

# Patchwork Girl

*Shelley Jackson*

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## **Patchwork Girl** Shelley Jackson

CD for Macintosh and Windows. The acclaimed hypertext re-working of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, now in its 6th printing!

## **Patchwork Girl Details**

Date : Published January 1st 1995 by Imprint unknown

ISBN : 9781884511233

Author : Shelley Jackson

Format : CD-ROM 300 pages

Genre : Horror, Feminism, Sequential Art, Graphic Novels, Science Fiction, Fiction, Social Issues, Class



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# From Reader Review Patchwork Girl for online ebook

## Miclan Quorpencetta says

Shelley Jackson's classic hypertext *Patchwork Girl* was a quicker read than I expected. I spent about two hours altogether before deciding there were no unread sections remaining, so I would consider this a short story rather than a novel. Still, it was a fun story- gothic steampunk, but with a feminist edge. The action follows a female monster, begun by Dr. Frankenstein and finished by Mary Shelley, who is apparently better adjusted and sexier than her male counterpart. The theme of the joining of diverse parts is echoed in the structure of the novel, which consists of paragraph length lexia, linked into five main sections, on a Storyspace platform. While not difficult to navigate, the 1995 interface seems dated to the modern eye. This quality actually gives it a strange sense of fragility sometimes found in the crumbling pages of ancient books, and adds gravity to the reading experience. The lexia are read in varying order, depending on the actions of the reader, and thus they are written to stand somewhat alone, leading to a poetic style in which description is foregrounded and plot is minimal. Jackson's success with the hypertext medium recalls the feeling of possibility and wonder that accompanied the birth of the Internet, and it is hard to understand why so few writers have followed in her footsteps.

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## Amanda Abend says

<https://thewandererliteraryjournal.wo...>

Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* demonstrates how intertextual allusions are used as piecework in order to construct new literatures together from various sources of the past. Presented in hypertext format, *Patchwork Girl* uses intertextual allusions borrowed from canonical texts such as Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and L. Frank Baum's *Patchwork Girl of Oz* to create a new work inspired by and in reference to Shelley and Baum's works, reinterpreting their ideas and making them modern. The work of *Patchwork Girl* proves that literature has always been intertextual - writers have forever been influenced by other writers. We are all only standing on the shoulders of giants.

By assembling a work that borrowing from various influences, *Patchwork Girl* illuminates multi-vocality, intertextuality and hybrid authorship. *Patchwork Girl* adapts both L. Frank Baum's *Patchwork Girl of Oz* (1913) and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) in an effort create a conversation between herself and authors of the past. "There is a continuing tradition of poets and programmers collaborating in the creation and use of authoring systems for generative literature" (Malloy, 32). Writers are influenced by other writers. The text of *Patchwork Girl* "renovates an ancient past as inspiration for modern literature" (Pressman, 304).

## FRANKENSTEIN

*Patchwork Girl* immerses the reader in the act of piecing fragments of the story together, reminiscent of the sewing of a quilt. The 'pieces' of *The Patchwork Girl* are borrowed and reinterpreted from *Through the assemblage of the female monster by 'stitching' together body parts collected from various sources, the patchwork girl herself constructs her own identity from the borrowed body parts as reference points. This act of piecework references the fragmented characters from Mary Shelley's Frankenstein monster, as well as*

Baum's Patchwork Girl of Oz, characters who are both constructed from borrowed scraps.

## BAUM

The Patchwork Girl of Oz shows a direct correlation to the Patchwork Girl in style and make "The Wizard of Oz can no longer be regarded the work of a single author" (Griswold, 465). Baum recognized that, while fairy tales were "collected by the Grimms and Perrault and Lang, these tales were, in fact, the community property of the oral tradition and told by professional storytellers, and sung by wandering minstrels" (Griswold, 466). For example, Baum may have been influenced by Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* when writing these Oz tales that seemingly address the meaning of life: "if you prick us, do we not bleed? If you tickle us, do we not laugh? If you poison us, do we not die?" (*The Merchant of Venice*, 3.1) Shylock's speech in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* is loosely referenced in both Baum's *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* and Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*, reminding us that we are all human - the same, all equipped with the same faculties and therefore the same [types of] experiences, the same pains and comforts of emotion. For *Patchwork Girl*, working off this ancient idea of life as life for everyone validates *The Patchwork Girl*'s existence as a living, sentient being. Revisiting and remaking this idea new encourages tolerance of differences, celebration of shared experiences, and acknowledges humanity as united rather than opposed. Baum uses *The Wizard of Oz* books to expand on traditions borrowed from writers of the past by retelling them, making them modern and new, recycling old ideas in contemporary ways. Similarly, Jackson uses *Patchwork Girl* to revisit and expand on ideas from *Frankenstein* and *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*.

## TITLE PAGE

### Patchwork Girl Title Page

"Patchwork Girl has been described as a 'rewriting' of *Frankenstein*" (Trimarco, 126). That is, by taking the original plot of *Frankenstein* in certain lexias and rewriting passages of Shelley's text in style of the nineteenth century novel, *Patchwork Girl* borrows from Shelley, simultaneously rewriting it while keeping the message the same. The title page of *Patchwork Girl* directly references Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which "plays with the similarities of the names Mary Shelley and Shelley Jackson by attributing authorship to 'Mary/Shelley & Herself'." (Trimarco, 126).

"A Modern Monster", an alternative title to *Patchwork Girl*, references the *Frankenstein*-ian elements that have been borrowed and integrated into the new monstrous text that is *Patchwork Girl*. By hinting at the intertextual allusions that have been purposefully pulled, the idea of one author is dismantled and instead the reader is presented with a title and author page that reflects a patchwork of intertextual sources, creating the idea of hybrid authorship.

## AM I MARY

Throughout the entire hypertext, *Patchwork Girl* is on a quest to understand her own identity. Making references to Mary as *Patchwork Girl*'s creator in the story, who has taken various 'patches' [of skin] from various bodies and sewn them together in an effort to unite them as one bodily being; Mary is part of *Patchwork Girl*, and the *Patchwork Girl* is now a part of Mary. This skews *Patchwork Girl*'s perception of herself, because not only is she composed of random limbs, each with a backstory of their own, she now also has a piece of the seamstress-creator within her. The lexia *Am I Mary* illustrates her identity confusion: "I wonder if I am writing from my thigh, from the crimp-edged pancakelet of skin we stitched onto me (ousting

a smidgen of some Veronica or Lenore). Is my gift of cutting hers? Am I a host, phony, a setting for gemstone? And if so, is that good or bad? Maybe my crude strength and my techy bent are better filters for her voice than her still-polite manners. Or does her politeness make her criminal leanings steeper, more vertiginous for the height of their drawing room origins? Like a meathook hung over the spinet? / Mary writes, I write, we write, but who is really writing? Ghost writers are the only kind there are.”

Jackson addresses the denotation of the term “ghostwriter” here. By extending the concept of ghostwriting to suggest that “all writers and all authors are ghostwriters in the sense that 65 all words and linguistic or literary elements they use have been used before, largely by writers and speakers who are dead now. Thus, when we appropriate their words, style, and other narrative elements, we all become ghostwriters [...], and we all commit multiple acts of plagiarism,” (Bauschke). The patchwork-like construction process of the text deliberately emphasises intertextuality and hybrid authorship. The profusion of intertexts “expands current understandings of textual appropriation by offering the term ‘patchwriting,’ which is defined as ‘copying from a source text and then deleting some words, altering grammatical structures, or plugging in one synonym for another” (Logie, 103). As a form of imitation or mimicry, patchwriting facilitates the “reshape[ing] of the work of another while leaving traces of the earlier writer’s thoughts and intentions” (Logie, 103).

Patchwork Girl has difficulty in understanding the division between herself and her sources. Not knowing if her mind is her own, the Patchwork Girl “wonders” from which limb her thoughts are derived. Patchwork Girl’s inability to separate herself from the amalgamation of past lives she derives from forces her to question herself, wondering if she is her own or if she is simply the sum of the parts.

## SCRAP BAG & THERAPIES

Patchwork Girl immerses the reader in the act of piecing fragments of the story together, reminiscent of the sewing of a quilt. Through the assemblage of the female monster by ‘stitching’ together body parts collected from various sources, the patchwork girl herself constructs her own identity from the borrowed body parts as reference points. The structure and content of Patchwork Girl parallel each other; the scattered form of the work imitates the character created by the work: both the character and the work itself are a patchwork of parts that ultimately create the whole. The fusion of lexias that allow for multiple reading experiences reflects the synthesis of experiences that create the patchwork girl herself.

Patchwork Girl recognizes herself as fragmentary, which parallels the patchwork of intertextual sources that make up the work: “Mary writes, I write, we write, but who is really writing?” The work itself is reflective of the message it is trying to portray: Patchwork Girl herself is reflective of the hybrid authorship that IS hypertext, with an emphasis on the multiplicity of authors. The combination of layered lexias create “the sense of a fractured, decentered, and disembodied identity” (Doran, 267) which emphasises the multi-vocality that combines to create the Patchwork Girl. By adapting and borrowing from Baum and Shelley, the Patchwork Girl demonstrates how literature rearticulates the past. “Electronic literature is a “hopeful monster” [...] composed of parts taken from diverse traditions that may not always fit neatly together. Hybrid by nature, it comprises a trading” (Hayles) of ideas and creates a conversation between contemporary authors and their predecessors.

## GRAVEYARD & THERAPIES

Jackson uses the work to create a conversation between herself and her influences. Combining the rich past

of literature with modern technologies and writings Jackson's hypertext *Patchwork Girl* questions the way we use technology and an amalgamation of our past experiences in order to construct our own identities. By assembling a work that borrows from various influences, *Patchwork Girl* embodies juxtaposition and multi-vocality that creates a composite message concerning the way we use technology to construct our own identity. *Patchwork Girl*'s identification of herself as an "I" while simultaneously recognizing the multi-vocality of her thoughts creates an identity crisis within the *Patchwork Girl*, causing her to question the stability of her identity. Jackson uses the work to create a conversation between herself and other authors, such as Mary Shelley and L. Frank Baum, borrowing words or phrases or ideas, and repurposing language of the past in a contemporary setting. Her inclusion of literary sources reinforces the idea that we are all standing on the shoulders of giants.

*Patchwork Girl* claims "we are redundant, looped, entangled" (Jackson), supporting the idea that authors revisit literatures and rework them in an effort to create a conversation between themselves and literatures of the past. This "illustrate[s] how literature adapts to a new age and its new media" (Pressman, 27), making universal age-old ideas modern and relevant.

We are all standing on the shoulders of giants. Giants being those major texts, canonical texts, texts that have withstood time, ancient texts that are still studied today, texts that offer ancient wisdoms, texts that are referenced and made new by modern authors.

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### **Terry says**

I wanted to love this interactive book as I am writing interactive novels and nonfiction myself and went to it for inspiration.

The interface is a confusing and frustrating. Nothing engaged my interest long enough for me to want to follow the story.

The book receives rave reviews - by whom, I had to wonder! great PR.

I left the book (cd based) figuring it was created in a pioneering period of interactive writing. One of the bump periods as we invent this new literature. I don't think the form will work until writers can create their own structures - this one was forced into a template interactive hypertext form software application created by the publisher.

To be fair, I will have some of my interactive students take a look at it and see what they think.

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### **Dani says**

I applaud the efforts to frontier hypertext, but there were some serious technical difficulties. First of all, the flash drive from the company isn't good on PC, so you have to find a Mac. I also had to click randomly on every page to make sure I wasn't missing anything (I almost didn't read the majority of the America scene because I didn't realize it existed).

Getting past the technical fumbles, I did like the narrative in the story once I was able to find it. Patchwork Girl focuses on the creation the way the original Frankenstein does, but it also focuses on the parts of past people that make up Patchwork Girl.

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### **Kate says**

My very first hypertext. It was interesting and I made some connections about pomo that I wouldn't have made without it. If you're interested in reading a kind of Ultimate Choose-Your-Own-Adventure with a "high literature" feel, feel free to borrow my copy. It's kind of hard to find.

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### **Kayla says**

Reading has drastically changed with the advancement of technology. Doors to new possibilities have opened and books are no longer acknowledged as single purpose objects. Through digital mediums stories

can now be told in experimental and non-traditional fashions. One experimental writing form is hypertext. According to Ted Nelson, hypertext is defined as “a software system that links topics on the screen to related information and graphics, which are typically accessed by a point-and-click method.” Hypertext breaks traditional form and adds several interactive features allowing participants to explore the message or theme at an exceptionally profound level. Nelson believes hypertext was the catalyst for the new era in written word. This new era was drastically different than traditional methods of reading and writing, but was readily accepted by those who utilized digital literary mediums.

“Patchwork girl”, a hypertext story written by Shelly Jackson, uses hypertext to present a feminist message. Jackson tells the story by using drawings of female body parts stitched together through text and illustration. The story and the images utilized to create Patchwork Girl uses this breakage from traditional writing and parallels it with the voice and perspective of a female narrative. Patchwork Girl is written in Hypertext style to give writer Shelly Jackson an experimental voice to mold and shape as her own without being transfixed to a still page. Patchwork girl correlates with an expression of feminism because it moves away from the indoctrinate style of writing with its nonlinear form, its deconstructive body of the monster and its lexias, and the random selection of its text.

hypertext has three central defining functions. It has multiple pathways to continue the reading, chunked text, and a navigation system of links. The form of hypertext is revolutionary because it breaks apart linear writing styles and puts it into something completely new. By making the writing nonlinear the author is essentially no longer in control of the flow of the story. Instead, the reader has control and can navigate the story as she or he wishes. The reader chooses the pathway and she or he autonomously concludes the ending. While some authors of Hypertext stories may etch a constant fixed destination, other Hypertext stories reveal alternate conclusions depending on the reader, at least the reader can choose the road. The reader is not bound by a narrow pathway, but instead she or he has liberty to choose. The journey to the destination matters and choice, freedom, and independence is what Hypertext offers. Equality reverberates in the very foundation of Hypertext.

In Patchwork Girl, Jackson has more of a conversation with the reader about feminism and allows the reader to come to the same conclusion through the nonlinear usage of hypertext. The message of feminism is all about equality and by using hypertext this message is not only in the writing, but it also in the construct. Patchwork Girl has apparent ploys to convey a feminist message, but the hypertext medium itself expresses feminism because it breaks away from tradition. The writer and the reader become equal participants in pushing the story forward. Just like in feminism, both parties are equally important in carrying out to the finished goal. Robert Coover wrote that “the traditional narrative time line vanishes into a geographical landscape or exitless maze, with beginnings, middles and ends being no longer part of the immediate display. Instead: branching options, menus, link markers and mapped networks. There are no hierarchies in these topless (and bottomless) networks, as paragraphs, chapters and other conventional text divisions are replaced by evenly empowered and equally ephemeral window-sized blocks of text and graphics -- soon to be supplemented with sound, animation and film” (Coover 707). He continues by rhetorically asking if hypertexts are “to be linked to the chain of existence and events, (he answers) yes, but bound by it? No. I forge my own links, I am building my own monstrous chain, and as time goes on, perhaps it will begin to resemble, rather, a web.” Coover’s quote repeated by the monster in Patchwork Girl, not only shows the power of feminism underlined, but also relates directly back to usage of hypertext. Hypertext is completely different from the traditional hierarchal form of writing and just like the monster wishes to be something equal and autonomous, hypertext does so simultaneously.

The first image that is seen when entering the story of Patchwork Girl is the deconstructed monster. The body metaphorically represents the body of text that is the story and the body that must be sewn together in order to unfold itself into its story. This monster parallels greatly with Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein and is also equally as important to understand and travel through to comprehend the message of feminism behind the story. The female monster correlates Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein’s monster and offers a parallel to the words of Mary Shelley’s monster. What the monster in Frankenstein yearned for the most was a female

companion to be his equal counterpart so he did not have to live in solitude, dominating over another sex. The wish was denied in Frankenstein, however this power of equality is granted in Patchwork Girl as the author stitches the patchwork of the story and creates the female monster. Frankenstein thinks better of creating the female counterpart in Mary Shelly's book and destroys the monster and in Patchwork girl the female monster is given a voice to parallel as the reader patches it together. The reader essentially gives the monster life and the female monster interrupts the voice of Mary Shelly and remarks "I told her to abort me, raze me from her book; I did not want what he wanted. I laughed when my parts lay scattered on the floor, scattered as the bodies from which I had sprung discontinuous as myself rejoice to be." The body is reassembled by reading about all of the different body parts and the story cannot continue without first reassembling the body parts of the monster and thus giving it the voice and option to speak its story. (PatchworkGirl)

Hypertext relents the author from taking dominance by allowing the reader to make the choice of which text box to click on and continue the story. The link between written and stitch not only portrays the metaphor written in the following body paragraph, but also shows the equal importance of the reader and the writer. The reader must stitch the story together and the writer is responsible for the text on the screen. Both links to sewn and writing parallel each other to convey this importance. There are five paths for the reader to take; "the graveyard, the journal, the quilt, the story, and the broken accents." The reader chooses where to begin by constructing the story together. The reader in a sense is responsible for constructing the monster by which text box they decide to click on. All text boxes lead to several more text boxes in which the reader again gets to choose randomly of how to progress this story. The reader is essentially the parallel of Frankenstein and is responsible to giving life to the female counterpart of the monster. Shelley Jackson uses the voice of the monster to remark on how the original Frankenstein story structure and control of the author kept the monster back. "I alone remember the real Mary. Her curious mix of resonance and passion. The part that twisted under me with a dark satisfaction and the part that wiped her hands afterward and twitch the curtains open with punitive haste. You can see it in her book. How she embeds her tale in a thickness of letters and second hand account as if precaution were needed to secure the monster behind those locks and screens." The usage of hypertext gives the monster more dominance vs in Mary Shelly's story where the still pages in them self held the monster back and kept it constrained. It is only through the random selections of story that allows the female monster it's free voice to speak openly and lively with the reader. The author seems to have little power to what the monster will say next because it is not controlling the voice.

Patchwork girl is an expression of feminism because it moves away from the indoctrinate style of writing with its nonlinear form, its deconstructive body of the monster and its lexias, and the random selection of its text. Hypertext diverges from the hegemonic style of writing and provides freedom for writers and readers. Not only does hypertext writing reflect the feminist theory, but the theme within Patchwork Girl explicitly reflects the medium through which the story is written. Without the shared control, the work perhaps could not be close read and defined as something equal. Nor would it be able to parallel with Mary Shelley's Frankenstein so deeply to its very core and would lose its ability to critique the author through structure. Hypertext is one of many experimental forms of the digital that opens the door to convey new messages. It is important to understand how hypertext can be used so a deeper point can come across to the reader.

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## **The says**

**PATCHWORK GIRL** Shelley Jackson's Patchwork Girl demonstrates how intertextual allusions are used as piecework in order to construct new literatures together from various sources of the past. Presented in hypertext format, Patchwork Girl uses intertextual allusions borrowed from canonical texts such as Mary Shelley's Frankenstein and L. Frank Baum's Patchwork Girl of Oz to create a new work inspired by and in reference to Shelley and Baum's works, reinterpreting their ideas and making them modern. The work of

Patchwork Girl proves that literature has always been intertextual – writers have forever been influenced by other writers. We are all only standing on the shoulders of giants

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### **Xdyj says**

The premise is great, Shelley Jackson's writing is good, and the way she makes use of Mary Shelley & L. Frank Baum's classics as well as postmodernist/Marxist/feminist texts is brilliant. However I think the publisher did a bad job in portability & I find the UI on OS X to be awkward & ugly.

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### **Chloe says**

Hypertexts are near impossible to access today, but if Patchwork Girl is the only hypertext you ever read, it is worth it. A feminist take on Mary Shelley's classic in which the form and way of reading the text is as much a part of the text itself, the story (or variations of the story) must be pieced together by the reader, just like the story's subject. While hypertext very quickly died out, Patchwork Girl remains an iconic work of literature, even if every other text of its kind has been long forgotten. Only Shelley Jackson, who has forever revolutionised literary form and genre, could do hypertext justice.

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### **Katie Zhao says**

Shelley Jackson's "Patchwork Girl" is one of the most innovative hypertexts to be sewn together, structurally and thematically. Although confusing to navigate at first, the text unravels itself as the reader becomes accustomed to the nonlinear, interactive structure of the story. Where "Patchwork Girl" excels the most is using its hypertext medium to enhance its thematic ambitions.

Contemporary feminism plays a huge thematic role in "Patchwork Girl". This is shown most obviously through the gender that Jackson chooses to give her monster: female instead of male, the typical gender associated with monsters. Jackson questions traditional gender roles by characterizing the patchwork girl as appearing gender-neutral, with a mix of male and female-looking physical characteristics. To validate her points on feminism, Jackson quotes known historical feminists such as Bynum, Cixous, Haraway, Shaw, Darlin, etc. and pieces their theories and quotations together in this quilt-like fashion. Particularly in the section "a graveyard", the construction of the patchwork girl's body itself likens feminist concerns about the piecing together of female bodies to the creation of a hypertext. "Phrenology" leads to the subheading "body of text", which connects the multiplicity of the human (female) body to the multiplicity of hypertext. This connection is strengthened in "mosaic girls", which discusses the genetic multiplicity of the female body and its benefits. The overall multiplicity of the text and its fragmented nature speak to the multiplicity and fragmentation of the female body that society promotes through reducing females to certain body parts (legs, breasts, etc.), which could produce a problematic reading of "Patchwork Girl" as a feminist text. Jackson uses this fragmentation as a representation of what contemporary feminism defines itself AGAINST, however, in the same sense that the modern hypertext defines itself against traditional print.

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## **Bjarke Søverbæk says**

Værket er et spændende eksempel på hvordan en klassiker kan remixes og på den måde både indoptage, undergrave og berige meningen der var at finde i originalen. Her er der tale om Frankenstein (og sekundært The Patchwork Girl of Oz) der bliver udsat for en postmodernistisk og feministisk omskrivning i form af en labyrintisk hypertext. I teksten tages bl.a. udgangspunkt i fanfic-tanken: Hvad nu hvis det kvindelige monster som Frankenstein i romanen aldrig blev færdig med, rent faktisk fandtes? Teksten byder både på fragmentariske og mere klassisk lineære sektioner set fra både forfatteren, det kvindelige monster og selve tekstens synspunkt – og det er i de mere klassiske sektioner den er lettest at leve sig ind i. Samlet set er det ikke nogen let opgave man kommer på som læser, men det er helt sikkert besværet værd hvis man interesserer sig for litteraturens potentialer.

Bogen kan desværre kun købes direkte fra forlaget i USA på et USB-stick, så det er en noget pebret fornøjelse at anskaffe sig den. Men i det mindste er det stadig muligt at læse den på et moderne operativsystem – i modsætning til mange andre eksperimenterende, digitale værker fra 90'erne.

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## **Evan says**

"The hearts roost like pheasants on high bone branches. When I shinny up to examine one more closely I will discover the source of the sound I have been hearing since I first wandered into the jungle; the hearts are alive, they beat at a slow, nearly vegetable rate, with a deep cluck and boom."

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## **Molly M M says**

Brilliant hypertext.

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## **Rand says**

This is the sort of thing one never stops reading. I did a big chunk of it one day and it was exhilarating. every now and again I boot it up for more

If you enjoy allusions and updated-fairy tales then this is worth the effort to find and click thru.

The format is a little confusing; the software could use a newer version and the txt was really tiny.

The story loops back on itself and is an excellent exploration of composite identity and non linear story telling.

Truly innovative and still relevant, despite the dated interface.

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## **Katie says**

I am bored so in light of that...

Patchwork Girl, quite frankly, pissed me off at first. It was too disorganized for my liking, but because I had

to read it I made myself work through it. And, it turns out...I quite loved it! The disconnectedness, the lack of structure, and overall madness worked with the story (I find that it does have a structure. The structure is that each part stands alone but exists together as a whole, like the patchwork girl herself).I particularly loved the little bits that regarded scars. I love that there is beauty and acceptance in being a monster.

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