VISUAL WRITING:

A critique of graphic devices in hybrid novels, from a Visual Communication Design perspective

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Certificate of Authorship/Originality

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I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signature of Zoë Sadokierski

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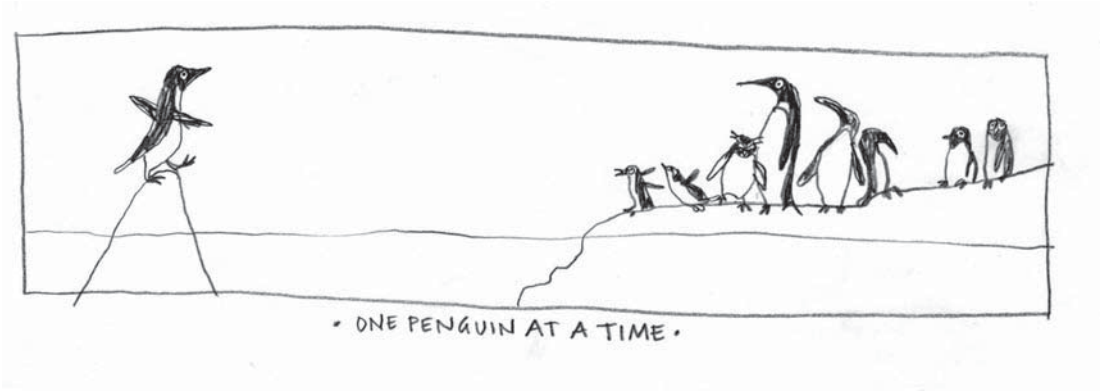

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Preface

This document breaks two of the presentation guidelines for a doctoral thesis set by the Graduate School at the University of Technology, Sydney. Here, I justify why.

First, the presentation guidelines stipulate that examiners' copies must be printed single sided. This exegesis is designed as a double page document because at times it is important to compare images that appear on facing pages.

Second, producing a list of 'illustrations' is difficult – images within this thesis form a significant part of my argument. Often, images are integrated with written text, rather than separated as 'illustrations'. This will become clear as the argument is established.

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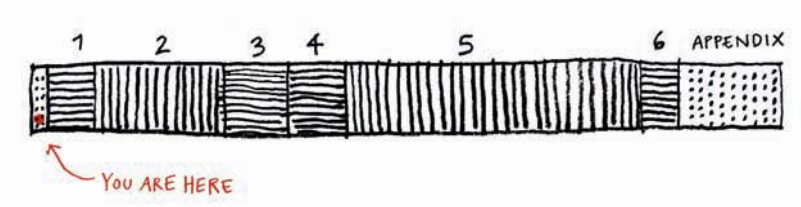

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Abstract

This thesis examines *hybrid novels* – novels in which graphic devices like photographs, drawings and experimental typography are integrated into the written text. Within hybrid novels, word and image combine to create a text that is neither purely written, nor purely visual. Although not new, hybrid novels are increasingly appearing in commercial publishing, and increasingly recognised as an insufficiently explained phenomenon by both literary critics and academics.

Book reviews and essays show that readers and critics accustomed to conventional novels can find hybrid novels perplexing. They ask: What are these images? What are they doing in novels? How does one 'read' them? These questions point to the need for new approaches to the analysis and critique of hybrid texts, approaches that account for the interplay between words and images. This thesis proposes that Visual Communication Designers – those versed in both the verbal and the visual – offer useful analytical tools and critique for the study of hybrid texts. So the research asks: How could a designer's particular knowledge of word-image interplay explain the function of graphic devices in hybrid novels?

A preliminary study of fifteen hybrid novels develops: criteria for identifying hybrid novels; a typology of graphic devices in hybrid novels – photographs, illustrative elements, unconventional typesetting, ephemera and diagrams; and a set of analytical tools to critique the effectiveness of the graphic devices in hybrid novels. Then, a primary study uses the analytical tools to critique the graphic devices in three exemplar hybrid novels: Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close*, Steven Hall's *The Raw Shark Texts* and Dave Egger's *You Shall Know Our Velocity*.

This thesis is practice-led in that an issue identified through my design practice led to the research, and analytical and critical tools derived from practice are applied as research methods. The research also draws upon a theoretical framework from the emergent field of Visual Studies, where scholars call for the interdisciplinary study of hybrid texts in a critically acute and widely accessible way.

Finally, this thesis is itself a hybrid text; a combination of graphic devices and writing form parts of the argument.