited the phenomenon that Marshall McLuhan and, more recently, Walter J. Ong have explored: the format and conventions of print are part of the information conveyed.[6] This work examines how those modernist writers used the printed bodies of their books.

Metatextual authors do not pretend that print narrative exists in the same, immediate environment as oral narrative, where the teller adapts the tale to the current audience and the form of the tale itself derives from the exigencies of oral transmission. In an oral society nothing can be written down, so everything must be set in repetitive formulas in order to be remembered. Conventional narrative ignores its printed form and pretends to deliver its events as if they were the unrepeatable, singular occurrences of oral performance, even though the intricate and strong linear plots of the novel would not have developed without print and can be reread at any time.[7] Metatextual authors show the effects of print's repetition and codification on language, as Stein does in *Tender Buttons* or as Joyce does in the layered, repeating structures of *Finnegans Wake*. Instead of ignoring the difference between speech and print, they focus on that difference and force print and its conventions to show themselves and their influence on language.

Unfortunately, the habits of print have proven too strong and most critics have slighted the distinctive way in which some modernist writers incorporate the printed bodies of their works into narrative. Though definitions of modernism vary, most critics identify fragmentation and disjunction as a primary element of modernist form, yet slight the physical disjunctions of the text that so fragment the form. They glide through the physical form of the modernist text to its irony, or parody, or indeterminacy.[8]

To ignore the printed body of modernism is to ignore one of its most salient aspects.[9] Writers, like painters and sculptors, saw the influence print was having on language, and therefore on perception. Painters, fascinated with the newspapers, posters, programs, dinner menus, and other printed materials papering their world, constantly inserted them into their works. Writers too began to consider printed words and paper the materials of their art, and as visual artists called attention to pigment, canvas, wood, and cardboard, so writers called attention to print, the page, and the conventions guiding their produc-

tion. The materials of one's art, writers realized, comprised an important part of its final effect.

Some critics have made nods theoretically in the direction of the printed form of literature, especially poetry.[10] Gerard Genette, writing of both poetry and prose works, has insisted that the book be examined as a "total object." Further, Terence Hawkes observes that both poetry and prose "emit *iconic* messages about their nature through the visual means of typography over and above (or under and beneath) the *symbolic* messages [the lingual or "auditory" component] of their content. . . . The writer can choose to increase the intensity of this *iconic* message, or to decrease it, in relation to the *symbolic* message emitted by the 'content' of the writing."[11]

Those considering the physical form of prose writings are fewer. W. J. T. Mitchell has expanded Joseph Franks' notion of "spatial form" to include the material of the book. Carl Malmgren has created a theoretical system of "fictional space" in narrative, one part of which describes the physical space of the novel. Malmgren defines ICONIC SPACE as consisting of the deployment of "the sign vehicles of fiction in such a way that the signifying practice either resembles or becomes part of the signified reality." Further, he distinguishes four levels of ICONIC SPACE: ALPHABETIC (the space of the letters), LEXICAL (the space of the words), PAGINAL (the space of the page), and COMPOSITIONAL (the space of the chapters, index, appendices, etc.).[12] As Malmgren remarks, works exploring the "materiality of the discourse . . . are often dismissed as 'gimmicky,'" but "experimentation with ICONIC SPACE has as much validity as experimentation with other aspects of discourse and constitutes an attempt to multiply the types of space available for signification." Malmgren's theoretical system is admirably thorough and well considered, but more attention needs to be devoted to understanding the physical form of the book in individual works.[13]

My study begins with the simple question of what purpose the oddly shaped bodies of twentieth-century texts serve in the work. How do they function? In other words, why do these writers increase the intensity of the "iconic" (to use Hawkes's terms) aspects of their work? Or how should one see the various parts of "iconic space"— "alphabetic, lexical, paginal, and compositional" (to use Malmgren's terms)—as interacting and functioning in a work (such as, say, *Finnegans Wake*)?

To understand why modernist works use their physical bodies in the way they do, one must first explore the early novel and its use of physical form. The following examination of the physical form in earlier novels does not pretend to exhaust the topic or explore fully the indi-

vidual works; a complete survey of print and the novel is beyond the scope of this work. However, it provides a context for understanding twentieth-century writers' attitudes toward the physical form of their works and distinguishes their attitudes from earlier writers' attitudes toward it.

Physical Form and the Early English Novel

The early English novel, as embodied in the works of Aphra Behn, Mary de la Rivière Manley, Daniel Defoe, and Samuel Richardson, developed out of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century when print culture began to replace the older oral and scribal cultures.[14] The history and development of the early novel are intimately bound with the history and development of print. As Michael Holquist and Walter Reed point out, "In poetry and drama, the presence of the printed text is a secondary feature, subordinate to the phenomenon of voice or scene; this is true even if voice or scene are only perceived in the mind's ear or the mind's eye. Novels constitute a literature of the printed book and the peculiarities that this medium entails. . . . The novel was the first kind of literary work historically to experience the transition from 'work of art' to 'text.'"[15] Print, then, is one of the defining characteristics of the novel. Lennard Davis has traced the development of the modern novel out of *newes* (ballads and reports of recent events) and *nouvelles* (fictional tales and accounts based on fact). Printers, he writes, did not distinguish between factual and fictional narratives. Recycled ballads and journalistic items were presented as equally "true." Their truth resided primarily on the fact that they were printed.[16] Contemporary commentators lamented that there were those "who will believe no otherwise but that they [romances presented as histories] are true, and for this only reason, *Because they are Printed.*"[17]

Early English novelists similarly relied on print to support their claims to truth whether they offered fact recast as fiction (Manley and the *nouvelle*) or fiction as fact (Defoe, Richardson). They appealed to the physical form and its "documentary" reality. Not only did they claim to derive their works from actual documents (letters, recently discovered manuscripts, journals), but they often imitated the document in the printed form of the work itself.

Why this should be derives, at least in part, from the place of the document in English culture. Both English law, with "its validation of

the 'objective' testimony of documentary objects," and Protestantism, with its primary emphasis on the Good Book, the printed Word, stress the importance of the written word.[18] The status of the early English novels as documents (even if merely claimed) helped guarantee their authenticity.

Mary de la Rivière Manley's subtitle to the *Secret History of Queen Zarah* (1705), for instance, purported it to be "*Translated from the Italian Copy Now Lodged in the Vatican at Rome, and Never Before Printed in Any Language.*" The trope belongs to scribal culture, in which newly discovered manuscripts promised a copy less free from scribal error.[19] Older was better, closer to the source. "New" information came from older sources. In print culture, however, the latest edition, with the most up-to-date scholarly and editorial insights holds pride of place. Print shows itself as well in the subtitle. Manley adverts to one of the prime advantages of print culture—"*Never Before Printed in Any Language.*" The phrase refers to the dissemination print provides, making a previously "lost" or "unavailable" document open to any with the money to buy it and the learning to read it.[20]

Most other early English novels also present themselves as written documents in order to place themselves among other documentary objects, and in the process gain a corresponding degree of "objective" validation. Like Manley, Daniel Defoe poses in *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) as merely the editor of a manuscript, in this case Crusoe's journal and narrative. Distancing himself from the novel effects a guarantee of the "objective" status of the work.

Defoe takes the illusion of the novel as document further and presents the novel unbroken by books or chapters, as if he is actually printing Crusoe's manuscript. The only typographic break occurs when Crusoe presents his journal.[21] The printed body of the book authenticates that it is indeed a manuscript. The journal also serves the function "earlier" manuscripts typically serve in scribal ways of thought. One can see the later, narrative account, a redaction of the journal, as a distortion of the earlier (and therefore "truer") journal manuscript. Defoe proposes the journal as an earlier, more immediate source and uses the printed form of a manuscript broken only by dated entries to authenticate it further.[22] (Interestingly, a map of Crusoe's voyage appears as a frontispiece to the fourth edition [1719]— as if to document the tale further by giving a printed chart of the route.)

However, the journal soon veers from the rough notes of a typical travel journal (the kind the Royal Society recommended to ensure the accuracy of later accounts) into narrative summary and religious re-

flections on events on the island and Crusoe's spiritual wayward-ness.[23] After such digressions, Crusoe inevitably writes "But I return to my journal."[24] What once seemed the primary source, shows itself to be a retrospective commentary on the journal. By the end of his journal Crusoe offers an almost conventional narration. He often simply mentions the passage of days rather than making individual entries. Finally, he claims to have run out of ink and drops the pretense of the journal altogether.

The introduction of Friday into the narrative brings up the need for recounting conversations. Crusoe records his first conversation with Friday like a dramatic script, with each character's title (Crusoe names himself to the "Master" role) given before their lines. The dialogue that follows in the novel appears in the familiar style of alternating lines and passages identified with speaker tags (though not, originally, with the quotation marks that appear in modern editions; those were used only for verbatim quotations from other works). Defoe's book, originally presented as journal entries and then redaction, eventually becomes virtually indistinguishable from what we would consider novelistic form.

In the shifts Defoe makes in Crusoe's journal from the entries to narration and to dialogue, one glimpses not the flaws of naive artistry, but Defoe's efforts toward subtly eliding the "documentary" surface of the novel. Defoe's novel, initially presented as a print version of a written manuscript, edges toward a nineteenth-century narration in which the narrator pretends to address the reader directly. The preponderance of first-person accounts in early novels further promoted the "decreasing perceptual distance" that Lennard Davis posits as occurring in readers' experiences of early journalistic accounts. As readers became more and more used to the idea of reading about the recent past, they came to feel involved in the events described on the page. The printed page came to seem more of an extension of their own world.[25] That closer connection between the reader and events described on the printed page becomes even more prominent in the novel. The first-person narrator draws the readers in to experience the narrator's life "firsthand" and "as it actually happened."

Richardson's technique of "writing to the moment" attempts precisely such a connection between reader and narrator/letterwriter. In *Clarissa* [1747–48], Lovelace claims to write "as it was spoken and happened, as if I had returned and put down every sentence as spoken."[26] Such "writing to the moment" collapses the distance between the page and the events being described.[27] In *Pamela* (1740), the long, last Letter 32 during her imprisonment at Mr. B's consumes the rest of the novel and very nearly its epistolary format. (Richardson, like Manley and Defoe with their manuscripts, presents himself as an editor.) Though interpolated letters do appear in this part of the novel and Pamela is cast as writing the events in a letter, the letters are, at times, seemingly simultaneous with the events they describe, and the letter-writing, as with Crusoe's account, verges on narration. This is especially true during long sections of dialogue such as that between Pamela, Mrs. Jewkes and then Pamela and Mr. B during the attempted rape. As with the journalistic accounts commented on earlier, the perceptual distance between the reader and the events described collapses, as does (and along with) the perceived distance between events narrated and the time of the narration (or in this case the time of writing the letter). The reader becomes the voyeur/participant in the scene. Reading becomes "watching" rather than seeing words.[28]

After the initial presentation of the physical form of the novel in *Crusoe* and *Pamela*, it fades from sight, though in many ways, one might argue that the authors never actually meant for it to be seen. After all, the printed surface of the book pretended to show the scribal surface of a manuscript or a letter. The authors displayed the words in the novels not as *printed* words, but as printed imitations of written words. Thus while the dated entries, letter greetings and closings, forced readers to negotiate the physical form of the works, the authors used the form of their works not to reveal their *printed* bodies but to hide their naked fictions in the borrowed reality of printed documents. Unlike modernist writers who exposed the printed form itself, early novelists created a fiction of the physical form, intending their work to be accepted as a document amidst other documents, an acceptance made plausible by the prevalence of actual letters, biographies, histories, travel narratives, and diaries.[29] As Timothy Reiss perceptively remarks of Crusoe's constant appeal to Providence, it is as though Crusoe were saying: "I have authority of *my* discourse but I am not responsible for that authority and its manifestations."[30] The same statement applies to early English novelists themselves—Behn, Defoe, Richardson, and Manley depended on the physical form of the novel to effect and support just such a contradictory claim. As the editors of the documents, they implied, those documents have authority by virtue of their existence (their "actual" existence and their printed one) as documents, but they were not the ones responsible for that authority. They did not create the document, they merely presented it.

The Naturalization of Print, Metatextuality, and *Tristram Shandy*

First published only ten years after *Pamela*, *Tristram Shandy* (1759–67) seems to have little to do with its earlier contemporary. Its typographical displays, drawings, and references to its physical form seem to look ahead to later experiments in the novel. Yet Sterne's work too betrays, finally, the desire of other eighteenth-century novels and their authors to dissolve the physical form.

The stylebooks and grammars that flourished in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries continually attempted to devise systems that would make writing a transcription of speech. The intent betrays the contradictory attitudes toward printed language. The importance of rhetoric, a discipline devoted to oral presentation, fostered an identification in the eighteenth-century mind between writing (as well as print) and speech.[31] However, the attempt to make print a transcription of speech suggests a dissatisfaction with the limited expression available in writing and print. It shows a covert realization of what twentieth-century authors take for granted (though they fail to acknowledge it openly in the work)—printed language is different from that spoken. To erase their uneasiness with the disjunction, eighteenth-century linguists and writers tried to *make* writing and print into speech.

James Greenwood, in *An Essay Toward a Practical English Grammar* (1711), sought to render the perfect "Picture or Image of Speech" on the page.[32] James Burrow remarked similarly that "as Letters are the Marks of *Articulate Sounds*, and Words the Signs of *Ideas* and *Language* the Representation of *Thoughts*; so Writing and Printing may be deemed Pictures of Pronunciation. The *Pauses*, the *Accents*, the *Emphasis*, and even the Tone of Voice may, perhaps without Difficulty, be noted upon Paper."[33] By using different stops—comma, semicolon, colon, period, hyphen, parenthesis, and asterisk—as well as capitalization and various typefaces, these theorists hoped to impart visually the nuance and tone of the speaking voice. The quotation from Burrow demonstrates his use of capitalization, italicization, and punctuation to create a "picture of pronunciation." The numerous systems of writing, of which Burrows's and Greenwood's are only two, endeavored to mediate the split between print and speech and somehow marry the two.

Though the theorists differed on how this might be best achieved (whether capitalization or italicization was best for emphasis), the effect was the same. Despite the garish heterogeneity of the typography, they intended to make print less visible and transform it into an instrument for transcribing voice. The new conception of language, then, as an object to be studied had, at least initially, the paradoxical effect of making it "invisible," and marked the beginning of print's movement toward that end.

The imaging of speech by print paralleled the move toward a more "transparent" style that Thomas Sprat and the Royal Society, following Francis Bacon's notion of a new scientific language, attempted. The new "plain style" would restore the primitive purity of language before the Fall, when language echoed perfectly the reality it described. As Bacon explained his conception of this new, true style, it "adds nothing of its own, but only iterates and gives it back."[34] Language (and therefore print) was shifting from a system of signs or signatures containing hidden or allegorical significance to one that only referred to the things it named. Stylistically, ornament and flourish, anything that called attention to the language as language, were to be avoided. This stylistic prescription for writing eventually carried over to book design as well.

If one examines early typographical design, it suggests a strongly visual approach, one that calls attention to the design as a design. The frontispiece for Thomas Elyot's *The Book Named the Governor* (1534) completely ignores the "legibility" of the words—breaking them into unreadable bits—and arranges the type to suit a visual pattern set in a massive architectural frame to demarcate the space of the page:[35]

THE
BOKE
NA-
med the governour,de-
vysed by sir Tho-
mas Elyot
knight.

Unlike earlier books such as those printed by Caxton, in which the printed words fill a solid block on the page (as they would on a written manuscript), here the printed words are treated as objects to be arranged on the space of the page; print has not yet been so internalized nor design so sophisticated that they become "natural." The design dominates the meaning of the words rather than emphasizing it. It breaks from the normal manuscript arrangement, which usually ignores the "functional" visuality (i.e., easy legibility) of the text and serves more as a reminder for oral recitations of the text.[36] Green-

ood's planned system of typography, however, moved the design advances further and attempted to impart the speaking voice visually. int took on a visual "voice." Print became more "visible" so that it ould be "seen" less. The various typefaces and stops tried to make e meanings of words visible on their surface.[37] Once theorists assumed that the meaning of printed word could be reflected on its surface, print became subservient to the meaning it contained. In seeking accommodate print to the spoken word, the eighteen-century linguists used print against itself to make it "transparent."

Eighteenth-century linguistic theory and thought, then, must be considered when examining the printed body of Laurence Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* (1759–67). On first glance, it appears to counter the growing invisibility of the page that I have been tracing. Little about the physical form of Sterne's novel seems effaced. Readers come upon blank, marbled, and black pages, inserted documents (interestingly used similarly to the journal in *Crusoe*, for authentication), missing chapters later rearranged, literal "story lines," a textual flourish of Trim's cane, black letter legal comments, an author's preface in the middle of the third volume, an invocation near the end of the entire work, and on and on. Readers see the body of the book interacting with the narrative as well as becoming, in part, its subject.

In spite of such display, though, critics and the narrator himself comment on the conversational tone of the novel, on the centrality of its "speaker."[38] Tristram points out that "writing, when properly managed (and you may be sure I think mine is) is but a different name for conversation."[39] In fact, the eighteenth-century linguists' attempt to make printed language into a visual equivalent of speech—a sort of printed voice—shows up more directly in Sterne than in either Defoe or Richardson.

Sterne's use of print suggests his familiarity with the linguists' theories about print. While Richardson sensed the "literary possibilities of punctuation marks," Sterne took such a sensibility one further, carefully varying dash length to create ever more subtle nuances of speech, and thereby naturalizing the printed to the oral.[40] Sterne's technique, then, does not work contrary to Richardson's—the contemporary he seems least like—but in essentially the same manner. Print dissolves into the voice, in this case into Tristram Shandy's voice, for the autobiographical form of the novel focuses our attention on Tristram writing alone in his room addressing an imaginary audience.[41]

A metatextual reference like the two instances of missing or delayed chapters at Book 4.24 and Books 9.18 and 19 do point to the physical form of the novel, but turn into more of a plot device (withholding important information to comic effect, as in Uncle Toby's misunderstanding of the Widow Wadman's request about the location of his wound—he thinks her question geographic in nature rather than physical). More important, textual references typically call on the reader to imagine a reality on the other side of the page, to look "beyond" it more than "at" it. "The truest respect which you can pay to the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself" (Book 2.11). Thus, the blank page provided for the reader to image the Widow Wadman, importunes the reader to "paint her to your own mind . . . please but your own fancy" (Book 6.38).

Readers are enjoined to create a fuller world, albeit a theatrical one ("I have dropp'd the curtain over this scene for a minute"—Book 2.19), in which the imagined gestures of the characters override the gestures of the text. Trim's eloquent dropping of his hat to underscore the transience of mortal flesh and his equally fitting flourish of his cane to express the sweetness of bachelorhood point to a gesture beyond the page. In the latter, readers again see the text, in the ink squiggle, but are pushed to Trim's stick flourishing in a gesture for which "a thousand of my father's subtle syllogisms could not have said more" (Book 9.4).

The dramatic sense of the novel pushes the reader's attention away from the page and toward Tristram's descriptions of the doings of Uncle Toby, Mr. Shandy, and the rest of the Shandys.[42] The "speaking" voice spontaneously commenting on and acting out the events of the narrative draws the reader to it through the page. Thus, the printed page becomes more an unavoidable obstruction that the reader must *see* through (though Sterne continually reminds us by his use of the physical form of the text of the difficulty of so doing) than an object of contemplation.[43]

What distinguishes Sterne's use of the physical form of the novel from that in the twentieth century is his belief in his ability to "overcome" the printed text, to control it for his own ends. Twentieth-century writers are less sure of the possibility of communication and the malleability of print. Sterne, however, feels that he can always manage his printed pages as easily as his conversation. Some have interpreted Tristram's comments on the endless misunderstandings in the Shandy family to suggest Sterne's mistrust of language, but the comments have more to do with the Shandys than with language, and even Tristram's protestations on the possibly salacious connotations of particular words are more carefully calculated devices to preserve

his appearance of innocence than comments on the slipperiness of language.[44]

What we witness in the eighteenth-century use of the physical text in the novel—in Richardson's *Pamela* as well as in the metatextual *Shandy*—is the gradual naturalization of the voice to printed page. Readers began to internalize the conventions of print—the neat printed blocks of right-justified type, nicely numbered, replete with running heads—so the rift opened between print and the voice appeared healed. The high value put on the informal (and therefore oral or conversational) discloses an attempt to hide the formality and highly conventionalized nature of the interchange.[45] The apparent informality of tone was designed to make print seem "natural," unmediated by the physical form. The informal style in "familiar" letter writing had long accomplished the same for writing. The process was merely transferred to novel in the "written" forms of journals, letters, and autobiographical accounts such as *Tristram Shandy*.[46]

The effort at naturalization reveals the crisis print brought to language—furthering the separation of language from its source that writing initiated, giving language its own life—even as it shows naturalization concealing the crisis. *Tristram Shandy* is a focal point for this process of revealing and concealing. Robert Alter calls *Tristram Shandy* the first novel about the crisis of the novel; I would call it the first novel about the crisis of print.[47] The linguistic project of creating a printed voice was an attempt to avert the crisis brought on by the clash between an oral culture (which the eighteenth century had largely been until its end), which relies on context for meaning, and a print culture, which must develop strategies for cuing the reader to the context, by naturalizing print to the voice. If print could be shaped into a visual voice, no apparent contradiction between the static surface of the page and the lively movement of the voice would remain. The author could pretend to speak *through* the page.

The Printed Voice and the Nineteenth-Century Novel

The oral bias of the eighteenth century continued into the next century.[48] Nineteenth-century authors continued and furthered the pretense of speaking to the reader through the page. Because improvements in print technology made print widely available (steam presses and stereotyping introduced early in the century lowered costs) and increasing literacy made it more familiar, the physical fact of the page

faded.[49] Focus turned from the book itself to the information it "contained," just as the words that comprised them were now regarded as containing meaning.[50]

One measure of the shift in attitude toward the physical form of the book can be gauged by the fact that nineteenth-century authors who presented their works as deriving from historical documents felt no need to present the document itself (or rather the printed appearance of such a document). In *The Scarlet Letter* (1850), Hawthorne's narrator discovers a letter—the letter A—and some "notes" on Hester Prynne, but he does not present the document itself as Defoe did in *Robinson Crusoe*. Hawthorne's narrator only takes his hints from the notes, interposing himself between his readers and the documentary evidence, documentary evidence which is itself already secondhand and which the narrator admits to using only as the basis for his tale.

The reality of the work was no longer defined by the physical form of the book. The focus lay primarily on the narrative rather than on its physical form. In fact, the fiction of the printed voice had become so ingrained and print so transparent that using documentary form directly broke the illusion of realism that it had originally been enlisted to support because it drew attention away from narrative events and toward the narrative form. Letters, written documents, journals became obtrusive anachronisms, awkward devices that readers could no longer accept as real. Sir Walter Scott, for example, complained that epistolary form obliged the action "to stand still while the characters show all their paces. . . . [And] characters must frequently write, when it would be more natural for them to be acting."[51] The voice on the page no longer needed to be "explained" by its physical form as a document. In fact, it was the documentary form that could not—as Scott lamented—be explained.

Like Thackeray's "Manager of the Performance" in *Vanity Fair* (1848) or Pip in *Great Expectations* (1851), nineteenth-century narrators tend to be presenters and storytellers—either presenting the narrative, as in Thackeray's novel, or themselves and their stories, as in *Great Expectations, Moby Dick* (1851), or *Huckleberry Finn* (1885). Such a situation does allow for the possibility of exposing narrative workings and artifice—as Thackeray's or Trollope's narrators at times do—but does not necessarily reveal the physical text. Though the narrator may nod in the direction of the page with addresses to their "dear readers," nowhere are readers reminded of the fact that they are reading words on a page *by the physical form of the novel itself*. They are put much more in the position of "listeners" rather than readers—even though they are obviously not listening at all.[52]

The uncertain origins and status of Huck Finn's narration in *Huckleberry Finn* illustrates the extent to which print had been naturalized to the voice. Huck "writes" to the reader but does so without the need of a fictional journal or collection of letters. In the opening he mentions "that book" by Mark Twain, signifying by implication the existence of "this" book, the one he is creating (writing does not seem quite the proper word). At the close he reminds readers again, telling them that if he "knowed what a trouble it was to make a book I wouldn't a tackled it." The fiction of the physical form has lost its effect, as, perhaps, has the need for historically authenticating narrative. Though Huck seems aware of "his" book, he speaks as if he is telling his readers a long tale. The book denies its printed form. It plays no part in the novel.

In *Huckleberry Finn* the authenticating feature is its unlettered style. Huck seems truthful, in part, because he seems too innocent to lie (to the reader) intentionally. He seems incapable of lying because his style is "naive" (read oral). Huck's syntax and phrasing emphasize his unfamiliarity with writing and print, but his spelling is only intermittently irregular, departing from convention at the opening and closing of Huck's narrative only when he attempts to spell "sivilize." The misspelling serves as a rebellious acknowledgment and defiance of the standardizing and civilizing of language wrought by print. Huck and Twain have been there before.

The oral or informal style of the novel, which reaches one extreme in *Huckleberry Finn*, displays how thoroughly print has been internalized, how thoroughly it has come to seem "natural." As with Crusoe, Huck's homely, unbookish style (i.e., not according to the grammars, spellers, and dictionaries) is defined against print conventions as "natural" and therefore authentic. As with Defoe, only familiarity with print (the sort Twain as a journeyman printer and sometime publisher would have) could allow the complex handling of language to make it appear artless.

The Crisis of Print and Metatextuality in Twentieth-Century Writing

To understand the crisis of print in the twentieth century, one needs to understand the contradictory attitudes of late nineteenth-century writers toward language and style. The "transparent" language that the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century linguists had theorized and at-

tempted proved impossible to maintain when thousands of newspapers and cheap books flooded the public daily. By the late nineteenth century the omnipresence of print made obvious the division between speech and print that earlier scholars had papered over.[53] The printed voice of the nineteenth-century page began separating as linguists such as Michel Bréal and Otto Jespersen shifted attention away from inscriptions and written documents to speech. Language, Jespersen insisted "means speaking, and that speaking means action on the part of a human being to make himself understood by somebody else."[54] Spoken language became more apparent as an entity separate from written or printed language. The unresolved identification between speech and print started to erode. Print and writing, for Jespersen and his fellow linguists, petrified rather than preserved language. While writers like Coleridge looked to the literature of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and the King James Bible to define a *lingua communis*, the linguists felt that such written, literary language, in comparison to spoken dialects, suffered the same petrification and loss of regenerative power as Latin and other dead languages.[55]

Early Anglo-American modernism developed out of these contradictory attitudes toward print and speech. Walter Pater, following Coleridge, insisted that one must write English "more as a learned language," attempting to balance the bustle of the new and colloquial, with the weight and subtlety of the archaic and erudite.[56] Pater clearly identifies the spoken with liveliness, but just as clearly values writing over speech. His younger contemporary Oscar Wilde, however, felt that Pater's attempted balance made his writing "far more like a piece of mosaic than a passage of music," even accusing Pater's writing of lacking, at times, "the true rhythmical life of words."[57] The print blanketing the country, Wilde feared, had induced a deadly rigor mortis in the language: "Since the introduction of print, . . . there has been a tendency in literature to appeal more and more to the eye, and less and less to the ear. . . . We, in fact, have made writing a definite mode of composition, and have treated it as a form of elaborate design."[58] The only cure, thought Wilde, was "a return to the voice. That must be our test." Such a move would stifle the tendency (exemplified by Pater, who often did set essays in type at his own expense while revising to judge the final effect) to write strictly for the confines of the printed page.[59]

But the new voice Wilde described sounds remarkably similar to Pater's prescription for writers. The voice, Wilde wrote, must be enriched and "different from actual use, a language full of resonant music and sweet rhythm, made stately by solemn cadence, or made

delicate by fanciful rhyme, jewelled by wonderful words."[60] If Pater accommodated speech to his writing while favoring the written in his style, Wilde included the written covertly. Wilde called for a language *"different* from *actual* use (my emphasis)," "full of resonant music and sweet rhythm," with "solemn cadence," "fanciful rhyme," and "wonderful words." The description betrays his Paterian sense of style in the polish he desired his "jewelled" words to have and their difference from "actual use." Different from speech, the words must be closer to writing, a sort of spoken writing or writing with the spontaneity of speech. Wilde's spoken style reveals the Derridean speech that is already "written." Indeed, Wilde's dilemma may account for his meager output; unable to adapt speech to writing, he gave his most brilliant performances in his conversation. To Yeats, the later, printed versions of Wilde's tales seemed marred by "verbal decoration," the same damning charge Wilde laid on Pater.[61]

Metatextuality and Modernisms

Pater's and Wilde's work, artistic and critical, shaped early modernist thinking, though in opposite ways. Their artistic works were rejected and their critical thinking silently assimilated. Consequently, the opposition of spoken language versus literary language continued in covert form. Two strains in early modernism emerged in response to these earlier contradictory positions.[62] Those favoring spoken language (Yeats, Frost) sought to ameliorate the deadening effect of print with speech. Those favoring a new experimental language (in effect a new literary language) sought to achieve a new reality in language and tried to use words as things (Pound, the Imagists), something that printed words—already objects themselves—made easy. Both of these early modernist positions sought a more authentic language— one truer, in their thinking, to reality.[63] The first group hoped to infuse life into a moribund language with the vernacular. The latter reached toward a realm beyond language, ignoring the fact that their works were comprised of language and desiring a structure to contain, as George Steiner describes it, "a matrix of thought more immediate, more fluid and intense than that of language."[64]

W. B. Yeats and Ezra Pound exemplify the extremes of each position. Following his countryman Wilde (but inspired more by a vision of Irish oral and folk culture), Yeats championed Irish poetry and Irish stories, which "were made to be spoken or sung," over English

literature, a literature "all but completely shaped . . . in the printing press." For Yeats, the incessant pounding of the printing press had hammered the English language to death. Writers, consequently, "have begun to forget that literature is but recorded speech." Despite his attention to the spoken, Yeats had to admit that, for the literate, the influence of print was hard to escape entirely: "even when we write with care we have begun to write with elaboration that which could never be spoken."[65] Pound, for his part, followed Mallarmé's injunction that "the rhythm of a sentence about an act or even an object has meaning only if it imitates them and, enacted on paper, conveys in spite of everything some element of that act or that object" (though ultimately Mallarmé proposed to transcend both print and speech).[66] The imagist project derived from this desire, as Andrew Ross notes, for "a plastic transcription of experience," for "words that become or behave like things."[67] Henceforth, poetry would create the image, "an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time," and the "natural object" would always be "the adequate symbol." Pound's intent to use natural objects for his symbols betrays a subtle—and impossible—shift from language to reality, for one cannot introduce natural objects into one's poetry without language, though Pound pretends it is possible.[68]

Both of these early modernist positions, though, look little different on the page than nineteenth-century literature. Both assume a transparency of print. One attempts to reproduce the voice (Yeats's writing as "recorded speech"), and the other attempts to use words as things. Though the latter might seem a metatextual approach, readers are not to see the printed words themselves but the objects they represent. Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" does use the spacing and arrangement of print, but the poem as a printed object is only a little more visible than the Japanese haiku after which it is patterned. Pound intends more that we see his superimposed image of "The apparition of these faces in the crowd" and "the petals on a wet black bough" than the printed words that compose the lines.

Pound's imagist aesthetic also shows the conflation of spoken language and literary language. His insistence on "direct treatment of the thing" necessitated the jettisoning of "poetic" language and ornate figures of speech. This does not dictate the vernacular but it certainly presents a predilection for it.

Hemingway's early writing exhibits the same early modernist conflation of positions. His "direct treatment of the thing" attempts to convince the reader of the solidity of his fictional world with his taut sentences, a tautness that depicts Nick Adams's taut, well-pegged