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## Hyperfiction, creativity and postmodern novel

Baharak Darougari

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## **Hyperfiction, Creativity and Postmodern Novel**

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## I. Introduction

Writing, when properly managed, [...] is but a different name for conversation: As no one, who knows what he is about in good company, would venture to talk all [...]. The Truest respect which you can pay the reader's understanding, is to halve this matter amicably, and leave him something to imagine, in his turn, as well as yourself.<sup>1</sup>

*The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*

Since Ted Nelson coined the term “hypertext” in 1965, there have been frequent debates on the merits and dangers of digital texts and whether the development of digital technology would outdate the print-based medium. The prophecies were apocalyptic and the future of books seemed bleak. About fifty years later, the doomed print-based medium and the digital hypertexts, their “would-be-executioners,”<sup>2</sup> both still exist. Novels are still popular and so is hyperfiction. Neither outdated or eradicated the other. Instead, the coexistence of books and their digital counterparts has affected our perception of text, reader, writer and the reading experience. More importantly, the exchange between the two media has resulted in exceptional experimental fiction both on screen and on paper. The conjunction between fiction and digital technology is of concern to this project which attempts to study hyperfiction, its roots in fiction and its printed descendants.

The first step to study hyperfiction and its impact on the mainstream novel is to revisit the basic definitions. However, a survey of literary glossaries and narratology handbooks shows that the

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<sup>1</sup> *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, 77.

<sup>2</sup> “The End of Books,” *The New Media Reader*, 706

term hypertext fiction has not been fully defined as a literary term yet.<sup>3</sup> The lack of definition is due to two main reasons. First, the emergence of hyperfiction in a medium other than the traditional one emphasizes its genealogy as the descendant of hypertexts and declares its kinship with the digital medium. Therefore, the definition of hyperfiction relies on how we define hypertext and since the realization of hypertexts on paper is improbable, reaching a clear definition among literary terms seems unlikely. The definitions presented by the prominent figures of digital studies and computer science remain insufficient also, as the arguments usually revolve around hypertext and not the resulting fiction. An overview of the literature produced by the distinguished digital studies theoreticians shows that major reference works such as *Hypertext 3.0* by George Landow attempt to offer a comprehensible definition of hypertexts, their origin and how they function. The literary inspiration behind hypertexts, Borges' "The Garden of Forking Paths," has been frequently revisited and the roots of such texts in the poststructuralist critical theory have been exposed repeatedly.<sup>4</sup> Hypertext fiction, on the other hand, has simply been defined as hypertexts which present fictional content. Although a section is usually dedicated to the introduction of the pioneers of hyperfiction in arguments about hypertexts, it is the underlying clockwork and their hypertextual features which merit recognition. The lack of clear definition has blurred the lines between hyperfiction and other digital concepts such as hypermedia, and resulted in the ambiguities which raise more questions

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<sup>3</sup> Although different aspects of digital media and the impact of cyberage narrative have been studied at length by the prominent narratologists, a simple and clear definition of hyperfiction as a literary term is yet to be produced. The following titles are among the visited references:

Abbott, H. Porter. "Hypertext Narrative." *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2008.

Alber, Jan and Rudiger Heinze (eds). *Unnatural Narrative, Unnatural Narratology*. Berlin/ Boston: De Gruyter, 2011.

Fludernik, Monika. *An Introduction to Narratology*. Hausler-Greenfield, Patricia, and Monica Fludernik (trans). London and New York: Routledge: 2009.

Herman, David (ed.) *Narratologies, New Perspectives on Narrative Analysis*. Columbus, Ohio State University Press: 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Landow, George P. "Hypertext: An Introduction." *Hypertext 3.0*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006.

Murray, Janet H. "Inventing the Medium." *The New Media Reader*. Wardrip-Fruin, Noah and Nick Montfort (Eds). Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press, 2003.

Wardrip-Fruin, Noah and Nick Montfort (Eds). "The Complex, the changing and the intermediate." *The New Media Reader*. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The MIT Press, 2003.

about the quiddity of hyperfiction. In short, the definition of hyperfiction relies on our definition of hypertext. This unusual dependence begs the question of what hyperfiction embodies and more importantly, whether and how it is connected to mainstream fiction.

The second problem, which hinders the definition of hyperfiction, is ironically hyperfiction itself. This type of fiction defies definitions. Each fiction sets its own rules and guidelines in *Tristram Shandy's* guise,<sup>5</sup> and challenges the readers' perception of fiction and the established definitions of reader, writer and text. Moreover, the flexible form and the non-linear nature of these hypertexts make critical reading almost impossible. The analytical practice revolves around revisiting the texts and studying them from various angles. But how can we analyze a text that changes at each reading? This raises the questions of what hyperfiction actually is and how it affects the process of reading. Finding the answer to the first question, which turned out to be the most difficult challenge against primary expectations, determined the itinerary of the research and led to two consequential questions regarding the reciprocal influence of hyperfiction and fiction: How is hyperfiction related to the novel? And is it possible to create hypertext fiction on paper?

The mentioned difficulties made clear how the discussions should be pursued. First, a study of the available definitions of hypertexts is necessary in order to determine which intrinsic features turn the text as we know it into a *hypertext* and how the new definition reconfigures our perception of the text, as a consensus about the main features of hypertexts would facilitate the study and the classification of their derivatives such as hyperfiction and hypermedia. Secondly, a general study of selected hyperfictions becomes indispensable to observe their similarities and distinctions, and reach a more precise definition than fictional hypertexts. The first goal is achieved through reviewing the literature produced on hypertexts by the prominent theoreticians of computer and

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<sup>5</sup> “*Horace*, I know, does not recommend this fashion altogether: But that gentleman is speaking only of an epic poem or a tragedy;—(I forget which,) besides, if it was not so, I should beg Mr. *Horace's* pardon;—for in writing what I have set about, I shall confine myself neither to his rules, nor to any man's rules that ever lived.” (I:4)  
*Tristram Shandy*, 4

digital studies. The gist of this research points out three main features that all hypertexts share: non-linearity, medium-consciousness and reader-centrality, and determines the path to reach the second goal, tracing the aforementioned qualities in hyperfiction and their impact on the presentation and the perception of the fictional content. The second objective steered the research towards the available hyperfictions, their similarities, differences and possible ties to mainstream fiction. Some of the forerunners of hyperfiction published by the Eastgate company and most of the texts archived in the Electronic Literature Collection (volumes one and two) shape the corpus for this research. Electronic Literature Organization, Electronic Literature Directory, and ELMCIP: Anthology of European Electronic Literature have been the main sources to follow the evolution of hypertexts and find more information about hyperfictions which are no longer available online.

The study of hypertexts shifted the focus of this project towards the critical theory and the fiction which have been inspired by the poststructuralist stance on texts and their elements. Thus, the connection between the structuralist and the poststructuralist critical theory (Barthes' and Derrida's ideas on texts in particular) and resulting fiction was taken as the point of departure to respond to the second question: how is hyperfiction related to the novel? The review of the poststructuralist literature with the aim of studying the concepts such as ideal and writerly texts, frequently cited as the theoretical basis for hypertexts, demonstrates that the aforementioned concepts are slightly altered to fit the digital medium in the form of medium-consciousness, reader-centrality and intermediacy. The three timelines of hypertexts, the evolution of computers and the critical theory, presented in the appendix, permitted a scrutiny of hypertexts and the critical theory side by side in order to find significant meeting points. Furthermore, since all the previously mentioned poststructuralist concepts have been developed to be applied to fiction, the fiction inspired by such theories is then examined.

The idea of a text with the potential to multiply at the hand of the readers can be traced in postmodern fiction to some extent, self-conscious fiction in particular. An extensive study of several

metafictions — John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and B. S. Johnson's *Albert Angelo*, *Christies Malry's Own Double Entry*, *House Mother Normal* and *The Unfortunates* — in comparison with hypertexts and hypertext fiction, represented by Rick Pryll's *Lies*, points out numerous similarities and possible overlaps. The thorough analysis of the above fiction demonstrates that hyperfiction could be easily classified as an upgraded version of metafiction. However, this does not fully answer the need for a general definition of hyperfiction which distinguishes it from hypertext and hypermedia.

The juxtaposition of hyperfiction and metafiction foregrounds that hyperfiction has a greater affinity with metafiction rather than hypertext. This finding called attention to different types of hypertexts and the demand for a basic classification based on hypertextual features. Since studying hypertexts as isolated systems defies their interconnected and intermedia nature, the concepts of core text and hypertextual networks are developed to facilitate the analysis of hypertexts separately and in connection with their constituent and/or branching texts. Focusing on the three main features which define hypertext, hypertextual networks are divided into four classes: open, semi-open, semi-closed and closed networks. Although semi-open and semi-closed networks have a lot in common, the middle class is more efficient when divided into two groups. One example from each category, *Doctor Horrible's Sing Along Blog* (2008), *Sherlock* (2010), *Memento* (2000), *Patchwork Girl* (1995) in that order, is analyzed as so to determine the degree to which each network engages the medium and permits extension and / or pluralization. This classification shows that hyperfiction falls under the last category which bears a resemblance to metafiction and paves the way for the third question this project has raised: how is it possible for hypertexts to return to the print-based medium?

The reaction to the last question involved the search for novels which can realize on paper the three hypertextual features of non-linearity, medium-consciousness and reader-centrality. The formal experimentation and the typographical innovations of Mark Z. Danielewski's novels make

them appropriate examples of the intersection between books and computer-based fiction. *House of Leaves* (2000), *The Whalestoe Letters* (2000), *The Fifty Year Sword* (2005) and *Only Revolutions* (2006) challenge our traditional perception of books and their elements, both material and virtual, in order to realize the unexplored potentials of the print-based medium. More importantly, the correspondence between the books and both metafiction and hyperfiction discussed in various parts of this project uncovers the reasons behind the coexistence and prolific collaboration between hyperfiction and mainstream novel. Hyperfiction, as an extension of metafiction, ensures the reinvigoration of the novel instead of its deterioration.

The arguments concerning the three main questions of this study have been allocated to four chapters titled “Hypertext,” “Metafiction: the progenitor of hyperfiction,” “From hypertext to hyperfiction” and “Hypertext fiction on paper.” A brief review of each chapter and the main discussions of each here permits the introduction of the study cases as well as tracing the progression of the debates toward the final goals of this study: defining hyperfiction in narratological terms by establishing its connection to metafiction and examining the possibility of and the circumstances under which it could be realized on paper. Before going any further, I would like to clarify a few points regarding my extensive analyses of the study cases. First, the analyses have been planned to exemplify and prove the arguments but also to react to the challenges of each text and justify the difficulties of the study case at hand. To my mind, theory exists to facilitate the comprehension of fiction and inapplicability renders the theory pointless. Second, when discussing texts without borders, there remains no choice but to delineate the frontiers of the text. However, the problem remains when expandability is the focus of the discussion and the reading aims to point out how core texts develop into ever-growing networks. The section on open hypertextual networks, for example, is among such discussions, the compression of which would defeat the purpose. Third, reader-centrality and the techniques the text employs to engage the readers, affect the process of reading and create the potential for innovative interpretations are fundamental to my arguments

concerning hyperfiction. Therefore, the analyses of study cases have provided the opportunity to approach the ideas pragmatically and demonstrate various processes of reading which a single text may initiate. The comprehensive approach seemed to be the best choice to analyze different aspects of the text and show how it sets multiple, and sometimes contradictory, interpretive processes in motion. This being said, I am fully aware that the presented readings offer the ideas of a single reader and may be easily challenged, contradicted or canceled. But multiplicity is the beauty of hyperfiction, “the freedom that allows other freedoms to exist.”<sup>6</sup>

Chapter Two entitled “Hypertext” shapes the theoretical basis of this study. Due to the sparsity of the critical literature on hyperfiction, this chapter adopts an eclectic approach and benefits from the arguments put forth by the renowned figures of both digital studies and the poststructuralist critical theory. The flexibility of this approach equipped me with the basis for the subsequent discussions and analyses, and gave me the freedom to re-define hypertext, hyperfiction and hypermedia as literary terms, classify hypertexts, develop my own theories and introduce new concepts such as core text and hypertextual networks.

Basic definitions are the main concern of the second chapter. Due to the insufficiency of theoretical basis on hyperfiction, this chapter opens by focusing on the definition of hypertexts. It draws on the opinions of Ted Nelson, Jeff Conklin, Jay David Bolter, George Landow and Noah Wardrip-Fruin to define hypertextuality and its outcomes. The literature review helps establish the criteria to define hyperfiction, distinguish different types of hypertexts and finally evaluate them. According to the reviewed works, non-linearity, medium-consciousness and reader-centrality are shared among all hypertexts. In addition to the general definition, the opinions of each theoretician on hypertexts and their functions depict how hypertexts perceive and modify the concepts of text, writer and reader. The discussed ideas raise some questions about the definition of text in hypertext and consequent alternations.

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<sup>6</sup> *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 99



The third section of this chapter, “*Hypertext, hypertext* and hypertextual networks” concentrates on hypertexts’ understanding of text in “*Hypertext*,” which links computer studies to the critical theory. This section revisits the definition of text in the postmodern and the digital era and examines the concept with regard to the notions of linearity, the transcendental urtext (referred to as Text in this dissertation) and the reader. Since the hypertextual view of text is close to the poststructuralist perception of writerly texts, some of the key concepts, introduced by Roland Barthes, will be briefly revisited. The poststructuralist concepts provide the perfect segue to redirect the discussion towards fiction, since the mentioned theories are concerned with fiction and its evolution.

“*Hypertext*” regards hypertext as an enhanced text and mulls over the concepts, the qualities and the alternations, which are the results of the hypertextual perception of the “text.” The underlying text and the consequences of the multimedia features of the text are among the discussed topics. “*Hypertext*” also studies the concept of non-linearity, its realization in modernist fiction and metafiction and its impact on the readers and the process of reading. These discussions bring about the idea of active reading by using the medium and display how hypertexts employ, yet update, the same techniques metafiction uses to engage the readers in decoding the text.

Finally, “Hypertextual networks” introduces the concept of “core text,” its evolution and expansion into a “hypertextual network.” The discussions of this section, which will be developed further in Chapter Four, make it possible to distinguish among different types of hypertext, especially hyperfiction and hypermedia. The “meta-level” is another concept, introduced in this section, which helps us understand how self-conscious and medium conscious texts function. Loosely defined, meta-level refers to the virtual diegetic level where fact and fiction coexist. This concept, later realized in the form of the internet which houses both the factual and the fictional, and may function as a complementary diegetic level to any text, lays the ground for discussions concerning reader-centrality and the expansion of the core text.

These arguments and suggestions form the theoretical base of this project. As previously mentioned, the lack of theoretical basis concerned with hyperfiction led to this eclectic approach. However, the diversity of ideas from both digital theory and critical studies facilitated the interdisciplinary shift between the digital media and print-based medium and the examination of the study cases. Most of the ideas presented in Chapter Two are revisited and developed at length in the three subsequent chapters.

The third chapter, titled “Metafiction: the progenitor of hyperfiction,” discusses the affinities between metafiction and hyperfiction. This chapter reviews the concept of “ideal text,” coined by Roland Barthes, and its resultant discussions. The goal is to study the realization of the concepts such as ideal and writerly texts and examine the notions of writer, reader and text in metafiction. “Language: An oral AND written medium of communication” discusses the transformation of oral speech into written words (and vice versa) and the qualities that may be lost or become inactive during the process. This argument is useful in the subsequent section which concentrates on linearity through language and the dormant potential of the printed text. Finally, the study of readerly and writerly texts in fiction and non-fiction shapes the basis of open and closed networks which will be developed in detail in Chapter Four.

The subsequent section, “Metafiction: narcissistic self-consciousness,” argues that self-referential tendencies of metafiction pave the way for exposing the underlying non-linearity and engaging the readers. This part has been divided into two sections: one uses Borges’ “The Garden of Forking Paths” and John Fowles’ *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* as study cases to demonstrate how metafiction realizes non-sequential and parallel narratives in the medium of print, and the other concentrates on B. S. Johnson’s books to study self-referentiality through form and its consequences.

“The Garden of Forking Paths” (1941) and *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969) have been chosen to represent conventional metafiction due to the realization of non-linearity in an

otherwise linear format. “The Garden of Forking Paths” introduces the idea of bifurcation in fictions and readers’ freedom to choose, yet the form of the printed story on paper does not manifest these revolutionary opinions. The story is about a novel in which the readers choose all the possible options at the same time and as a result, create infinite alternative realities. *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* puts this idea into practice in a novel which actually gives the readers the choice among several endings and teaches them how to read critically in order to make the right choice. Similar to “The Garden of Forking Paths,” the experimentation with the idea of non-linearity and reader participation takes place on the language level and the non-sequential content does not affect the continuous look of the printed words.

The study cases of “Self-referentiality through form” have been chosen to display how metafiction reveals its fragmentary nature by using tools and techniques other than language, namely the graphic surface, or the book itself. This type of metafiction shows the most similarities with hyperfiction. The timeline of B. S. Johnson’s books, the study cases for this section, also corresponds to the emergence of the first hyperfictions (Mid 60s) as well as the publication of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969). However, the main reason behind the choice of Johnson’s experimental novels was the way they put all elements of the book into use so as to draw attention to its components and promote reader participation.

B. S. Johnson’s books oscillate between self-referentiality through language and self-referentiality through form. *Christie Malry’s Own Double Entry* (1973) is a masterclass about writing and the future of the novel presented in a series of conversations between the writer and the characters, who are fully aware of their fictionality and function. Johnson limits the author’s remarks to one chapter in *Albert Angelo* (1964) and yet, this novel uses the layout and techniques such as cut-out windows and blank pages to reveal the non-sequential narrative and design puzzles for the readers to solve. He takes a step further in *House Mother Normal* in which typography is of utmost importance in character development, and the story flows in the blank space as well the

printed sentences. Lastly, *The Unfortunates* (1969), which comes in a box including twenty-seven unbound chapters, challenges the concept of the book, engages the medium in the development of the story and simulates the process of recollection. As it is evident from these study cases, metafiction easily keeps up with hyperfiction.

To underscore the similarities between hyperfiction and metafiction, the final part of Chapter Three, entitled “Hyperfiction: the progeny of metafiction,” studies *Lies* by Rick Pryll (1992) in terms of non-linearity through language and graphic surface, employing the medium in the progression of the story and engaging the readers in the process of meaning-making. The reason behind the choice of this particular hyperfiction is its striking resemblance to printed fiction in spite of its interactive environment. Although the medium permits the bifurcation of the text, the hyperfiction encourages reader participation and calls attention to the process of writing by designing a complicated language network in which words and phrases have arbitrary meanings. While the typography and the layout are important to the progression of the story, they are not medium-bound and can be transferred from the screen to the page easily. In brief, *Lies* has a lot in common with the metafiction discussed earlier and can be easily re-produced on paper.

The fourth chapter, “From hypertext to hyperfiction,” offers a classification of various types of hypertextual networks in order to distinguish between hyperfiction and other hypertextual entities with the aim of reaching a comprehensible definition. Innovative usage of the medium in presenting the content, encouraging reader participation in the expansion of the network and acknowledging the branching texts as part of the canon are among the criteria used to reach the mentioned classification. Therefore, the first subpart of this chapter, “Putting text in hypertext: the Library of Babel effect,” is devoted to the stance hypertexts take in regard to the expansion of their core text.

Such expansion of the text takes place in the form of pluralization (the dissemination of meaning in the sense of Derrida) or extension (the creation of branching texts). The concept of

urtext is of great significance in this discussion, because the inaccessibility of the urtext<sup>7</sup> is the source of pluralization and expansion in hypertexts, which like the printed text, rest on the unchangeability of the urtext. However, while the printed text equals the urtext and its printed representation, hypertexts deny direct access to the underlying text and present fragments of it on screen for the readers to assemble. Therefore, the printed text rejects alternations because the representation is supposed to be the sacred urtext, whereas hypertexts destabilize the concept, so the readers can analyze the fragments and put them together in a coherent manner in an attempt to reach the urtext. The result is a plentitude of texts which are similar, yet different in details. I call this feature “the library of Babel effect” after the story by the same title written by Jorge Luis Borges. The readers who take part actively in the pluralization or the expansion of the text use their analytical skills to write new representations of the urtext and are called wreaders<sup>8</sup> in this study.

The second sub-part, “Hypertextual networks: the extensions of memory and imagination,” focuses on two features which are responsible for the extension of the core text: intertextuality and intermediacy, and compares digital hypertexts and printed texts in regard to these two mentioned concepts. The intertextual web, which shapes a text, usually places it in an already extended web of meaning. The allusions to constituent texts bring the historical context, the literary tradition and other forces which have shaped the text into play and demands that the readers (re)read and (re)interpret the text in connection to the uncovered web. Therefore, intertextuality usually results in the pluralization of the text through the process of interpretation. Intermediacy, on the other hand, accelerates the expansion of the network, as this quality ensures the transference of the text among media and creates the possibility of branching texts. Although all texts have the potential to

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<sup>7</sup> In this study, the urtext is the unreachable and ethereal underlying text which may be captured in parts in different representations. The core text is the first realization of the urtext.

<sup>8</sup> David Kolb suggests the term “wreaders” for hypertext readers who participate in assembling the text out of the pieces, and figuratively co-author it in “Hypertext Structure under Pressure.” This project has stretched this definition to use the term in reference to the readers who expand the core text, either by interpreting, or creating branching texts.

Kolb, David, “Hypertext Structure under Pressure.” *Reading Hypertext*. Bernstein, Mark and Diane Greco (eds.) Eastgate Systems: Watertown, 2009. pp. 193-210.

multiply and extend to some extent, hypertextual networks vary in embracing the expansion at the hand of the users / readers.

The third part of Chapter Four, “Open and closed networks and how they function,” will offer four classes of hypertexts: open networks, semi-open networks, semi-closed networks and closed networks. The study cases for the networks, *Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog*, *Sherlock*, *Memento*, and *Patchwork Girl*, permit the close consideration of the distinctive features of each network in order to reach a definition. It is noteworthy that this section takes into account the hypertextual perception of the text as a multimedia entity. This extended definition is the reason why the core texts of these hypertextual networks belong to various media.

Open hypertextual networks consist of a highly intertextual and intermedia core text which catalyses both pluralization and expansion. These networks fully support reader participation and acknowledge the branching texts, either created by the authorial group or the users, as authentic. *Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog* belongs to this category. The fusion of genres and literary traditions in this mini-series creates the potential for expansion, and the multimedia core text of the series catalyses the transference among media. *Dr. Horrible* uses the internet, its medium of distribution, as a virtual meta-level to welcome the branching texts by both the authorial group and the audience into the network and establish direct contact between the creators and the audience. Needless to say, the network has been growing since the distribution of the series online in 2008. The analysis of *Dr. Horrible* demonstrates how the series initiates interpretive processes as well as the creation of branching texts.

BBC’s *Sherlock* will serve as the study-case for the semi-open networks because *Sherlock* is the result of an outstanding wreading of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* and a remarkable example of a branching text which has turned into a core text. This section aims to achieve two goals: first, to study how *Sherlock* realizes the potential of its core text to expand the network and engages the medium in the development of the story, and second, to

analyze the one-sided relationship between the series and the audience. The discussions concerning the latter objective help us define semi-open hypertextual networks according to the restriction they impose on the expansion of the network.

As we move towards more closed networks, the network exercises more control over the core text and restricts reader contribution to interpretive processes. *Memento*, which illustrates the semi-closed hypertextual networks in this section, has been chosen to display how a semi-closed network tends to favor the multiplication of meanings over the expansion of the core text. Studying the possibilities and the restrictions of the medium and how the core text uses them to its benefit are the main reasons behind the choice of this movie. *Memento*, like *Sherlock*, is a branching text of a short story titled “Memento Mori” about a man afflicted with short term memory loss in search of his wife’s murderer. *Memento* has succeeded in the transference of the story to a new medium. What is more, the movie uses the medium brilliantly to simulate the same circumstances, break the illusion of continuity, and let the audience undergo the same experience as the main character.

The last part of this chapter will study closed hypertextual networks including hyperfiction. The classification of hypertextual networks sheds some light on the features specific to hyperfiction. These attributes in turn, help us distinguish between hyperfiction and hypermedia. Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl* is the study case for this section not only because it is a pioneer hyperfiction, but also due to the fact that hyperfiction and how it functions are among the themes presented in this core text. Juliet Davis’ *Pieces of Herself* serves as the study case for hypermedia. Despite thematic similarities with *Patchwork Girl*, *Pieces of Herself* is open to infinite interpretations. As a semi-closed network, this hypertext creates the potential for pluralization without defining particular reading paths. The juxtaposition of these two hypertexts accentuates the differences between hyperfiction and hypermedia.

All the discussions mentioned in previous pages lead us to the last question this project has raised: is it possible for hypertext to appear in print? Chapter Five, “Hypertext fiction on paper” responds to this question using Mark Z. Danielewski’s books as study case. Since his debut novel, Danielewski has tried, book by book, to revitalize the novel, modify our traditional perception of books and reconfigure their elements. His experimental novels, which are the junction between fiction and the digital medium, will be studied in terms of non-linearity, medium-consciousness and reader-centrality in order to foreground their resemblance to digital hyperfiction. It is worth mentioning that the novels have not been discussed in chronological order. Instead, the creative approach in developing the story through the medium of print and the reconfiguration of the elements of writing determine the order in which the novels will appear in this chapter. According to this logic, *House of Leaves*, which is the most experimental among the four novels, has been chosen to end the discussion about hypertexts on paper in spite of its publication date.

All Danielewski’s books manifest hypertextual tendencies to some extent. They integrate the medium in the development of the story in order to create a vivid experience and an enrapturing and irresistible puzzle for the readers to solve. *Only Revolutions* uses typography, layout and more importantly, the materiality of the book to carry out the mentioned tasks. The repetition of history, for example, is one of the major themes and is realized through two separate stories which are narrated in parallel. The layout is also worthy of attention, as four texts, two narrations and two history gutters, appear on the same page. In short, *Only Revolutions* uses the materiality of the book to its benefit to simulate an experience for the readers, and experiments with the graphic surface in order to train them. The readings of *Only Revolutions* display how the readers follow the clues toward an interpretation.

*The Fifty Year Sword* is a masterclass in reading fiction. The novel is concerned with the hidden potential of language as well as the functionality of different elements of the book in inducing new theories. The second section of Chapter Five presents two readings of this novel. The



first one shows how the novel trains the readers to link the story to the illustrations which hold the key to some mysteries of the text. The second part will study Danielewski's original ideas about words and how they function. *The Fifty Year Sword* is a remarkable example of calling attention to both the book and the fiction by using the medium in visualizing the metaphors, instead of addressing the readers directly. While the novel has a regular look, it functions the way a digital hypertext does.

*House of Leaves* is the ultimate proof that hyperfiction is not a medium-bound concept because all distinctive features of hypertexts can be re-created on paper. *House of Leaves* challenges our perception of books and reconfigures its elements and the medium of print. This approach toward writing, as revolutionary as it can be, is not a simple exploration of possibilities. The experiments with typography and the medium of print all serve the purpose of the story and this is the point which is usually missing from critical literature on *House of Leaves*. The innovations of the book, its formal ambitions and how they impact the future of fiction have been repeatedly discussed. However, the impact of the typography on the process of reading and how the formal irregularities of the novel help the readers justify the events and uncover the mysteries of the story have remained unexplored. Therefore, the main goal of this section is to show how *House of Leaves* succeeds in leading the process of reading, creating an enrapturing experience, and initiating infinite interpretive processes through creative usage of the familiar parts of the book.

In order to compare *House of Leaves* to a digital hypertext, this section will also study *Tube Lines* by Joseph Chris to see how digital hyperfiction uses the possibilities of the digital medium in developing the story and whether *House of Leaves* falls short in comparison due to its medium of presentation. Furthermore, *House of Leaves* proves that expansion is possible in both forms, the pluralization of the core text and the creation of a branching text. The book creates a great potential for ongoing interpretations through its experimentation with the graphic surface. The extension of the core text, other than on the official Danielewski sites and forums which are customary to all his

books, has also taken place in *Haunted*, a 2000 album by Anne Danielewski, also known as Poe. The examination of the album as a branching text will form the last discussion of Chapter Five.

A good branching text is able to expand its core text and at the same time stand alone as an independent text. A brief study of *Haunted* shows that the album has accomplished both tasks successfully. Anne Danielewski's unique take on the novel makes the readers re-read and re-interpret the fiction. She focuses on family relations, which have been left undeveloped in *House of Leaves*, in order to shed light on the significance of the house and its aberrations. On the other hand, *Haunted* tells its own story. The album is an exploration of grief and loss as well as the formation of the female identity by the family and the society. To sum up, *Haunted* displays that how an original wreading of the text results in the expansion of the hypertextual network. The reciprocal connection between *Haunted* and its core text proves that the writers will ensure the revival and multiplication of their fiction if they "leave [the reader] something to imagine, in his turn, as well as [theirs]."<sup>9</sup> Despite Dr. Johnson's disapproval, *Tristram Shandy* is still popular and has branched out in meta- and even more so, hyperfiction.<sup>10</sup> The 2010 edition of the book by Visual Editions exposes the hypertextual tendencies of this late eighteenth century novel which feels surprisingly contemporary and has a remarkable potential to be re-created in the digital medium.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, Martin Rowson's graphic novel<sup>12</sup> has provided an interesting wreading of *Tristram Shandy* and Michael Winterbottom's *A Cock and Bull Story*<sup>13</sup> expanded the network by following in Sterne's steps in breaking the rules and adjusting the medium to the content. *Tristram Shandy* proves that confining

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<sup>9</sup> *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, 77.

<sup>10</sup> "Nothing odd will do long. Tristram Shandy did not last."

Dr. Samuel Johnson

Johnson, Samuel. "The Romantic Notes." Oxbridge Notes, <[www.oxbridgenotes.co.uk/revision\\_notes/english-oxford-university-the-romantics/samples/nothing-odd-will-do-long-tristram-shandy-did-not-last-samuel-johnson](http://www.oxbridgenotes.co.uk/revision_notes/english-oxford-university-the-romantics/samples/nothing-odd-will-do-long-tristram-shandy-did-not-last-samuel-johnson)>

<sup>11</sup> Sterne, Laurence. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. London: Visual Editions: 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Rowson, Mark. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. London: SafeMadeHero: 2010.

<sup>13</sup> *A Cock and Bull Story*. Directed by Michael Winterbottom. Performances by Steve Coogan and Rob Brydon. Red Bus Film Distribution, 2005. DVD.

rules should be examined and amended in order to push the boundaries and create an original piece.<sup>14</sup> Let the world catch up centuries later. Hyperfiction simply follows *Tristram*'s example.

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<sup>14</sup> “[I]s a man to follow rules— or rules to follow him?” (IV:10)  
*Tristram Shandy*, 204

## II.Hypertext

### II.1 Hypertext, an introduction

Hypertext, like any other novelty, has been defined in comparison with the familiar antecedent, the written text in this case. This juxtaposition has provided us with a complex, yet comprehensible definition of hypertexts as “non-sequential”<sup>15</sup> “blocks of words (or images)”<sup>16</sup> joined together by links which function like “dynamic footnotes”<sup>17</sup> that determine “multiple orders”<sup>18</sup> which, in their turn, empower the readers and transform them into “co-author(s)” or “co-learner(s)”<sup>19</sup> who “map” and “remap” the “textual (as well as visual, kinetic, and aural) components.”<sup>20</sup> However, the magnified unconventionality of the digital hypertexts and the unexplored potential of the conventional written text created an aperture between the text as we recognize it and the digital text, and caused the predominant association of the latter with computer science rather than literature. This view of hypertext can specially be detected in the general attitude toward hypertext fiction, the literary origins of which has usually been ignored. Hypertext fiction, hyperfiction in brief, has been viewed not as mainstream literature, but as a digital by-product. This viewpoint, in addition to the complicated reading process resulting from the non-linear nature of this type of fiction, has hindered exhaustive studies.

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<sup>15</sup> Nelson, Theodor Holm. *Literary Machines*. Mindful Press. 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Landow, George P. *Hypertext 3.0*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Moulthrop, Stuart. “You Say You Want a Revolution: Hypertext and Laws of the Media.” *The New Media Reader*. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort (eds.) Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003 , pp. 691-704.

<sup>18</sup> Bolter, David Jay. “The Computer, Hypertext and Classical Studies.” *The American Journal of Philology*, vol. 112, No. 4, (Winter, 1991), pp. 541-545.

<sup>19</sup> Joyce, Michael. “Siren Shapes: Exploratory and Constructive Hypertexts.” *The New Media Reader*. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort (eds.) Cambridge: The MIT Press. 2003, pp. 614-624.

<sup>20</sup> Coover, Robert. “The End of Books.” *The New Media Reader*. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort (eds.) Cambridge: The MIT Press. 2003. pp. 706-709.

If one considers the release<sup>21</sup> of Michael Joyce's *Afternoon* on floppy disk in 1987 as the birth of the first hypertext fiction, this flexible genre has evolved alongside digital technology and appeared on CDs (hyperfictions such as Stuart Moulthrop's *Victory Garden* in 1992 and Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* in 1995 released on Storyspace by Eastgate), on the World Wide Web (Douglas Cooper's *Delirium* in 1994 and Mark Amerika's *GRAMMATON* in 1997) and finally on DVDs (Steve Thomasola's *TOC* in 2009) for over a quarter of a century. However, hyperfiction has usually been studied as a subcategory of hypertexts and separated from conventional fiction despite its undeniable consanguinity. That is to say that the digital (hyper-) aspect of hyperfiction has cast a shadow on its literary lineage (fiction). The definition that evolved from the simple digital "non-linear" texts<sup>22</sup> to "radically divergent technolog[ical], interactive and polyvocal"<sup>23</sup> networks, which George Landow and Michael Joyce find synonymous with hypermedia,<sup>24</sup> usually ignores the intrinsic propinquity of hyperfiction with fiction in favor of its digital ancestry.

Hypertext fiction is presented as more or less synonymous with hypertext and hypermedia rather than fiction. Even though almost all the theoreticians acknowledge the literary roots of hyperfiction by mentioning "A Garden of Forking Paths" and the poststructuralist perception of the text, the focus on the digital aspects of hypertext such as dynamic links and the freedom of choice on the part of the reader imply the impossibility of the creation of such texts on paper. Hence, the break between printed fiction and computer-based fiction.

The perplexity caused by the indeterminate distinction between hypertext and hyperfiction is reinforced by an even more amorphous differentiation between hypertext and hypermedia. The

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<sup>21</sup> The word "release" has replaced "publication" in the mentioned sentence as publication clearly connotes paper-based printing industry.

<sup>22</sup> Conklin, Jeff. "Hypertext: An Introduction and Survey." *Computer*. September 1987. Pp. 17-41.

<sup>23</sup> Coover, Robert. "The End of Books." Cited in footnote 6.

<sup>24</sup> "Since hypertext, which links one passage of verbal discourse to image, maps, diagrams, and sound as easily as to another verbal passage, expands the notion of text beyond the solely verbal, I do not distinguish between hypertext and hypermedia." (Landow, George P. *Hypertext 3.0*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press. 2006. P. 3.)

tendency of hypertexts to exhaust every possibility of representation in any media when generating a text<sup>25</sup> makes it very difficult, if not impossible, to draw the line between hypertext and hypermedia since the medium is supposed to morph into the text (and vice versa) in an ideal hypertext.

To respond to the mentioned difficulties, the present chapter will first revisit the current definitions of hypertext, hyperfiction and hypermedia provided by prominent computer theoreticians, Theodor H. Nelson, Jeff Conklin, Jay David Bolter, George P. Landow and Noah Wardrip-Fruin in a section titled “Hypertext: literature overview.” The definition of hypertext and hyperfiction in the field of computer science will help us establish the criteria for studying hypertexts in order to redefine the aforementioned concepts in a literary context later.

Studying the definitions of hypertext and hyperfiction shows that the emergence of hypertexts has modified the definition of “text” in computer science. Text has been reconfigured and redefined as a non-linear, interconnected and multimedia entity with the potential to expand. The change of the definition has also modified the notions of writer and reader. “*Hypertext*” will review the concept of text briefly in the postmodern and the digital era in order to seek similarities between the two definitions of the text and finally trace hyperfiction back to fiction, metafiction in particular. This section underlines that the three main characteristics of hypertexts, medium-consciousness, non-linearity and intermediacy, were already present in metafiction in the simpler form of self-consciousness, non-linearity and intertextuality, and confirm the correspondence between hyperfiction and printed metafiction.

Revisiting the definition of the text foregrounds the similarities between the definition of text in the digital era and the poststructuralist definition of the ideal text. The following part titled “*Hypertext*” will focus on the digital text with an eye on metafiction which has attempted to realize

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<sup>25</sup> The term text has been employed in a broader sense than the written text. A *hypertext*, as we shall see later, can be composed of visual, auditory, topographic, kinetic or tactile composites.

the poststructuralist theory on paper. This juxtaposition shows that hypertext and hyperfiction seem to follow metafiction in terms of non-linearity, self-consciousness and reader-centrality. “*Hypertext*” attempts to discover to what extent the digital medium affects and modifies the mentioned concepts in hypertext and hyperfiction.

The last part of the present chapter will benefit from the mentioned arguments to introduce the concept of “Hypertextual networks” in order to make a distinction between hypertext and hypermedia. This distinction will enable us to redefine hyperfiction and point out its propinquity with mainstream fiction, metafiction in particular. “Meta-level” is the other concept introduced in this part. Meta-level, the mere existence of which connects hyperfiction to metafiction, is not a medium-bound concept and creates the possibility for the text to be rearranged and for the readers to determine the direction of reading and participate in the process of meaning-making. The possibility of the reproduction of the text, the control over the reading process and the co-authorship will lay the ground for my main argument. Even though digital technology has provided the perfect medium for the realization of the ideal text that the poststructuralist critical theory had described, the re-production of hyperfiction on paper may not be as difficult as it seems due to its literary heritage. The emergence of hyperfiction did not lead to *the end of books*, to quote Coover, as envisioned, but influenced books and inspired a notable type of experimental fiction which constantly attempts to explore the possibilities of its own medium.

## **11.2 Hypertext, literature overview**

### **11.2.1 Theodor H. Nelson**

“Hypertext” first appeared in Ted H. Nelson’s “A File Structure for the Complex, the Changing and the Intermediate” published in *Association for Computing Machinery: Proceedings of the 20th National Conference* in 1965. Nelson coined the word to describe ELF, Evolutionary List File. This file structure, which bears similarities with “list processing systems,” was supposed to be

made of zippered lists with the potential to be modified and extended. EFL, the “glorified card file” to quote Nelson, was simply intended to create, annex, cross-index, and save files and separate subsets in order to meet the demands of users, namely writers and scientists whose creative projects require an adaptable data-storing system.<sup>26</sup> This system led to the creation of a medium which Nelson envisioned and named hypertext:

Let me introduce the word “hypertext” to mean a body of written or pictorial material interconnected in such a complex way that it could not conveniently be presented or represented on paper. It may contain summaries, or maps of its contents and their interrelations; it may contain annotations, additions and footnotes from scholars who have examined it. Let me suggest that such an object and system, properly designed and administered, could have great potential for education, increasing the student’s range of choices, his sense of freedom, his motivation, and his intellectual grasp. Such a system could grow indefinitely, gradually including more and more of the world’s written knowledge. However, its internal file structure would have to be built to accept growth, change and complex informational arrangements. The ELF is such a file structure.<sup>27</sup>

Nelson completes his explanation by giving some examples of possible hypertexts such as stretchtext,<sup>28</sup> hypermap,<sup>29</sup> and hypergram,<sup>30</sup> the equivalents of which in the world wide web may be blogs, Google maps, Google earth and pull-down menus. Nelson later clarifies the meaning of

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<sup>26</sup> It is noteworthy that Nelson’s suggestion accentuates readers/users and their psychological needs as the major goal of the system. He mentions writers and scientists as target users due to the fact that they need a supple system in comparison with the average users who may find the system extremely useful for educational purposes and entertainment.

<sup>27</sup> Nelson, Theodor Holm. “A File Structure for the Complex, the Changing and the Intermediate.” *The New Media Reader*. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort (eds.) Cambridge: The MIT Press. 2003. p. 144

<sup>28</sup> “Stretchtext, a kind of hypertext, is basically a form of writing closely related to other prose. It is read by a user or student from a computer display screen. The user, or student, controls it, and causes it to change, with throttles connected to the computer. Stretchtext gets longer, by adding words and phrases, or shorter, by subtracting words and phrases, on demand. (*The New Media Reader* 315)

<sup>29</sup> “The Screen is a map. A steering device permits the user to move the map around the world’s surface: a throttle zooms it in. Not by discrete jumps, but animated in small changes, the map grows and grows in scale. More details appear as the magnification increases. The user may request additional display modes or “overlays,” such as population, climate, and industry. Such additional features may pop into view on request. (*Ibid*, 315)

<sup>30</sup> “A hypergram is a picture that can branch or perform on request. [...] When the student points at a label, it becomes a sliding descriptive ribbon, explaining the thing labeled. Or asterisks in an illustration may signal jumps to detailed diagrams and explanations, as in discrete hypertexts. (*Ibid*, 315)



“hyper” in the “complex and significant new media, the hypertext and hyperfilm”<sup>31</sup> and emphasizes the prefix, which connotes extension and generality for Nelson, brings to the fore the non-linear nature of the medium which impedes adaptation to linear media such as text string.<sup>32</sup>

Nelson’s definition, even before the inauguration of hypertext as we know it, sheds some light on the most important features of hypertexts: non-linearity, user-centrality, medium-consciousness and extendability. It is of interest that digital links, which were later to be considered as the most important aspect of hypertexts, have not been mentioned in this article, but in “Computer Lib / Dream Machines” in which Nelson elaborated on this system, which is recognized today in a less complicated structure as the world wide web. Focusing on the practical applications of hypertext and how the system shall work as a whole, Nelson stressed the interrelations, also known as links, between the verbal and the pictorial material which enables the reader / user to access or append to the body of text on demand. Nelson configured his definition to include the prolific “jumpable interconnections”:

“Hypertext” means forms of writing which branch or perform on request; they are best presented on computer display screens. [...] Discrete, or chunk style, hypertexts consist of separate pieces of text connected by links. [...] Such jumpable interconnections become part of the writing, entering into the prose medium itself as a new way to provide explanations and details to the seeker. These links may be artfully arranged according to meanings or relations in the subject, and possible tangents in the reader’s mind.<sup>33</sup>

Links have been mentioned as the determinative features of hypertext ever since. On the one hand, links play a significant role in a hypertextual network. Links not only do connect the fragments of the text and audiovisual illustrations, but also enable the readers/users to determine the direction they wish to follow after a brief search. On the other hand, the efficiency of digital links creates the

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<sup>31</sup> Nelson, Theodor H. “A File Structure for the Complex, the Changing and the Intermediate.” *The New Media Reader*. pp. 133-145.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 144

<sup>33</sup> “A File Structure for the Complex, the Changing and the Intermediate.” *The New Media Reader*, 114

misconception that such effect cannot be achieved in any other medium. Stress must be laid on the point that Nelson's explanation deals with the links produced in discrete or chunk style hypertexts. It can be easily concluded that different types of links can be generated because of the nature of the medium in which they appear. As I will discuss shortly, for Nelson, hypertext is not a medium-bound concept.

In "Dream Machines," Nelson discusses the pragmatic interconnections, known to us as links, to highlight the reader-centrality of hypertext and its applicability in the field of education. He took his innovative idea of literacy through hypertext as far as to propose computerized dissection and hypercomics in 1974. Both concepts have been realized in our time as computer-assisted surgeries and interactive flash videos. He stresses the fact that learning would be a pleasurable experience if the students had the freedom to choose the material. Links serve this purpose efficiently. In short, Nelson defined hypertext as 1) an ever-expanding network of 2) interrelated but 3) discontinuous written or pictorial material which facilitates the emergence of forking paths and 4) provide the users<sup>34</sup> with 5) a range of choices 6) on request. Despite the common belief, Nelson did not regard digital links as the most important feature of hypertexts. Neither did he confine hypertexts to the digital medium, though the digital medium can be considered to be the best medium for generating hypertexts due to the various opportunities it offers. For Nelson, the front page of a newspaper can also be a hypertext:

By hypertext I simply mean non-sequential writing, a magazine lay-out with sequential text and inset illustrations and boxes, is thus hypertext. So is the front page of a newspaper, and so are various programmed books now seen on drugstore stands (where you make a choice at the end of the page and are directed to other specific pages).<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> As Nelson later elaborates in "No More Teacher's Dirty Looks," a sub-section in "Computer Lib / Dream Machines," he envisions a solution for the deficiencies of the educational system in computers and "education with hypermedia". Therefore, I took the liberty to replace "student" with "user" here. It is noteworthy that Nelson uses student and/or user later in the same paper while elaborating on different types of hypertext.

Nelson, Theodor H. "Computer Lib/ Dream Machines." *The New Media Reader*. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort (eds.). Cambridge: The MIT Press. 2003. pp. 301-340.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

According to this definition, Nelson’s unconventional papers in which the lay-out and the reader are as prioritized as the content can be considered hypertext. **Figure II.2.1.P.1** is a reproduction of Nelson’s “No More Teacher’s Dirty Looks” in *The New Media Reader*. The layout and pictorial parts of the article have been slightly modified to adjust to the book at hand. An image of the original page has been placed in the bottom left. It seems that Nelson’s criteria for hypertext, non-linearity, user-centrality, medium-consciousness and expandability<sup>36</sup> have met on a single page.

Nelson regards the discussed interrelations<sup>37</sup> as a guarantee for this interminable publishing system. The interrelations are undoubtedly essential to hypertexts, but they can be produced in different manners depending on the medium in which hypertexts appear. To quote Nelson again, “‘Technicality’ Is Not Necessary.” The possibility of hypertext in different media shall be discussed later.

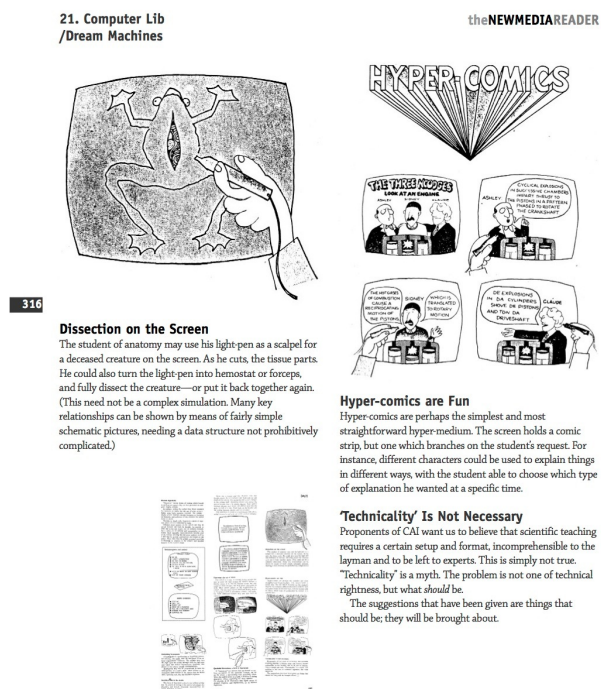


Figure II.2.1.P.1  
*New Media Reader*, 316

## II.2.2 Jeff Conklin

Focusing on the variety of the hypertext systems at the time, Jeff Conklin attempted to simplify the concept in 1987. In “Hypertext: An Introduction and Survey,” he states: “The concept of hypertext is quite simple: Windows on the screen are associated with objects in a database, and the links are provided between these objects, both graphically (as labelled tokens) and in the

<sup>36</sup> I shall return to expandability on paper later in this chapter.

<sup>37</sup> The word “interrelations” has replaced “links” which connotes “digital” interconnections.

database (as pointers).”<sup>38</sup> The database is “a network of textual (and perhaps graphical) nodes which can be thought of as a kind of hyperdocument.” The document functions when the “windows on the screen correspond to nodes in the database on a one-to-one basis and each has a name or title which is always displayed in the window.”<sup>39</sup> The twenty-first century reader has no difficulty visualizing what Conklin explains. However, Conklin tries to explain how a hypertext “works,” rather than what a hypertext “is.” Accordingly, his definition is not concerned with the gist of hypertexts and their intrinsic potentials.

### **II.2.3 Jay David Bolter**

Jay David Bolter, on the other hand, studies hypertexts in comparison with written texts which may be produced by a word processor, but to be printed and “read in the conventional way.” However, a hypertext is an interactive document designed to be both written and read on the screen. A hypertext is organized as “a network of interrelated elements (individual sentences, paragraphs, or sections), and these elements are joined together by electronic links, which determine the multiple orders in which the elements can be examined by a reader.”<sup>40</sup> Bolter distinguishes between written text and hypertext by emphasizing the virtuality of hypertext and therefore, the instability of text on screen. He points out that: “The goal of scholarship in the past two centuries has been, above all, to fix each text of each ancient author: to determine the authenticity of works ascribed to an author and for each work to establish the Urtext - what the author actually wrote, letter for letter.”<sup>41</sup> By contrast, hypertext is the realization of postmodern literary theory which considers the text as

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<sup>38</sup> Conklin, Jeff. “Hypertext: An Introduction and Survey.” *Computer*. vol. 20. iss 9 (September 1987): pp. 17-41.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, 19.

<sup>40</sup> Bolter, Jay David. “The Computer, Hypertext and Classical Studies.” *The American Journal of Philology*. Vol. 112, No. 4. (Winter 1991), pp. 541-545.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, 543.

the offspring of reciprocal communication between the language, the written text, the reader and culture. In Bolter's view, hypertext

challenges the Urtext not in the jargon of postmodern theory, but practically and visibly in the way that it handles text. The reassuring physical presence of the printed book is replaced by invisible encodings on magnetic disk or CD-ROM. And once inside the computer, text is inherently unstable, appearing and disappearing with the touch of a few buttons."<sup>42</sup>

Bolter's emphasis on the fluidity of hypertext underlines the fact that the text is created and read on the screen. Since the readers have the choice to read the fragments they wish, it is the reading that constitutes the text. This idea bears similarities with the oral tradition of storytelling. Although the reading of a written text is also a unique experience, the physicality of the printed text makes it difficult to deny that a printed text exists apart from its reader. By contrast, the electronic text literally exists at the moment of creation by the author or being read/ run by the reader/user. In other words, the existence of the text is dependent on the reader as well as the author(s) who have more or less the same role, at least in theory.

Practically destabilizing the underlying Urtext, hypertext stresses the importance of different readings in the re-construction of the text. In Bolter's view, virtuality is the unique attribute of digital texts. In contrast to the allegedly stable text imprinted on solid paper, the representations of the text on monitor are changeable and unstable because the text cannot literally be realized in words unless the readers initiate the process. Not only does this perspective celebrate the existence of multiple versions of Urtext, but it also regards the reader as a crucial element in authoring the

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<sup>42</sup> *The American Journal of Philology*, 544.

text.<sup>43</sup> However, Bolter briefly mentions hypotext as the underlying text in the digital language of zeros and ones. Thus, the virtuality he assigns to hypertext belongs to its on-screen representation and cannot be considered an intrinsic attribute in spite of the undeniable tendency of hypertexts to destabilize the text.

#### II.2.4 George P. Landow

In *Hypertext 3.0*, George P. Landow calls attention to the literary roots of the hypertext and asserts that hypertext is the embodiment of the poststructuralist conception of open text. He points out the similarities between the poststructuralist critical theory and hypertext, and states that “hypertext promises to embody and thereby test the aspects of theory, particularly those concerning textuality, narrative, and the role and function of the reader” while critical theory attempts to theorize hypertext.<sup>44</sup> Landow notes the affiliation between link, node, web, path and network in computer hypertext and the perpetually unfinished text with multiple paths, described by Barthes in *S/Z* as the ideal text:

In this ideal text, the networks [réseaux] are many and interact, without anyone of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye reach, they are indeterminable . . . ; the systems of meaning can take over this

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<sup>43</sup> Michael Joyce uses the word “author” in reference to the work of a group of engineers, writers and designers who collectively create an educational software. Although Joyce employs the word in a different context, it is appropriate to use “to author” instead of “to write” in reference to the reader’s role in fabrication of a hypertext as well. Since the reader of a hypertext - with the exception of the rare cases such as IF (Interactive Fiction) - mostly constructs a text by joining the pieces of texts together, it is still the writer who has generated the original unified text presented to the reader in fragments on the screen. Since the role of the readers or their strategy of reading in re-formulating the text cannot be denied, I prefer to employ “to author” in reference to the interaction between the writer, the reader and the text which leads to the birth of a new version of the text.

Joyce, Michael. “Siren Shapes: Exploratory and Constructive Hypertexts.” *The New Media Reader*. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Monfort (eds.) Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2003. pp. 613-624.

<sup>44</sup> Landow, George P. *Hypertext 3.0*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2006. p.2

absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language. <sup>45</sup>

The realization of a literary concept in another medium clearly states the potential of hypertexts to be developed in both media. The potential of hypertext to be transmitted among media takes Barthes's definition of intertextuality to a new level, namely intermediacy. As Landow points out in his definition, intermediacy is undoubtedly another feature of hypertexts:

Hypertext, as the term is used in this work, denotes texts composed of blocks of texts - what Barthes terms a *lexia* - and the electronic links that join them. Hypermedia simply extends the notion of text in hypertext by including the visual information, sound, animation, and other forms of data. Since hypertext, which links one passage of verbal discourse to image, maps, diagrams, and sound as easily as to another verbal passage, expands the notion of text beyond the solely verbal, I do not distinguish between hypertext and hypermedia. <sup>46</sup>

While Landow's understanding of hypertexts in the context of the poststructuralist critical theory is extremely helpful in shaping the perception of hyperfiction later in this study, this definition also causes a major problem by using hypertext and hypermedia synonymously.

## **II.2.5 Noah Wardrip-Fruin**

Noah Wardrip-Fruin agrees with Landow's vision of intermediacy as being the crucial feature of hypertexts. Nevertheless, he attempts to correct the misconceptions about hypertexts by reviewing Nelson's original definition in "What Is Hypertext?"<sup>47</sup> Interestingly, he reproaches the literary community for focusing on links as the identifiers of hypertexts and states that "hypertext began as a term for forms of hypermedia (human-authored media that "branch or perform on

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<sup>45</sup> Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang: 1974, pp. 5-6.

<sup>46</sup> *Hypertext 3.0*, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Wardrip-Fruin, Noah. "What Is Hypertext?" *Hypertext '04: Proceedings of the fifteenth ACM conference on Hypertext and Hypermedia*. New York: 2004. pp. 126-127. <<http://www.hyperfiction.org/texts/whatHypertextIs.pdf>> cited 17 May, 2013.

request”) that operate textually.”<sup>48</sup> Wardrip-Fruin takes note of the absence of any references to links in Nelson’s very first statement<sup>49</sup> regarding hypermedia and hypertext:

It is worthwhile to note the following: (1) “hypertext” and “hyperfilm” are coined within the same sentence; (2) both hypertext and hyperfilm are characterized as “new media”; (3) the larger category in which at least the hyperfilm is included is “hypermedia”; (4) while hypertext includes written and pictorial material, material that functions cinematically has its own term (hyperfilm); and (5) while what Nelson offers in this brief section does not explicitly contradict definitions of hypertext that focus on the link, links are not mentioned.<sup>50</sup>

Wardrip-Fruin states that the literary community considers links as the main feature of hypertexts simply because most of the contemporary hyperfiction writers employ chunk-style link-oriented forms, but links are not necessarily the distinction between the digital and the conventional texts. Moreover, he distinguishes between hypertext and other forms of hypermedia by stating that hypertexts mostly include pictorial and written material while hyperfilm benefits from its audiovisual components to function cinematically. I would like to argue that the act of reading and the process of interpretation highly depend on ordering different sections of the text with the aim of building a comprehensible hypothesis. Book readers are required to uncover the connections and explore the possibility of interrelations in order to expose the underlying network and make sense of a text. In brief, links (or at least the concept) existed long before the emergence of hypertexts. The structure of hypertext only accentuated this longtime feature that all texts share. But before starting my argument about links, it is necessary to consider how the definition of “text” was expanded in hypertexts.

### **II.3 Hypertext, *hypertext* and hypertextual networks**

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<sup>48</sup> *Hypertext '04: Proceedings of the fifteenth ACM conference on Hypertext and Hypermedia*, 127.

<sup>49</sup> The quotation to which Wardrip-Fruin refers appears in parts in “II.3.1: Theodor H. Nelson.” The complete quotation can be found in *The New Media Reader*, p 144.

<sup>50</sup> *Hypertext '04: Proceedings of the fifteenth ACM conference on Hypertext and Hypermedia*, 127.



## **II.3.1 Hypertext**

### **II.3.1.1 Text as defined in the postmodern era**

The definition of text in all the theories mentioned above is the major source of confusion in discussions about hypertext and hyperfiction. First, almost all the given definitions study the concept, and subsequently hypertext and hyperfiction, in the context of computer studies. Needless to say, the definition of text in literary circles is not only different but includes several levels, aspects and grounds. Literary theory puts strong belief in the manuscript, the coherent written or printed entity which is worthy of being called text. The written text is considered to be either the urtext, the manuscript, or the authentic representation of the urtext<sup>51</sup> and therefore superior to appendices such as visual complementaries or annotations and footnotes classified as paratext. The belief in the sacredness of the text remained unshaken until the poststructuralist theory questioned not only the authenticity of the written text, but also the stability of its urtext. The inspired fiction attempted to realize this infinite and “irreversible” “galaxy of signifiers” and reach “the systems of meaning [that] can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language.”<sup>52</sup> However, despite the production of a large number of successful experimental novels, the ancient belief in the superiority of the written text over the other material on paper, if any, endured the poststructural era. This is explained by the fact that the poststructuralist critical theory is concerned with the post-production aspects of the text on the whole, namely the process of meaning making and the contribution of the reader.

The theory embraces the possibility of a multitude of meanings, hence the intact faith in the fixed text. The readers collaborate in the production of the meaning, but it is still the text, the stable piece of language captured in writing or print, that guides readers through the process of the

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<sup>51</sup> Bolter defines the urtext as what the author actually wrote, letter for letter.

Bolter, Jay David. “The Computer, Hypertext and Classical Studies.” *The American Journal of Philology*. Vol. 112, No. 4. (Winter 1991), pp. 543.

<sup>52</sup> Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Trans. Richard Miller. New York: Hill and Wang: 1974

creation of the meaning(s). In short, the readers cannot, and are not intended to, replace the writer. However, they are expected to take the role of a critic. The text which the writer created before her/his figurative death, to use Barthes words, has an aptitude for disseminating an abundance of meanings and interpretations, provided the reader has the ability to realize the hidden potential. The readers cannot and do not even seek to change the printed story, the written text or the canon. Thus, the readers are not the co-authors, but the interpreters, the critics, the reviewers. The birth of the reader, to use Barthes's phrase again, is the celebration of the plurality of the interpretations brought forth by the readers' knowledge of literary conventions and the mechanics of writing.

Inspired by the newly unveiled role of readers, postmodern fiction, metafiction in particular, has attempted to train reader-critics through laying bare the device and experimenting with the written text. The meaning(s) are still the result of the reader's contemplation on the written text. The text has never lost its dominance. Otherwise, the scholars of postmodern fiction would have rejected the superiority of first editions or manuscripts in favor of the authenticity of a multitude of texts because they all represent one or some aspects of the urtext, a real *Library of Babel*.<sup>53</sup> Thus, the writer, though hidden in the shadows, is as influential as ever. In short, although the poststructuralist critical theory has turned the spotlight on the readers and their interpretation of the text, the authority of the written text and that of its creator still remain undeniable.

Meanwhile, the poststructuralist metafiction has been successful in shaking the sacred image of the printed text. The paratextual, metafictional, intertextual metafiction, which has bared the writing device and has moved backward and forward through the story, has suggested the presence of an unreachable urtext, the transcendental signified which postponed, if not impeded, the emergence of the real meaning. Metafiction has illustrated that the texts as we know them are the fragments of the urtext captured in print. They are merely representations of the urtext and therefore

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<sup>53</sup> A short story by the Argentinian writer, Jorge Luis Borges, which conceives of an infinite library that preserves different versions of all books. While there may be different copies of a single book in the library, none of them are exactly the same. Minor differences such as a comma, a synonym or a typo mark the difference among the copies.

incomplete. The postmodern attitude toward the written text undermines the writer's absolute authority and reduces him / her from the creator of the text to the first reader/critic who makes sense of the accessible fragments or comments on the text in progress. From this point of view, all stories are repetitions, imitations and renditions of each other after all. It is not surprising that parody and pastiche are among the most popular forms in postmodern fiction. Moreover, the ideal texts require the readers to re-order the fragments with the aim of building a coherent text. In short, there are some similarities between the readers' and the writer's role. However, the writer is the one who creates the text and trains the readers to dismantle and re-create his / her text in order to re-construct a multitude of texts.

Undermining the writer's absolute authority and portraying him as the first reader, critic or plagiarist in apocryphal histories or re-writings such as Coetzee's *Foe*, postmodern fiction invites the readers to identify with the writer, experience the process of writing and present their own versions of the text. In other words, a thoroughly planned and limited "co-writing" takes place in the postmodern novel. The reader of postmodern fiction, especially metafiction, usually receives more writing material than the promised story. Gaps, pauses, unconventional punctuations, concrete writings, misplaced sentences or paragraphs, Do-It-Yourself instructions in the form of the irritating writer who interferes to tell the reader how stories are written, and all the exhilarating and exasperating postmodern diversions provide the readers with what the first reader, namely the writer, started on. The experience resembles (re-)writing a book so much that the reader can be called a co-writer or critic: "a writer" because the reader makes a story out of fragments, missing paragraphs, footnotes, annotations and illustrations the same way writers do and "a critic" because the reader analyzes and de-constructs an already-finished novel in order to re-construct the story. Both roles are theoretically feasible. However, the reader of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* has to either choose an ending among the three provided endings by John Fowles, or accept the possibility of multiple endings for the story. The reader's limited participation in concluding the story will not

change the already-written novel but initiates multiple chains of interpretation. The possibilities are likely to exceed the options which result from the conventional close reading and reading between the lines because this time the writer intentionally provides the readers with the material necessary to trigger the process of interpretation. The reader's supervised co-authorship of the text is not dissimilar to the chain of re-tellings in oral storytelling and poetry recitation. Although some parts of the story or the poem will be modified, omitted or replaced in each telling, the kernel story or poem remains the same. Otherwise, the title on the cover of the novel would read by *John Fowles and any reader who has finished the book* instead of the actual writer.

In short, postmodern theory and fiction encourage the plurality of interpretations rather than plural texts. The writer's intentions lose significance the moment the reader initiates the process of meaning-making. At this moment, the writer is figuratively non-existent. But all interpretations are based on what the text, the creation of the writer, has to offer. The writer is never dead but just absent from the process of generating the meaning and hidden in the text that is open to multiple readings. The readers are expected to make sense of a pre-fabricated and printed text. In other words, the written text, the proof for the writer's existence, is actually fixed and the reader's total liberty a delusion. Even if the writer's genius has equipped the readers with a multi-layered text meant to be re-read and re-interpreted, the readers are allowed to reorganize the segments in their minds if they find new connections in order to develop new theories, but they can never re-write the paragraphs. So how do we read and re-read literary texts and still find unexplored aspects if the stability of the text limits the meaning to some extent?

The reason why the theoretical co-writing never really takes place lies in the solidity of the printed book that creates the illusion of a stable text. Even Barthes' definition of ideal text implies the fixity of the written text and is concerned with the multiplicity of the meaning presented through the infinite chain of signifiers and signifieds in the lingual labyrinth. The readers' foregrounded role is to choose, ignore, follow and drop signifiers and create alternative meanings. I would like to

emphasize that the written text is fixed and unchangeable indeed. It is the language, the ultimate conveyor of the transcendental Text, that can reshape and modify the text in each reading. It is the figurative aspect of the language which enables the readers to find different centers in the text and create various and even contradictory meanings. In short, the much-discussed plurality happens mostly in readers' minds and on the language level rather than on paper. The written text in its classic form is indeed immutable if the imagination of the reader is not factored into the equation.

The focus on the multiplicity of the interpretations in the postmodern era has successfully challenged the authority of the written word. The text, though fixed, became a representation of the Text, the transcendental signified, the ethereal Urtext. Regarding the text as a representation of the Text as an ineffable entity, the post modern theory and the resulting fiction have inspired the creation of versatile texts with the capacity to realize the theoretical assumptions before the emergence of the digital media.

The solidity of the text was seriously questioned with the shift of the medium from paper-based to digital. The medium enabled the text to move, play and constantly change, the qualities that the materiality of the book denied. Digital media redefined the text as a combination of the verbal, visual and kinetic elements. Although the illustrations have accompanied the text on paper for long, the illustrations in digital text have surpassed their traditional role as appendices or complementary and became essential components of the narrative process. In brief, the definition of the text as an autonomous but solely verbal entity with the potential to be interpreted on the language level only was challenged by multimedia entities whose constituents such as illustrations, colors, and layout became as vital to the narrative as the language. The digital representations of the text demonstrate the ethereality of the urtext for the first time and undermine the solidity of the written text. Thus, studying the reconfigured definition of the text after the digital revolution is the first step in the study of hypertexts.

### II.3.1.2 Text as defined in the digital era

Naturally, the text in digital terminology is not necessarily verbal and can be defined as purely verbal, audio or visual or a composite of language and/or audio-visual material. This perception is different from, if not in opposition with, the definition of text as a piece of written or a body of printed works in the literary frame of reference. Moreover, literary criticism also presents different understandings of the text focusing on its different aspects: writing, reading and stability.<sup>54</sup> Espen Aarseth in “Non-linearity and Literary theory” summarizes the general perceptions of modalities of the text:

(1) A text is what you read, the words and phrases that you see before your eyes and the meanings they produce in your head. (2) A text is a message, imbued with the values and intentions of a specific writer/genre/culture. (3) A text is a fixed sequence of constituents (beginning, middle, end) that cannot change, although its interpretations might.<sup>55</sup>

He later clarifies his usage of the term to demonstrate the interpretive or the informative aspects of the text. The informative aspect of the text views it “as a technical, historical, and social object” and “the text as it is individually received and understood” is the basis of the interpretive aspect. These two aspects are interrelated and highly influential on the other despite the superficial dissimilitude. The informative aspect of the text determines the composition of the words and the spaces on paper as well as the reading strategy. The interpretive aspect of the text is “what makes it worth reading” to use Aarseth’s phrasing. This elixir is the result of the union between the semantics and the form, though the form has only been challenged in experimental texts, needless to say, most of the texts we read daily are “boringly familiar.”

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<sup>54</sup> The definitions, argument and textonomy in this section are based on Espen Aarseth’s “Non-linearity and Literary Theory.”

Aarseth, Espen J. “Non-linearity and Literary Theory.” *The New Media Reader*. Wardrip-Fruin, Noah and Nick Montfort (Eds). Cambridge, Massachusetts, London, England: pp. 762-780.

<sup>55</sup> *The New Media Reader*, 763

Aarseth distinguishes between the two mentioned aspects of the text by coining *script*, a term that refers to “the visible words and spaces.” Understanding the script is quite helpful in distinguishing between the transcendental Text and its printed (or digital) representations. The lack of distinctions between Text and its representations causes a dilemma in studying hypertext and hyperfiction. Aarseth briefly considers the interrelation between the text and the script, and while confirming the complexity of explaining such connection due to the conventions and technologies involved, suggests two distinct relationships. One favors the superiority of the text over the script and the other privileges the script over the text: “text subordinate to script (the handwritten letter, the electronic word-processing document) and script subordinate to text (the mass-produced paper copy, the read-only CD-ROM). In the first case, whatever you do to the script affects the text; in the second, it does not.”<sup>56</sup>

Aarseth’s distinction between the underlying, the transcendental, the ethereal or the original Text, which appears as capitalized in this study, and the script is essential to my argument that Text is inherently unstable whether printed or digitally generated. Slightly different from what Aarseth intends to demonstrate in “Non-linearity and Literary Theory,” my definition of the real text focuses on its mercurial nature. The verbal text we are familiar with is simply a representation, a script, an attempt to frame the intrinsically volatile Text and materialize it in language on paper. To put it differently, the printed text in my definition is just a form of re-production and should not be mistaken for Text<sup>57</sup> which is “a potential that can be realized only partially and only through its script.”<sup>58</sup> That is why the texts live, evolve and get re-interpreted constantly. If the text is consolidated in any of its representations, it perishes. The familiar linearity of texts belongs not to the Text, but to the representation or to both the text, the script to use Aarseth's term. It is the

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<sup>56</sup> *The New Media Reader*, 763

<sup>57</sup> I would like to clarify that my definition of unaccessible Text has undeniable similarities with the transcendental signified of the deconstruction theory. The unreachability of Text except through oral, written or digital representations makes it possible for Text to be resurrected in different forms and media.

<sup>58</sup> *The New Media Reader*, 766

representation that has the potential to appear in linear or non-linear form in language, whether on paper or monitor, due to the volatility of the Text.

### **II.3.1.3 Linearity**

The traditional written text displays a linear sequence of words and sentences which carry some information in non-fictional texts, or a story in fictional texts. That is to say, while the form has usually taken a linear path, the content may have challenged linearity through language. The stream of consciousness, the dominant narrative form of the modernist era, highlights the non-linear narratives captured in linear form. Quentin Compson's narration in *The Sound and The Fury* was dated 2 June, 1910 and the section has a distinctive beginning and ending. However, Quentin's recollection of the events that the readers have already read about in Benjy's section are set forth in a non-chronological manner, yet presented through a linear form. Faulkner benefits from the hidden potential of the language to exceed the barriers imposed by the form, and invites readers to not only experience Quentin's confusion and anguish, but to perceive the remembering process and the consequential recovery and (re-)discovery of painful or distant memories.

The solidity of the printed books creates the illusion that texts are normally linear. Although the printed text imposes a beginning and an ending point on the text, the language may easily defy linearity through digressive thoughts and concepts hidden in words and sentences that appear on paper consecutively. As mentioned above, this type of non-linearity, which takes place on the language level, is not a novelty for either oral or written literature. The non-linear narrative dates back to epic literature which began in *media res* and *Arabian Nights* and its numerous digressive imbedded narratives. The novel has also flirted with non-linearity since the very beginning. Although Pamela's long letters easily deceive the readers into believing in a complete recount of the



story, the epistolary nature of the novel clearly marks the gaps in the narration.<sup>59</sup> Bronte's *Wuthering Heights* is another example of defying linearity on the language level even though the script — even in the form of html files and ebooks — has usually been presented in a linear manner. However, the main story that contains a long flashback of Catherine and Heathcliff's relationship causes the immersion of the readers in the diegetic level to the point that they may even forget Lockwood's presence. In Swift's *A Tale of A Tub*, digression is not a technique but the *Tale* itself and in close contact with the content. Likewise, the modernist fiction narrated through interior monologue and stream of consciousness is characterized by leaps in thought, reflections and sensations presented in a flow of usually unpunctuated words, phrases and sentences. If is difficult to trace a linear narrative direction in *Mrs. Dalloway* and *The Sound and The Fury*, it becomes impossible to read *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake* in a linear fashion despite the outward linear script:

the day I got him to propose to me yes first I gave him the bit of seedcake out of my mouth and it was leap year like now yes 16 years ago my God after that long kiss I near lost my breath yes he said I was a flower of the mountain yes so we are flowers all a womans body yes that was one true thing he said in his life and the sun shines for you today yes that was why I liked him because I saw he understood or felt what a woman is and I knew I could always get round him and I gave him all the pleasure I could leading him on till he asked me to say yes and I wouldnt answer first only looked out over the sea and the sky I was thinking of so many things he didnt know of Mulvey and Mr Stanhope and Hester and father and old captain Groves and the sailors playing all birds fly and I say stoop and washing up dishes they called it on the pier and the sentry in front of the governors house with the thing round his white helmet poor devil half roasted and the Spanish girls laughing in their shawls and their tall combs and the auctions in the morning the Greeks and the jews and the Arabs and the devil knows who else from all the ends of Europe and Duke street

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<sup>59</sup> The very fact that Pamela was criticized for telling everything without selection or omission and yet was later parodied in *Joseph Andrews* and *Shamela* on the grounds of the alleged hidden truth — mostly the parts that Pamela left out — calls attention to the digression of the familiar linearity in the narrative.

and the fowl market all clucking outside Larby Sharons and the poor donkeys slipping half asleep and the vague fellows in the cloaks asleep in the shade on the steps [...] <sup>60</sup>

It is noteworthy that the non-linearity on the language level is one of the techniques that fiction employs to encourage the plurality of interpretations. Non-fiction intends to give information and avoid confusion. Thus it tends to be literal and transfers knowledge directly to lead the readers towards the correct conclusions. Fiction, on the other hand, expires if the interpretations are limited to what the writer has intended. The constructive confusion, which is the result of an attribute I would call "readability" in reference to the mysterious essence which keeps a piece of work appealing to different generations of readers, brings another factor into the equation; namely readers. The underlying non-linearity alongside the figurative language and illustrations encourage various reading strategies determined by the readers' background and personality. Each reading may result in various and sometimes even contradictory interpretations. In non-fiction, on the contrary, the content should be conveyed truthfully, so that readers reach the correct conclusion. The mortality rate in hospitals would be even higher if the surgeons and medical students had different understandings of open heart surgery procedures. In this case, non-linearity and the consequential expansion of the interpretations is in contrast with the objectives of the text.

#### **II.3.1.4 The Text**

I have already defined Text as a potential with the capacity to be realized in different forms and media. Hence, there are the oral, written, audiovisual, musical and digital representations. The entirety of Text cannot be confined in a representation. Thus, the verbal representation of Text on paper, which for long has been the medium of literature, cannot be considered Text. If so, how do we justify the superiority of manuscripts over printed books, the first editions over the volumes that

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<sup>60</sup> Joyce, James. "III." *Ulysses*. Gutenberg Project. 1 Aug. 2008. Web. 26 Feb. 2014. <[http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4300/4300-h/4300-h.htm#link2H\\_4\\_0003](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/4300/4300-h/4300-h.htm#link2H_4_0003)>

appeared later, and the author's notes over other paratextual material? How do we rationalize meticulous academic studies to authenticate a piece of work and confirm certain viewpoints and interpretations throughout literary history? Are all these contradictions, efforts and discussions not the result of the ethereality of Text that cannot be fixed in a frame? The text is not but a mere representation of the ethereal Text which has the capacity to be realized in various forms and media. But what did "text" originally mean?

The connotation of the word "text" goes beyond the merely written or even verbal text. Text, driven from the Latin *Textus* meaning "style or texture of a work," literally means "thing woven." Stemmed from the past participle of *texere* (to weave, to join, fit together, interweave, construct, fabricate) and from PIE root *\*teks-* (to weave, to fabricate, to make, to make wicker or wattle framework), the word found its contemporary meaning of "wording of anything written" in the late 14th century.<sup>61</sup> Robert Bringhurst in *The Elements of Typographical Style* explains:

An ancient metaphor: thought is a thread, and the raconteur is a spinner of yarns -- but the true storyteller, the poet, is a weaver. The scribes made this old and audible abstraction into a new and visible fact. After long practice, their work took on such an even, flexible texture that they called the written page a *textus*, which means cloth.<sup>62</sup>

Thus a text is a network of interwoven ideas with the potential to be materialized in different forms of representation. My understanding of the text; hereby, tends toward the broader definition supported by digital studies which present the text as a combination of different elements rather than solely verbal. However, this definition has merely pointed out an aspect of the text which already existed. Literary studies privilege the verbal element of the text over the others while the theoreticians of digital studies avoid discrimination among the elements — or the media — which compose a text. This makes the concept of linearity rather complicated to discuss. The linearity of a

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<sup>61</sup> "Text". *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Douglas Harper. Web. 28 May, 2014. < <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=text> >

<sup>62</sup> Bringhurst, Robert. *The Elements of Typographical Style*. Canada: Hartley and Marks: 2004. P. 118.

conventional text is an illusion produced by prioritizing the flow of words over illustrative material. Hypertext, on the other hand, is an amalgamation of its elements: verbal and non-verbal. The acceptance of all elements as vital parts of the text in hypertext brings its non-linearity to the surface. No wonder it looks fragmentary. But whether a verbal text is really linear is a question that needs more attention. Although linearity is possible, and more probable, in non-fiction, scientific and informative writing, literary texts flirt with the concept either through figurative language, which intrinsically initiates digression, or non-linear narration that aims at the abundance of meaning. The difference is that a literary text is easily able to hide its digression of linearity in language under the illusion of the linearity that the sequence of words and sentences create. To sum up, the non-linearity of hypertext, highlighted through links, which have been repeatedly mentioned as a liberating force and the distinctive feature to tell a text and a hypertext apart, is not new to literary texts. Linearity in fiction is merely an illusion.

### **II.3.1.5 The reader**

Defining the potential that can be realized in linear or non-linear scripts puts the most important participant of the reading process in the spotlight: the reader. Despite the emphatic focus of the poststructuralist theory on the reader, in practice, the reader's responsibility starts when the writer's has ended. When the final draft of the text is presented to the readers, they are expected to initiate the process of generating the meaning. This is true for the texts which maintain the outward linearity, in other words, almost all printed texts. Even the most experimental texts with several beginnings and endings find a fixed beginning and ending in the first and the last page if printed. But what if the text denies a determinate beginning and ending? Such never-ending texts are always open to modification, and thus, definitely non-sequential. The reader of such texts cannot be considered as merely the interpreter of the text since the text is in pieces. In order to reach an interpretation, the reader needs to unscramble the pieces. How do such texts modify the concepts of

reader, text or writer? The following section will take a close look at the significance of the prefix “hyper” to discuss to what extent *hypertexts* modify and expand the definition of the text as we knew it.

## **II.3.2 Hypertext**

### **II.3.2.1 Hypotexts**

Contrary to the common belief that associates “hyper” only with the digital attributes of the medium in which hypertexts are produced, the prefix also suggests an enhanced text. Liberating the text from the materiality of paper, the digital medium realizes the poststructuralist hypothesis and expands the borders of the text. The etymology of “hyper-” as the prefix which connotes “over, above, beyond, exceedingly, to excess”<sup>63</sup> is a good starting point for our discussion about the alternation of the text in the digital media. As the prefix suggests, *hypertext* is a text that exceeds the delimitations of the conventional written text. The medium finds a significant role in this process. Therefore, we shall compare the features which the digital and paper-based medium provide. First, the digital medium denies the text the comforting tangibility of books. The text does not exist unless the reader / user runs the program. Although the verbal digital text uses language as its medium of communication, the reader / user is aware that the displayed text is a translation from the mathematical language of zeros and ones. In other words, there always exists an underlying hypotext. The hypotext is usually a rendition of another transcription. I would like to draw attention to the point that the written language is also the translation of the spoken language into the words and phrases on paper. The spoken language is in turn the translation of the speaker’s ideas and imagination into a form of communication. This is the chain of the signifiers and the transcendental signified that the poststructuralist critical theory has enthusiastically put forth. Interestingly, the

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<sup>63</sup> “hyper-” *Online Etymology Dictionary*. Douglas Harper. Web. 5 June, 2014. < <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=hyper->>

common reader/user does not have access to either the original text or the hypotext. In summary, the unreachable Text only exists in the chain of hypotexts. Its representations are all the readers get.

### **II.3.2.2 *Hypertext, a multimedia entity***

Unsurprisingly, the theoreticians of computer science or digital media do not define the text as solely verbal and even the verbal texts presented on the digital media are virtual. The text in the cyberspace jargon can be solely verbal, audio or visual or a kinetic combination of all mentioned entities. The digitally-produced texts benefit from all the opportunities the medium offers and if not, it is a waste of opportunity. Who would visit a dictionary website which does not offer the pronunciation of the words nowadays? Or a news website which does not illustrate the breaking news with photos and clips or at least links to the webpages containing the audio-visual information? Multimedia bits and interlinks reinforce the definition of the text as an ever-growing network of woven threads, a return to the etymology of the text. This may be the reason why computer studies do not really distinguish between hypertext and hypermedia.

A *hypertext* is a combination of different texts in different media. Unlike the conventional texts which usually respect the boundaries of the medium of production, hypertexts are not necessarily medium-bound since they are generated from an assembly of diversified texts produced in various media. The barriers of the media in hypertext negate each other as the media overlaps in hypertextual interfaces. A primarily-verbal digital text can be read aloud to the reader. The words and sentences are liable to movement, enlargement or change of color. The illustrations and the videos may accompany or be linked to the text and the fragments may change function half way through the reading since it is the reader who determines the direction of the reading. Thus, a digital text is far less bound to a single medium than a solely printed, painted or composed text. Benefiting from different media with different imposed boundaries, the digital media creates a space with nearly no boundaries. The generated text is able to produce and/or include texts from various media,

initiate a text in a medium and expand it in other media, sometimes even by users other than the original producers. The outcome is a dynamic ever-growing network of texts or a *hypertext*. As the realization of the ethereal Text goes, hypertexts are the representation which resemble it the most.

### **11.3.2.3 Links**

To homogenize the multimedia bits and pieces used in the creation of hypertexts, the digital media introduced links as the interconnection among texts and the associated media. Links are important to my discussion about the digital texts because they have been erroneously considered as the distinctive feature of digital texts which cannot be re-produced on paper. The links are undeniably significant in the creation of hypertexts as they join the texts together and build a *hypertext* — hyper meaning “above normal” — but are they really the divergence between printed texts and digital texts? Does that mean that conventional texts contain no links? Let us take a closer look at the function of the links in hypertexts. Links connect the text with other texts either to provide readers / users with extra information about the text they are reading, or to serve intertextuality and make the reference in question accessible for the readers. The first function may include double or altered meanings, the etymology of the words and phrases, additional information in the form of historical background, interpretive remarks such as the writer’s intentions, first reception, different editions, and even critical annotations and commentaries. The links from this point of view operate similarly to footnotes and endnotes.

Footnotes are usually placed in numeral order at the bottom of the page and provide the reader with concise information about a particular part of the text above. While offering the necessary information to comprehend the text, footnotes need to be short, to the point and provide the reference for further readings. A complete body of text never appears in footnotes if the text is more than a paragraph long. It is the readers’ responsibility to search for the mentioned reference if they need to get more information.

Links, on the other hand, efficiently reduce all the steps the readers need to take to one click. The virtual interface enables the text(s) to be expanded interminably. Unlike footnotes, links highlight the problematic sections in the text and usually offer a whole text instead of the condensed summary the footnotes usually provide. With the exception of saving the readers a trip to the library, links do not function differently from footnotes. However, including the extra information in the body of the text and dynamic connection to other texts exposes the intertextual nature of all texts. Not only are the annotations considered as text instead of paratext, but also the text is part of an immense network of interwoven texts.

The second function of links is to facilitate the readers' access to the articles, books and papers mentioned in the text. This is not necessarily to give information, but to present the texts that inspired, influenced or were used in the creation of the current text. Therefore, the readers are given the choice to continue reading the text at hand or interrupt the reading and read the connected text. The readers may return to the first text or quit reading the text that started the chain reaction and change the direction of their reading altogether. The links, in this case, work like annexes, appendices and indices which are activated by the reader. If conventional texts offer references to other related texts for further reading, hypertexts offer the text itself. Consequently, the readers will have access to a complete library in one click. To conclude, the links, although highly practical, do not present a new feature, but an upgraded version of an existing one. Hypertexts merely recognize the hidden potential of footnotes and benefit from the medium to realize it. In printed texts, it is up to the reader to read the annotations or search for the related critical literature in libraries and more importantly, make the connection between the text and paratexts. Digital texts give readers what they may want to look for. This virtual ever-expanding book has the capacity to include as many notes and articles as possible, sometimes even the readers' comments and interpretations.

Exposing two inherent attributes of texts is what makes the links look as if they are the distinctive features of the digital texts. Links foreground the intertextuality and the non-linearity of



texts through connecting bits of texts and affecting the process of reading. As briefly mentioned before, both qualities exist in all texts to some extent and the poststructuralist critical theory has devoted a considerable number of volumes to both subjects. The question is why intertextuality and non-linearity, two concepts which have already been discussed theoretically, cause such excitement that hypertexts have been primarily defined as “non sequential blocks of words or images” connected by digital links? How is a hypertext different from a printed text?

#### **II.3.2.4 Intertextuality**

The poststructuralist critical theory concentrates on the meaning and interpretation rather than the text itself. The concept of “intertextuality” from the poststructuralist perspective deals with ongoing interactions among the composite texts within the text at hand. This dialogue results in the creation of a multitude of interpretations. The exchange takes place, provided that the readers’ prior knowledge of the conventions of literary genres and classic literature enables them to decode the quotations, translations and allusions embedded in the text and form an interpretation. Each reader analyzes a series of codes she / he recognizes, and reaches a different interpretation. This process leads to an abundance of interpretations. That is to say, the focus of the poststructuralist critical theory is on the relationship among texts rather than in a single text, and how the reading process and consequently the generation of the meaning is affected by the elaborate network of texts invoked in each reading. The process of reading finds more significance than the intention of the writer in the production of meaning from this perspective. However, it is still the writer who has designed a potential network of references for the readers to explore. The poststructuralist theory promotes the reader to a critic, but not to a writer.

In contrast to the uniformity of the printed text which conceals the running intertextuality in the text, a digital text exposes the ongoing tension inside the text. While the allusions and adaptations are either left for the reader to discover, or referred to in the footnotes and annotations

in a printed text, the visible links of a digital text deliberately expose the hidden intertextual web. The change of color and the possibility to access the text which was referred to, or inspired by, the text which is being read, constantly remind the readers of the existence of an interwoven web of texts which also includes the text they are reading. The readers/ users of a digital text are persistently reminded of the assortment of the texts that form the text at hand and are encouraged to consider the internal conversation within the text, as well as the external communication among the texts while forming an interpretation. Let us keep in mind that the text in cyberspace jargon is not solely verbal. Some of the texts that participate in the creation of the text being read (or is referred to in the body of the text) have been created in various media or contain bits of texts made in different media. In short, intertextuality in digital text equals intermediacy.

#### **II.3.2.5 Intermediacy**

The text in cyberspace connotes a combination of visual, verbal, aural and kinetic material and each element brings the specific features of its medium of production to the text. It is noteworthy that the term hypertext is usually used synonymously with “hypermedia” defined as an assortment of bits of texts created in different media in a single text. Therefore, “intertextuality” among hypertexts can be defined as intermediacy. Keeping in mind that intertextuality refers to a web of connections among a network of texts within a single text, we can use the word “intermedia” when discussing the relationship between two or more hypertexts and the impact on readers’ interpretation. Intermediacy is the very quality which facilitates the dislocation, transportation and continuation of the text from a medium to another. The fan sites of fantastic novels like *Harry Potter* or TV series such as *Sherlock* are good instances of such transmission. The exposed intertextuality of the text in hypertexts leads us to the next specific feature of hypertexts, namely their non-linear nature.

### **II.3.2.6 Non-linearity**

As discussed earlier, non-linearity is not specific to digital texts. The superficial continuity of the written text creates the illusion of linearity. However, there are either many disguised gaps in the plot without which the story loses the potential to be retold and dies. Moreover, the hidden discontinuity may take place on the language level. The first aspect can be traced in all literary texts while the modernist novels such as *To the Lighthouse*, *The Sound and the Fury* and *Ulysses*, which employ the stream of consciousness to narrate the story, are the best instances of the second type: non-linear language disguised by linear printed words. In both cases, non-linearity leads to reformulation of the story in readers' minds and the emergence of different interpretations. The significance of the reading process cannot be ignored in the argument about linearity. In short, both printed and digital texts display non-linear tendencies to some extent. Printed texts usually conceal this feature while hypertexts expose it.

### **II.3.2.7 Non-linearity and readership**

Digital texts and printed texts resemble each other in that they are both non-linear. In printed texts, the fixed beginning and ending of the book as well as the continuous stream of words and phrases on subsequent pages give an impression of uninterrupted flow of the story. On the contrary, the fragmentary nature of hypertexts uncover the underlying discontinuity at first glance. The links that connect the non-sequential bits of texts emphasize the role of the interrelated texts in the creation of a single text. Links also provide the readers with direct paths to the internally or externally connected texts. The readers may choose to read the digital text the conventional way, particularly when reading informative texts, and follow the instructions or explore their way through the text. Similar to the conventional texts, it is ultimately the reader who re-constructs the text in the process of reading, achieves coherence by creating his own version of the text and reaches a conclusion. The process of choosing and reshaping the pieces of text into a cohesive story

happens in readers' minds rather than on paper when reading printed texts. On the contrary, the digital text is already in pieces and ready to be re-assembled. The action merely takes place on the surface in hypertexts.

It is noteworthy that in both cases the primary text may be chronological or linear. In hypertext, the unreachable hypotext (for the readers!) may or may not follow a linear order while its on-screen representation may take different forms according to the readers' choice of direction while reading the text (or running the program). The method of reading can be determined by the readers' personality, their reading habits or simply their curiosity about the extra material. The readers who are used to finishing a piece of writing before starting a new one may read the text in question from the beginning to the end, and then return to the links that the text had provided. The readers who easily get distracted or lose interest may decide to follow the more exciting topics offered by the links. On the whole, the readers re-construct the text by applying different reading strategies when reading a hypertext.

A similar process takes place while a printed text is read. The text, either linear or in fragments, goes through changes while being de-constructed and re-constructed in the minds of the readers. Memory and the imagination of the readers are the elements that are usually ignored and the very components that hyperfiction employs to catalyze the multiplicity of fiction and its interpretations.<sup>64</sup> Despite the illusion of linearity, the printed text, fiction in particular, cannot help the apertures. The temporal aspect of fiction, for instance, imposes the presence of gaps and discontinuities. The narration normally takes place subsequent to the events. The fracture between the time of happening and the time of narration brings elements such as the reliability of the narrator into play because even if the narrator does not intentionally modify the story, her / his memory is undeniably fallible. Hence, the cracks of discontinuity appear. Moreover, it is pragmatically impossible to tell a story exactly as it happened. The narrator, or the writer on a larger

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<sup>64</sup> I shall get back to hyperfiction and the multiplicity of fiction in another part of this study.

scale, inevitably has to select, summarize and condense. It is the writer who decides where to start and when to end the story. These choices determine the direction the tale takes, and the possible interpretations. The heteroglossia caused by the written language, since the addition of the intonation to the written text can change the meaning completely, also challenges the linearity of the text. Additionally, language is a network of references and each word may evoke a chain of related words or images in the mind of the reader and digress from the linear progression of the text.

Even if a text is absolutely linear, which is practically impossible, it is liable to change into a non-linear version of itself the moment it is read. Each reader finds specific parts of the text worthy of attention. Compiling the parts they find significant, the readers re-construct their, version of the text. The events or data may or may not be in the same order that the text has presented since the reader may find some more important than others or simply forget some sections. Furthermore, the readers' imagination enables them to fill in the parts they have forgotten or the blanks the text originally contained. The processed text exists in the readers' minds. It simultaneously is and is not the primary text. Again Borges' "The Library of Babel" comes to mind. The text the readers have in mind is unquestionably a reflection of the primary text, but at a closer look, major differences can be detected. The story realized in the readers' mind may be as different from the original as the *Hamlet* of the first and the *Hamlet* of the second folio, astonishingly different, yet surprisingly the same.

### **II.3.2.8 Non-linearity in the modernist fiction and metafiction**

The potential non-linearity is what enables literary texts to live on. If the text cannot be taken apart and re-assembled, it expires as it is the case with scientific literature. Contrary to fiction that can be revived in each reading, the factual nature of science impedes re-construction of the text. The content is either true and thus, scientifically provable, or false, and soon obsolete. The poststructuralist critical theory recognizes this potential of fictional texts by celebrating the

multiplicity of interpretations, underlining the readers' role and emphasizing the absence of the author from the text at the moment of reading. As the realization of the critical theory, metafiction intentionally exposes the hidden discontinuity of the text through interruptions, the inclusion of the writer's notes, and the introduction of a self-aware writer who paradoxically confirms the presence of the real writer, whose name appears on the cover. Metafiction trains and encourages the readers to adopt three different roles: the reader, the critic, and the writer. The readers of such experimental fiction are expected to consciously analyze the text as a reader, critically decompose the text, then compile another version as a writer does. The writer has taught them how to take a text apart by showing them how he puts the text together. Not surprisingly, the synopsis of a postmodern novel changes at each telling.

As priorly discussed, digital hypertexts and printed texts both are potentially discontinuous. The difference lies in the medium of presentation which conceals the non-linearity of the text in printed texts and exposes the distinctive sequences of texts in digital texts. The modernist novel benefits from this hidden potential to depict the prolific ideas and thoughts that pass through the characters' minds. The fragmentary images, thoughts and sentences meticulously explore how the brain processes the data, and how the memory functions. Such novels also attempt to recreate the experience for the reader mostly through language. There are rare examples such as *Ulysses* which engages the reader in deciphering Molly Bloom's train of thought by omitting punctuation, but in mainstream modernist writing, the interruptions, broken ideas and images are not visually represented on the page through layout, but in language. Accordingly, the readers are encouraged to navigate their way among the multitudinous images and ideas offered by fiction and construct a comprehensible narrative. Not only does this authorial task enable the readers to empathize with the character(s), but to go through a simulated experience of authorship. This is not to say that it is possible for the reader to replace the real author through refashioning the narrative as the irreversibility of the printed text impedes any changes on paper. In short, the readers of the

modernist novel undoubtedly re-write the story by ordering the fragments and filling the gaps, but the story seems to be unalterable paradoxically, due to the illusory unadulterated text the printed book suggests. The poststructural critical theory later focused on this paradox and stated the reader was the generator of the meaning since it was the reader who re-constructed the text whether or not the writer intended for the reconstructions to take place. Inspired by the theory, metafiction focused on the process of writing and subsequently the process of reading and meaning-making.

Metafiction with its concentration on laying bare the device brought the fragmentary nature of the narration to the surface through language and medium. If the omission of punctuation in modernist novels was to replicate the process of remembering and ordering thoughts, baring the writing devices became a goal for the postmodernist writers. Metafiction intentionally drew the readers' attention to how a fiction is fabricated through language, through layout or a combination of both. In other words, not all metafiction challenges the materiality of the books and their relation with the ethereal Text (urtext). Some experimental metafictions deal with linguistic or narrative innovations and provide the reader with commentaries on how fiction is written. The fiction that experiments with the language, the work of Barth or Barthelme or Borges, the pioneers of such fiction for instance, is of modernist lineage. However, the fundamentally experimental books written by the mentioned writers do not engage the medium of print. The novelty that such fiction bestows on readers includes narrative, thematic and generic innovations. The point is Borges' *Tlön* exists in language, but there is no visual trace of it on the pages of *Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius*.<sup>65</sup> The non-linear nature of the story remains hidden.

That is not to say that mainstream fiction is in any way simpler or less innovative in comparison to fiction that brings the medium into play. The worlds that Borges has created are often too complicated to be re-produced anywhere but in imagination anyway. The point is the fiction in

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<sup>65</sup> Borges, Jorge Luis. "Tlön, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius." *Collected Fictions* Trans. Andrew Hurley. Penguin Books, 1998.

question does not challenge the medium of writing, but simply employs it to tell the story. Thus, the immanent non-linearity will remain unexplored. The texts that linguistically and visually question the medium and attempt to reveal and realize the hidden potential of the medium, Walter Abish's *Alphabetical Africa*, B. S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* or Raymond Queneau's *A Hundred Thousand Billion Poems* for instance, are more suitable to my argument. Such texts experiment not only with the language, but also with the medium of writing. The constrained writing, the typographical fiction, even limited storytelling or analyzing clues presented through the layout, challenge the alleged linearity using the medium of print. They intentionally draw the readers' attention to the process of creation. Needless to say, the readers' participation in the fabrication and witnessing how the fiction is written foreground the fractures and pieces and question the existence of an uninterrupted text. The readers are aware of the discontinuous fiction whether they obey the writer's orders in assembling the fragments or decide to reinstitute the pieces themselves and build their own version. Consciously non-linear, the mentioned metafiction, bear striking similarities with *hypertexts* in highlighting the readers' role in structuring a text.

As already discussed, the linearity of the text is an illusion. Texts can never be absolutely linear. While printed texts have a tendency to hide their discontinuity due to the limitations of medium in which they appear, the digital hypertexts proudly expose their non-linearity mainly through links. Hypertexts are made of bits of multimedia texts in a medium which provides them with the potential to expand, and therefore does not impose any restrictions on the reading process. This combination cannot look homogenous even if it tries, because the inclusion of bits and pieces from different media impedes any illusion of consistency. The chunks of texts are either presented in the same interface with a noticeable fracture in between<sup>66</sup> or are joined through links in a single text. Although the texts are noticeably connected through links, the readers determine the direction

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<sup>66</sup> Chunk-style hypertexts look surprisingly similar to the front page of a newspaper or the cover of a magazine as Nelson had already suggested.



of reading. Speaking of linearity in such context is simply absurd as the text has no beginning and no ending - or thousands of beginnings and endings - depending on the readers' various reading strategies. By embracing the ostensible inconsistency, hypertexts use the disruptive feature to their advantage and emphasize the significance of the readers' role, the frequently discussed concept of the poststructuralist critical theory. At this point, a brief study of the concept of reader in a meta-text and a hypertext seems necessary.

Although poststructuralism and the resulting fiction proclaimed the death of the author and regarded the reader as one of the most important elements in the process of meaning-making, the reader never really replaced the writer. This is to say that the writer never really died in postmodern fiction.<sup>67</sup> He has disguised himself as the fictionalized writer who sometimes takes the responsibility of narrating and commenting. The writer became the quadruple threat: writer, reader, narrator and critic. John Fowles is omnipresent in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and not just because he rides on the train with the protagonist, Charles Smithson, but because he keeps drawing the readers' attention to issues he has in mind, comments on his novel — which is in turn a commentary on Victorian society — while writing and narrating. Ironically, his lengthy cameo affects the readers even more than a death of authorial presence as the reader needs to organize and analyze layers of story and information instead of a single direct narration. Fowles is as important as Sara or Charles in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

The writer is also apt to hide in the text or the paratexts in metafiction. She/He may avoid appearing as herself / himself or a character, but instead she / he may remind the readers of her/his presence through an extrovert or narcissistic text, to use Linda Hutcheon's term. The text, which interrupts the effortless reading and exhibits its digression of the norms joyously, summons the writer in the readers' minds ceaselessly. The proficiently structured and intentionally incoherent

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<sup>67</sup> The poststructuralist concepts of reader and writer were mostly put to practice in fiction. That is the reason why I keep referring to postmodern fiction while discussing "text" in general. In fact, the primary concept of hypertext was inspired by the theory, but developed following the experiments of the existing postmodern fiction of the time.

narrative of *Double or Nothing* not only displays the text in its basic components, but also showcases Raymond Federman's skills as a writer, even more than an adroit, yet conventional masterpiece would do.

The conventional text intends to immerse the readers in the story to the point that the writer is forgotten while reading. Metafiction, on the contrary, unmask its creator when displaying its fictionality. In brief, the conventional text keeps the writer and the text aside, so that the reader can concentrate on the content, whereas the text and the writer of metafiction are two of the primary characters themselves. Whether the writer is emphatically stressed or not, it is the readers who initiate the process of meaning making. The readers decide whether to consider the writer's intentions and clues while forming their interpretations or ignore him altogether and focus on the hints offered by the text. Even then, the writer cannot be completely ignored because he is the one who has left clues in the text, and in the case of metafiction, the text does not permit the writer to stay in the shadows. Thus, the readers' interpretation, as independent as it can be, is still influenced by the writer. The birth of the reader does not necessarily eliminate the writer from the text.

The relationship between the reader and the writer of a hypertext is even more ambiguous. Detecting the writer of a hypertext is a complicated task to begin with. As a multimedia entity, a hypertext is created by writer(s), software programmer(s) and web designer(s). Since a team of writers, designers and technicians are responsible for one single hypertext, creating a text is not an individual experience anymore, but a collaborative process.<sup>68</sup> The text is the result of a close collaboration, and thus almost impossible to measure the contribution of the creators. Additionally, hypertexts are fairly open networks, and usually welcome additions and modifications. Although it is excessive to consider a commenter as a contributor to the text, the role of the users/readers who, if permitted, edit the text, add information or modify the text for better or worse cannot be ignored.

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<sup>68</sup> Producing a text has never been an individual task, but the conventional text has mostly avoided challenging the established idea of author and authorship.

In open networks such as Wikipedia, the readers are allowed to contribute to the existing entries or even create new ones. Although common readers have nothing to do with the technical aspects of the website or even the primary entries, they are able to take the role of the writer momentarily and join this collective authorship experience.

### II.3.2.9 The medium

The medium is the fourth concept that hypertexts add to the conventional writer-text-reader trinity. The self-consciousness of meta-text usually affects the process of creation. Metafiction features stories about writing stories and meta-cinema is concerned with movies displaying the production process. In fact, nowadays with selfies, making-ofs, breaking the fourth walls, alternative endings and gag reels, “behind the scene” is not as out of reach for the audience as it was at the beginning of the poststructuralist era. Hypertexts, on the other hand, elevate the concept of self-referentiality to another level. As multimedia entities, hypertexts focus on the process of creation too, but shift the focus to the medium. Harold Pinter’s brilliant adaptation of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* replaces the authorial interruptions of the fictionalized John Fowles with a couple of actors, and conserves the concept of meta-text in the novel’s journey to the big screen, whereas Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl* employs the medium as a part of the story. *Patchwork Girl* would not have been as effective if it had been presented in a medium that supported continuity. The idea of stitching the body parts (and the fragments of the story) and creating a different, if not monstrous, creature would lose its impact if the readers were not to put the pieces together literally to reach a comprehensible narration. Rick Pryll’s *Lies*<sup>69</sup> also lays the foundations of the story in correlation with the medium of presentation. The readers of *Lies* are allowed to choose between “truth” and “lies” only to understand that the mentioned concepts cannot exist separately. The self-reflexivity of hypertexts promotes the conscious employment of the medium in

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<sup>69</sup> Pryll, Rick. *Lies*. 3 July, 2014. <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies.html>>

the creation of the piece to the point that the change of the medium may change the original understanding of the narrative. As anticipated, hypertexts welcome the change and the consequential polyvocality. Encouraging the dislocation of a text from its original medium and its implant or continuation in another one is the common feature of hypertexts.

In conclusion, the prefix “hyper” reinforces three innate, but less-explored aspects of a conventional text which meta-text has already touched: non-linearity, reader-centrality and medium-consciousness. Meta-text, the prototype of hypertexts, has a tendency to draw the readers’ attention to its fabricated nature through references to the process of creation. The self-aware nature of meta-text shatters the illusion of reality, and questions the alleged linearity of the text through continual interruptions. The text dares to question the writer’s authority and requires the readers’ participation to initiate the process of interpretation. In other words, the text creates the potential to be expanded in the readers’ minds.

#### **II.3.2.10 Hyperfiction or updated metafiction**

Hypertexts expand the boundaries of the text further by exposing themselves not only as non-linear, but fragmentary. Hypertexts audaciously display their multimedia pieces which are loosely connected by links, and invite the readers to construct the text as they wish. Not only do hypertexts foreground the process of authoring a text, but also the medium in which the text is produced and the related attributes of the medium of production. The unique way of hypertexts, hypertext fiction in particular, to draw attention to the production of a certain piece is to envision thematic ties between the content and the medium. Shelley Jackson’s *My Body: A Wunderkammer* explores the relation between human identity and her body parts and questions whether it is possible to reach a confident and coherent self through ordering jumbled ideas. *My body* takes advantage of the fragmentary nature of the medium to comment on the holistic view of self. Needless to say, our understanding of the story might dramatically change if it were to be presented in another medium,

a book for instance. Furthermore, hypertexts welcome the transmission across media. This way, they confirm the multiplicity and the continuous regeneration of the text in addition to questioning the existence of the text unless being read / realized by readers. Hypertexts undermine the sovereignty of the finalized text in favor of the possibility of a multitude. In an ideal hyperfiction, the reader is promoted to co-author instead of her / his position as the critic in metafiction. If metafiction invites the readers to critically interpret the text, the readers of hyperfiction are expected to create their own text out of the fragments, and then analyze it. The readers morph into the author. The interwoven texture continues expanding across the media creating a never-ending story.

### **II.3.3 Hypertextual networks**

The confusion between hypertext and hypermedia is one of the reasons behind the literary ambivalence toward hyperfiction. Literary circles have a tendency to privilege the verbal text over the other forms in a work of fiction, whereas hypertexts define the text as an amalgamation of texts from different media. Each piece of text functions both within and outside the network, collectively or independently, in the medium of presentation and in the medium in which it was created, in the context and out of context. This quality provides hypertexts with infinite opportunities to expand and multiply, and introduces a revised definition of authenticity which is rather atypical of the texts with which the literary tradition is familiar. This may be the reason behind the hesitation to define hyperfiction as a narratological concept and to include hypertext fiction in the literary canon. The dubiousness toward such monstrous texts with the capacity to be continued forever across the media by multiple writers and under any circumstances seems rational at first glance. It is impossible to locate the borders of the text. There may not be a single writer, but thousands of writers. However, as stated earlier, hyperfiction has roots in the poststructuralist critical theory and displays surprising similarities with metafiction. To trace the roots of hypertextual fiction back to mainstream fiction, I

need to distinguish between hypertext and hypermedia whose similarity to hypertext in computer studies has caused confusion in the literary understanding of hyperfiction.

Hypertext in the jargon of information technology is considered an equal to hypermedia, because a) hypertext is a hypermedia entity and b) the revised definition of the text, which includes texts from all media, reinforces the similarity between hypertext and hypermedia. Hypertexts make it impossible to distinguish between the text and the medium. The text uses the medium not only as an expanse to be presented in, but also as an essential part of the story. As mentioned before, Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* would have created a significantly different impact if it had been presented on paper in the traditional manner. It is the medium which amplifies the loneliness, the peculiarity and the fractured sense of identity from which the narrator suffers. Although this unique quality of hyperfiction has led to the creation of memorable stories, the confusion of the text and the medium has resulted in ambiguous definitions which have nearly dismissed the textual - in the traditional sense of the word - lineage of hypertexts and consequently of hyperfiction. I would like to clarify the confusion by proposing the concept of hypertextual network instead of hypertext. To my mind, the ambiguity lies in our dual definition of text as verbal and text as a multimedia entity. Suggesting "hypertextual network" instead of "hypertext," I will aim to clear the confusion by keeping the verbal implication of the word "text" and defining "hypertext" as a multimedia entity the primary medium of which is language. Hyperfiction belongs in this category.

### **II.3.3.1 Hypermedia and hyperfiction**

A hypertext is a multimedia entity. It consists of a body of verbal text which has been translated into the language of ones and zeros in order to appear once again as a word-based text on the monitor. The word-based text may be accompanied by multimedia supplementaries or linked to the texts from the same or different media in order to provide the reader with the opportunity to have access to extra information per request, but the information is mainly transferred through

writing. Any Wikipedia entry can serve as an example in this case, because a) the written text is the primary source of information b) this text may expand on request through the connections which appear in the main text c) the word-based text may be accompanied by texts from different media, illustrations and audiovisual clips for instance and d) the registered readers are allowed to edit and modify the entry.

A hypermedia text, although very similar in function, does not necessarily use written text as its primary medium to communicate information. In hypermedia, either factual or fictional, the multimedia structure does not favor any of its composite media over the others. A network of texts from various media is presented to the users who are expected to find their way out of the web using the clues given by the creators. Hypertexts, on the other hand, highly depend on language, therefore determine a beginning point while keeping the options open for their readers. Shelly Jackson's *My Body: A Wunderkammer* may serve as an appropriate example once again.<sup>70</sup> In contrast to such hyperfiction, hypermedia can be approached from different angles. Its structure welcomes the abundance of interpretations as it avoids setting a beginning point for the users and instead, provides them with infinite choices to approach the composition of multimedia texts.

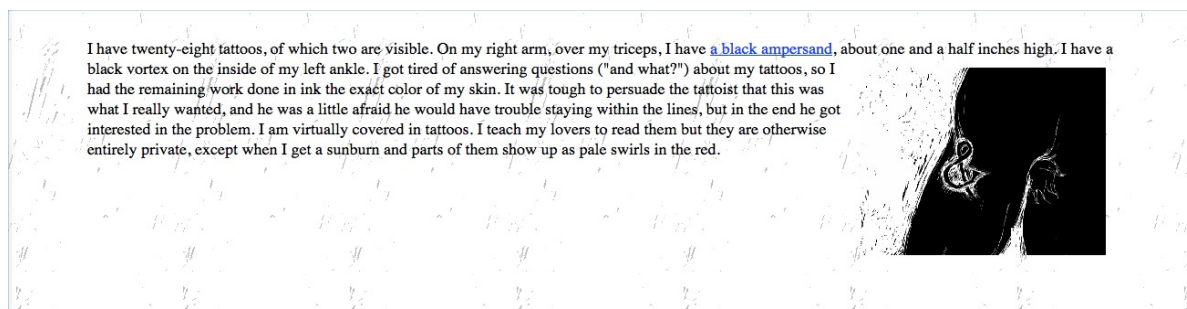


Figure II.3.3.1.P.1  
*My Body: A Wunderkammer*

Juliette Davis's *Pieces of Herself* is a good example of (fictional) hypermedia.<sup>71</sup> The interface presents a multimedia text consisting of written text, flash videos, kinetic and audio

<sup>70</sup> Jackson, Shelley. *my body a wunderkammer*. <[http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/jackson\\_my\\_body\\_a\\_wunderkammer.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/jackson_my_body_a_wunderkammer.html)>

<sup>71</sup> Davis, Juliette. *Pieces of Herself*. <[http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/davis\\_pieces\\_of\\_herself.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/davis_pieces_of_herself.html)>

material that are presented together with none being privileged over the others. The minimal usage of written text and the lack of a clear plot, which creates the potential for infinite stories, encouraged me to adopt the term “user” instead of reader. The story begins with the words: “Her friends said she needed to find “herself.” And sure enough when she started looking, she found pieces of herself everywhere.” But when the users click on “enter” to access the rest of the story, they are presented with the first interface titled “the shower” in which they would find the hidden organs, fluids, smells, notes, signs or any other far-fetched objects which are to be placed on the unidentified female dummy on the left side of the picture, a very strange dress up game indeed!

Finding each organ or object, the users are presented with a short narration, background sounds or even a song. One user may immediately form an interpretation in the very first interface when she/he finds red fingerprints on the trash can, drops of blood on one of the shower curtains and irksome sounds of

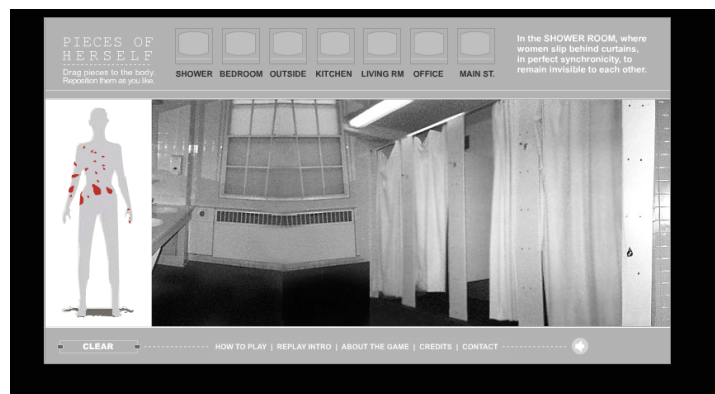


Figure II.3.3.1.P.2  
*Pieces of Herself*  
Juliette Davis

water drops. Another user may focus on the engraved heart and arrow which reads “Tracy and John - True Love 4 ever” on one of the doors of the bathroom stalls as well as the curious cell division in the other bathroom. In both cases, the eye behind the window that witnesses what is going on and the woman who takes a shower unaware of the strange happenings around her represent the invisible presence of other characters.

The related sound for each piece, which starts after being dragged and dropped on the body, inspires a different reaction or interpretation. While the narrations and the music play just once, some sounds such as the water drops continue playing and create a more lasting effect. The oral fragmentary and sometimes even unintelligible narrations such as “Oh, my God, I don’t even let my



kids see me naked!” or “Don’t forget to wash your hands” encourage the users to find the associations between the uttered sentences and the pictures to create a background story for the nameless woman whose grey body will bear everything the users decide to drop on. The only thing that we clearly know about our faceless heroine is that she is finding pieces of herself in any place she has lived or worked in, just the pieces, not a whole. The users, much like the woman herself, attempt to reach a holistic identity built on the pieces they find. Since the pieces can be placed on different parts of the dummy’s body, the interpretation is liable to change figuratively or literally if the bits change place. A woman with fire in her heart is viewed differently from a woman with fire on mind or in stomach. Ironically, by the end of the story, if the reader has religiously placed all the pieces on the female figure, nothing but a body is identifiable. The colors cancel each other. The outline of the objects and ideas is not distinguishable and the woman is nothing but a mixture. The search for identity ends in more confusion and the question remains open to discussion.

Multiple possibilities for a mere beginning may take the users’ attention away from the seven television sets on the top each representing a different part of the house or the city. Only then, the user may or may not notice the caption on the right corner which reads “In the SHOWER ROOM, where women slip behind curtains in perfect synchronicity to remain invisible to each other.” Not unexpectedly, different users adopt different methods to respond to such texts. The point is the structure shows no indication of how the text/interface should run. The users are expected to take control of the story they are creating. They should raise questions about the objects and ideas located in random places constantly and answer them in their interpretation considering the relation between the places, the objects, the sounds and the woman in question. How the users interpret the rabbit under the desk in “the office” or the floating fetus on the building resembling a garage in the “outside” section is what shapes the narrative and determines the direction the story will take.

While *Pieces of Herself* was classified as electronic literature, it is fundamentally different from *My Body: A Wunderkammer* archived in the same collection under the same title. Although

both stories are loosely labeled hypertext, Davis's and Jackson's stories can be easily separated as hypermedia and hyperfiction due to their distinctive features. Hypertext is undoubtedly a hypermedia entity. That is to say that the final result is a combination of different pieces and bits from various media. Yet the primary medium of presentation is the word-based text, either written or oral. The story or the body of information is mainly communicated through writing. The additional pieces from non-verbal medium, be it audio, visual or kinetic, function as supplements providing extra information in case of an informative text or illustrate the story in case of fiction.

Hypermedia as a separate entity equally benefits from its composite media. If the reader / user of hypertexts is encouraged to regard the verbal material as more important than the attachments, the verbal medium holds no authority over the other media in hypermedia. The verbal material that appears in hypermedia is either limited or compound, subtitles in a videoclip for instance. Therefore, while hypertext permits the readers to choose the material that they want to read, the verbal material determines the direction of the reading. In other words, it is rare for any professional reader — and I am using the word “professional” loosely in reference to anybody who has encountered more than two texts in his life — to recognize the first word of the first sentence as the beginning of the text and then decide to read a linear text from the middle, the end or backwards!

By contrast, hypermedia requires a different type of reading and engagement on the part of the reader. Although there may be instructions on how the structure functions — “Drag and drop the pieces onto the body. Then, reposition them as you like ...” in the case of *Pieces of Herself* — the users are not given any hints on where to start, which medium to start with or how to continue. The users may approach the structure from different angles provided by different media. To use the example of *Pieces of Herself* again, the users may choose to read the instructions, examine the tools the program provides, listen to the audio material, focus on the kinetic elements of the interface or multitask and do a combination all. The users are permitted to start in a medium they are familiar

with and add other multimedia elements by degree, or delete them completely from their (for the lack of a better word) reading. Unlike hypertexts, which indicate a beginning and an ending using verbal fragments, hypermedia leaves the choice of the medium in which a story may be formed to the users. Thus, while both hypertext and hypermedia are capable of presenting stories, hypermedia relies less on the word-based text and gives the users more freedom in confronting the structure. While hypertexts and hyperfiction are undoubtedly hypermedia structures, not all hypermedia structures are hypertexts and hyperfiction. Whilst benefiting from their composite media, hypertexts still rely on word-based text as the dominant medium. This quality limits the medium in which the message — either factual or fictional — is delivered to written text. However, hypertexts, similar to hypermedia, benefit from the confusion of various media, and permit the readers to determine the direction of reading using links.

Hypermedia gives a homogenous amalgamation of the media. The users are free to start with the medium with which they feel more comfortable. Unlike hypertexts that provide their readers with pieces of a word-based story, Shelley Jackson's *My Body: A Wunderkammer* for example, hypermedia expects the users / readers to create their own story from the bits and clips which are mostly non-verbal, Juliet Davis's *Pieces of Herself* for instance. That may be the reason why hypermedia stories frustrate the traditionally trained readers even more than hypertexts. Hypertexts, hyperfiction to be precise, playfully keep the writer-reader relationship when hypermedia boldly asks the reader to become a writer. Hyperfiction is still enchanted by the narrative possibilities that the medium offers while hypermedia questions the definition of narration by producing an anti-narrative or a multiplication of narratives. In Davis' *Pieces of Herself*, the users know nothing about the character, not even her name. As confusing as it seems, the users can take the story in any direction. The possibilities are immense. The users may depict other characters just by listening to their messages on the phone and relating them to a random object. It is the users who build the relationship between characters, and the fact that there are almost no written words

causes more questions than convictions. If the users doubt their perception of the event, for example if they ask themselves whether the message on which they have just built a conclusion was a crank call, they will have to start over, just as the “clear” bottom on each page suggests.

Hypermedia challenges the concept of story, reader or writer. Hypertext, by contrast, respects the traditional relationship between the reader and the writer while challenging the mode of presentation and liberating the reader and the story from the materiality of paper. In the case of hypertexts, it is much easier to put pieces of writing together and reach a convincing conclusion. Even though the direction the story (or the reader) takes will undoubtedly affect the interpretation, there are limited pieces of writing involved that liken the experience to discovering an old and incomplete manuscript in which random pages are missing. There is a story underneath that can be (re-) told in infinite ways.

Hypermedia is not about re-tellings, but re-constructions. The author of a hypertext keeps control over his text to some extent. The author of hypermedia neither can, nor intends to keep the text under control. The hypermedia nature of the structure and users’ various understandings of it result in infinite possible stories and interpretations. Thus, hypermedia stories are always in progress and this is why I prefer to distinguish between hypertext, hyperfiction in particular, and hypermedia.

Despite the mentioned differences, hypertext and hypermedia share numerous similarities which cause the confusion in the first place. First, hypertext and hypermedia are both multimedia structures. A multimedia structure may present its content in visual, audio, kinetic or even verbal form according to users’ / readers’ demand and interest. While hypertexts usually choose words as their primary medium of presentation, hypermedia leaves the choice of the medium to its users.

Second, both structures are highly medium-conscious to the point that there is an interchangeable relation between the content and the medium. The content is usually adapted to the medium of presentation or the medium is chosen regarding its role in intensifying the reading

experience. Hence, the dominance of themes such as memory, monstrosity and identity crisis which focus on fragmentation and discontinuity in both hyperfiction and hypermedia.

Third, both hypertext and hypermedia have the potential to expand across the media. Although there is usually a primary medium of presentation, the content is not medium-bound. The multimedia nature of both structures facilitates the mobility of the content and its transition among different media. Thus, there is usually more than one platform of presentation - or narration in the case of fiction. Hence, the ever-growing web of texts and never-ending stories.

Considering the similarities between hyperfiction and hypermedia, I would like to suggest an umbrella term to be able to include the two seemingly interchangeable concepts in one category: a hypertextual network, the “text” meaning any type of text. A hypertext is formed by a group of interrelating and interacting multimedia texts with the potential to function as a whole or independently depending on the readers’ request. A hypertextual network includes a series of hypertexts and hypermedia, a network made by a series of networks the components of which may interact with or intersect each other. This it is the reason why a hypertext has the potential to function independently or in collaboration with the other components of the system.

The quality that enables the stories presented in both hypertext and multimedia to be continued by different authors and in different media is their dormant status until being told or activated. Bits and pieces of verbal (in hypertext) or audio, visual or kinetic text (in hypermedia) are liable to form a story if the user / reader decides to activate them. If not, they are nothing but dispersed fragments. The story or text changes at each reading / encounter by each user / reader. There is a multitude of stories/texts. There is no single story / text. In other words, unlike the traditional form, the story lies outside of the text on a virtual level. This level grants the story mercurial characteristics, and enables it to take different forms and directions at each reading. Borrowing the term from metafiction, I will call this virtual diegetic level, meta-level.

### II.3.3.2 Meta-level

Meta-level is vaguely synonymous with hyperdiegetic level in fiction. Assuming the events of the plot usually take place on the diegetic level, the meddling writer of metafiction resides on a higher level or the hyperdiegetic level. Accordingly, the writer whose purpose is to attract the attention of the readers to the process of writing is also fictionalized and all the comments and the techniques which have an alienation impact on the reader are actually part of the story. The John Fowles who constantly interrupts *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is a presentation of the real writer. Moreover, the story with all the interruptions and difficulties has already been narrated. The readers of metafiction are encouraged to have different interpretations of the already-completed story. In other words, the writer maintains his authority over the story he has created. The readers of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* are presented with three endings to choose from, but they do not have any control over the progression of the plot or the direction of the story. In short, 'meta' in metafiction refers to the self-reflexivity which has already been recorded in the fiction. There is no diegetic level beyond the written levels of narration where the reader may experiment with or modify the story. This is the exact feature that the digital medium offers.

Meta-level is more significant in hypertext and hypermedia. Presenting the text — and sometimes the story — in fragments, both hypertext and hypermedia seek the participation of readers/users to become coherent entities. The underlying order is indistinct and that is why the external contribution becomes particularly important in digital hypertexts. The text comes in fragments. The pieces are not fixed in a sequence, but fluid and liable to change, and the force that initiates the flow of the fragments is the reader / user.

Besides the ethereal quality of Text, the torrent of stories / texts emanates from the volatility of the digital medium which functions as a virtual and external meta-level for all texts and stories. The internet functions as a virtual level for all different types of media, much like what iCloud does for Apple products. The internet by default adds a virtual meta-level to all the presented texts. This

virtual layer which exists outside of the text provides the readers with the opportunity to modify, continue and finally store their contributions to the text without literally changing it. Like iCloud, which connects all your electronic Apple devices such as phone, laptop or tablet and enables the virtually stored texts to appear on all different devices, the meta-level functions as the bridge among the media, as well as a diegetic level above the text where readers / users may apply changes and store their versions of the text. Meta-level in this discussion is much more than a mere presentation of the process of production, but a transmedia concept which catalyzes the realization of Text across media. This level exists above the text and since the digital text is not consolidated (at least in theory), changes may easily take place on the meta-level and the text may be transported to different platforms of presentation. This feature enables the readers to co-author an already-finished text, and the story to spread across the media. The fragmentary nature of hypertexts makes it possible for the readers to re-construct their own story and the hypermedia quality of the structure facilitates the transition of the story. The authenticity is questioned in favor of infinity and plurality. The story is once more the ethereal entity which may be framed in parts in different media, but never completely captured. Curiously, the perception of the story in the digital age bears undeniable resemblance to the oral tradition of storytelling.

The multimedia quality of hypertexts uncovers some of the prominent features of meta-level which has been left unexplored in metafiction. First, meta-level is not a medium-bound concept. This is nothing new since the concept has already been explored in meta-cinema, meta-music and meta-theater. However, the concept has usually been defined as the awareness of the process of creation. Therefore, metafiction is concerned with the process of writing while meta-cinema deals with the process of making a movie. Self-consciousness of fiction is usually defined as awareness of the fabricated and fictional nature. Although self-referentiality is foregrounded in hypertexts as in metafiction, especially through the fragmentary form and patchwork media clips, it adds a new dimension to the concept. Hypertexts show awareness of their constructed nature as well as the

medium. The discontinuity imposed by the fragmented structure, which is designed to be assembled according to the requisites of the medium, constantly reminds the readers of the medium and the process of construction. The medium-consciousness of hypertexts catalyzes the emergence of the stories which highly rely on the medium to unfold. This quality facilitates uprooting the stories from the primary medium of presentation and developing them in a new medium. This enables hypertexts to use multiple platforms to tell and continue a story.

#### **II.4 The final word**

In search of an appropriate narratological definition for hyperfiction, this study has examined the basic definitions of hypertext provided by the prominent computer theoreticians and concluded that there is more to be expected of “the non-sequential blocks of words (or images) which have been joined together by links.”<sup>72</sup> Nelson’s definition confirms that any type of non-sequential writing with the potential for expansion can be considered as hypertext, even the front page of a newspaper. In consequence, Nelson rejects the vitality of digital links in the creation of hypertexts, an idea to which Wardrip-Fruin returns years later in order to reprimand the exaggerated focus on digital links as the distinguishing feature of hypertexts. Bolter draws attention to the virtuality and the instability of the text which challenges the idea of an underlying urtext and instead underscores the significance of reading. He states that the digital text is a manifestation of its unreachable hypotext which has been written in the language of zeros and ones and suggests that it is the reading that constitutes the text. Landow regards hypertexts as multimedia entities and the realization of poststructuralist critical theory. He points out the similarities between hypertexts and Barthes’ definition of the ideal text. Revisiting the well-known definitions of hypertexts has led to two major conclusions. First, hypertexts, hyperfiction included, manifest three major characteristics: non-linearity, medium-consciousness and reader-centrality. Second, the fact that hypertexts have

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<sup>72</sup> The line is a direct quotation from the first page of this chapter.



been inspired by the poststructuralist critical theory raises the question of whether similarities between hypertextual fiction and the fiction produced based on the poststructuralist thought can be traced.

To answer the above question, the definition of “text” and the related concepts of write and reader have been studied during the modernist era, the postmodern era, and the digital era. This brief look at the modifications of the concept confirmed that there are similarities between metafiction and hypertexts in terms of non-linearity, intertextuality, self-consciousness and reader engagement. This finding led to the study of “hyper” in order to determine the extent to which hypertexts have modified and developed the traditional text, and study the consequences of such adjustments. Having defined the text as a multimedia composite with an interrelated texture that can be continued in the constituent media or joined to other texts in external media, hypertexts, namely hyperfiction, upgrade the characteristics they share with metafiction. They expose their non-linearity and demand reader participation to be developed into a coherent whole. The text can be expanded through its intertextual web or join other texts externally through links. This expansion may take place in the medium of presentation or the text may benefit from its multimedia nature to find other platforms suitable for growth. Moreover, the text consciously employs the medium in the development of the story to the point that any change in the medium may alter the interpretations of the story fundamentally. In brief, hypertexts upgrade the aforementioned qualities of metafiction to non-linearity, intermediacy, reader-centrality and medium-consciousness. However, the definition of the text as a multimedia entity makes it difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between hypermedia and hypertext.

To accentuate the distinction between hypertext and hypermedia, the final part of this chapter has introduced the concepts of “hypertextual networks” and “meta-level.” The “meta-level,” inspired by Werner Wolf’s definition of the concept of “meta” as unbound by the medium, refers to a virtual diegetic level on which the reader participation takes place. Although the printed

metafiction does not change and the readers' contribution cannot be stored, both actions take place somewhere above the text. This level which is at the threshold is sometimes used by the writers and their fictionalized alter egos also. This concept, which can only be detected in certain metafiction with merging diegetic levels, confirms the bond between metafiction and hypertextual fiction once more. Moreover, I suggest that in digital hypertexts, the internet serves as the virtual meta-level and ensures the extension of the hypertextual network, the transference among the media, the dissemination of the meaning and guarantees user participation and the storage of all different versions.

“Hypertextual networks” are a collection of conjoined texts with the potential to expand either from the inside using the intertextual web, or from the outside by linking themselves to another text externally. The multimedia core text of these networks usually defines a single medium as the dominant one. Hypertexts, and their derivatives, prefer language as their primary medium of presentation. Although the terms hypertext and hypermedia have been used synonymously in digital studies, hypertexts usually rely on language as the primary medium of presentation while hypermedia does not determine any medium as its primary platform of presentation. This distinction allows to differentiate between hypertext fiction and hypermedia fiction.

In conclusion, the survey of the basic definitions of hypertexts and their perception of different elements of writing have clarified the vague definitions of hypertext and hypermedia and resulted in distinguishing three major features of hypertexts, namely non-linearity, medium-consciousness and user-centrality. These qualities prove the kinship of hypertextual fiction with the literary critical theory which in turn confirms the connections between metafiction and hyperfiction. The correspondence between hyperfiction and metafiction will be explored in the following chapter.

### **III. Metafiction: the progenitor of hyperfiction**

The definition of hypertext fiction, hyperfiction in short, seems to be implied in the concept; simply the fictional realization of a hypertext. Contrary to this derogatory understanding, nothing about hyperfiction is unproblematic. First, the concept is too dependent on our definition of hypertext which is yet to be critically defined. While the reconfiguration of “text” in hypertext permits hypertext fiction to benefit from a multimedia status, it is still considered fiction and therefore, akin to mainstream fiction which prefers the medium of print. This raises the question of whether fiction has ever exhibited any defining features of hypertexts before the digital revolution. How compatible is fiction with the new medium? To what extent are the distinctive features of hypertext such as non-linearity, intermediacy, interconnectivity, medium-consciousness and user-centrality considered as novelty to fiction? If so, how are they manifested or altered in fiction? And most importantly, to what extent will fiction embrace the novelties of the new medium in order to differentiate itself from a simply digitalized texts produced by word processors? The present chapter will study metafiction, the lost link between mainstream fiction and hyperfiction, in terms of linearity, medium-consciousness and reader-centrality in an attempt to respond to some of the above questions.

The first section of this chapter will revisit the concepts of the ideal text, readerly and writerly text, the very notions that have inspired metafiction, in order to examine the possibility of the realization of the mentioned concepts in fiction. To do so, this section will introduce the concepts of open networks for the texts which welcome modification, reproduction and extension of the original, and closed networks for the texts that resist rewritings. Although printed fiction belongs to the second category for the actual rewriting is impossible, the text, especially a writerly literary text, encourages multiplication and expansion due to its primary medium of presentation, language. Some features of language such as intonation and tone become dormant in the written

text. Writerly literary texts use this feature to their advantage by creating ambiguity and inviting the readers to decipher the text. The readers need a set of skills in order to decode the text and so, metafiction, a writerly text by definition, attempts to train them. The writer of metafiction usually interrupts the course of the events in order to draw the readers' attention to the process of writing. In other words, the writer adopts the role of a critic in order to train readers who possess analytical abilities which enables them to initiate multiple interpretive processes and in consequence, ensure the reproduction and the revival of the text.

The second part of this chapter, titled "Metafiction: narcissistic self-consciousness" concentrates on self-referentiality in metafiction and how this obsession with the medium of production results in the creation of non-linear texts which train active readers. This part has been divided to two sections. The first one concentrates on self-referentiality in language and its consequences in Borges' "A Garden of Forking Paths," Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and Johnson's *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry*. Borges in "A Garden of Forking Paths" writes about a labyrinthine novel in which the character chooses all the possibilities at once. These forking paths result in alternative universes, multiple and simultaneous outcomes and an extremely complicated text. "A Garden of Forking Paths" introduced the world to the idea of hypertext in 1941. However, the story follows the traditional linear format. Fowles puts the idea in practice in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* by giving the readers three endings to choose from. Moreover, the fictionalized author adopts the roles of the author, narrator, character and critic in order to train reader-critics. Although interruptions, forking paths, and the process of writing are integral to *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the book realizes the mentioned concepts on the language level and avoids formal experimentation. *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry* also manifests its self-referentiality on the level of language. However, the characters are all aware of their fictionality and constantly discuss the novel with the writer, who is always present in the text. The constant

conversations about (and sometimes with) the elements of writing takes self-referentiality to another level.

The second part of “Metafiction: narcissistic self-consciousness” will focus on self-referentiality through form and studies formal explorations in B. S. Johnson’s *Albert Angelo* and *House Mother Normal*. *Albert Angelo* provides the reader with a novel which has been bared down to its elements and demands readers’ participation to achieve coherence. Moreover, *Albert Angelo* uses the layout and other typographic elements in character and plot development. Johnson perfected the usage of typography in *House Mother Normal* which realizes the holes in the plot and the gaps in the narration as blanks sections on the page and makes use of font, typefaces, character style and layout in character development.

Johnson shifts the focus of metafiction from self-consciousness to medium consciousness by focusing on the materiality of the book in *The Unfortunates*. This book in a box presents an intrinsically non-linear narrative in unbound chapters and incorporate the medium into the story in an attempt to simulate the experiences the characters undergo for the readers. The acute medium-consciousness of *The Unfortunates*, which is the subject of “Metafiction: medium-consciousness,” expands the definition on metafiction, discussed in “Metafiction: an extended definition” and confirms its similarities with hypertextual fiction.

The last part of this chapter, “Hyperfiction: the progeny of metafiction,” will trace the three hypertextual features, non-linearity, medium-consciousness and reader-centrality, in *Lies* by Rick Pryll in order to foreground the similarities between printed metafiction and hypertextual fiction in spite of the medium of presentation.

### **III.1 The ideal text**

Hypertext finds its roots in the definition that the structuralist critical theory offers for the ideal text. From Barthes’ vision of “writerly texts,” “a perpetual present, upon which no consequent

language (which would inevitably make it past) can be superimposed”<sup>73</sup> whose “galaxy of signifiers” denies a definite direction for the text<sup>74</sup> to Foucault’s perception of texts as links and networks which define books as intertextual and expandable networks,<sup>75</sup> to Derrida’s constant dismantling of narrative and its medium and exposing the intrinsic subversive centers of texts that consequently bring the readers into the spotlight,<sup>76</sup> the ideal text has been constantly defined and re-defined as an autonomous interconnected network liable to change and conscious of its status as a fabrication. Text as opposed to work by the Barthesian definition, embodies an irreducible plurality<sup>77</sup> and welcomes different and even contradictory interpretations. “The plural or demonic texture that divides text from work can carry with it profound modifications in the activity of reading and precisely in the areas where monologism seems to be the law.”<sup>78</sup> Such texts, which bear a striking similarity with the perception of text in the digital era, are not written for mere

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<sup>73</sup> “The writerly text is a perpetual present, upon which no consequent language (which would inevitably make it past) can be superimposed; the writerly text is ourselves writing, before the infinite play of the world (the world as function) is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system (Ideology, Genus, Criticism) which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages.” (*S/Z* 5)

<sup>74</sup> In this ideal text the networks [réseaux] are many and interact, without anyone of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable . . . ; the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text, but their number is never closed, based as it is on the infinity of language.” (*Ibid* 5-6)

<sup>75</sup> “The frontiers of a book are never clear-cut: beyond the title, the first lines, and the last full stop, beyond its external configuration and its autonomous form, it is caught up in a system of reference to other books, other texts, other sentences. It is a node in a network ... [a] network of references.” (*Archeology of Knowledge* 23)

Foucault, Michel. *The Archeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. Trans. A. M. Sheridan Smith. New York: Harper & Row, 1976.

<sup>76</sup> “The text is remarkable in that the reader [...] can never choose his place in it ... There is at any rate no tenable place for him opposite the text, no spot where he might get away with not writing what, in the reading would seem to him to be given, past; no spot in other words, where he would stand before an already written text. [...] The tale is thereby addressed to the readers’ body, which is put by things on stage, itself. The moment ‘therefore’ is written, the spectator is less capable than ever of choosing his place.” (*Dissemination* 320)

Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. trans. Barbara Johnson. Bloomsbury Publishing PLC: 2004.

<sup>77</sup> “The Text is plural. This does not mean just that it has several meanings, but rather that it achieves plurality of meaning, an *irreducible* plurality. The Text is not coexistence of meanings but passage, traversal; thus it answers not to an interpretation, liberal though it may be, but to an explosion, a dissemination.” (*Image-Music-Text* 159)

Barthes, Roland. “From work to Text.” *Image, Music, Text*. Trans. Stephen Heath. Hill & Wang. 1978.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, 160

consumption and can be considered unreadable unless readers execute the text. An unreadable text, according to Barthes, is a text whose readers are unable to “produce the text, play it, open it out, *set it going*.”<sup>79</sup> In other words, the reader is expected to take the role of a critic also.

The autonomy that such definitions attribute to the text suggests a flexible and ethereal consciousness which exists outside and above paper. The written or printed realization is but a representation in verbal form on paper: “[The] text is restored to language: like language, it is structured but de-centered, without closure.”<sup>80</sup> The text consciously avoids determining any beginning or ending that may delineate the structure and fully embraces its ever-expanding nature through engulfing all its representations which frame this endless entity only in parts. Thus, the text has the potential to be realized in language or other systems such as music, painting, etc. The fluidity of the text enables it to be reconfigured in different media.

This infinite texture is highly intertextual, not because it is generated in relation to other texts, but simply because it is impossible to live outside of an infinite text.<sup>81</sup>

Every text, being itself the intertext of another text, belongs to the intertextual, which must not be confused with a text's origins: to search for the “sources of” and “influence upon” a work is to satisfy the myth of filiation. The quotations from which a text is constructed are anonymous, irrecoverable, and yet already read: they are quotations without quotation marks. The work does not upset monistic philosophies, for which plurality is evil. Thus, when it is compared with the work, the text might well take as its motto the words of the man possessed by devils: “My name is legion, for we are many” (Mark 5:9).<sup>82</sup>

Thus, the common texts successfully hide their intertextual features to enhance the illusion of coherence and linearity for the reader. The ideal text, on the other hand, proudly displays its filiation and internal connections and thus, exposes its non-linear nature. The intertextual links within the

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<sup>79</sup> *Image, Music, Text*, 163

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid*, 159

<sup>81</sup> *The Pleasure of the Text* 31.

<sup>82</sup> *Image-Music-Text* 159

ideal text, which is a network of texts from different media, evolve into a multimedia texture and guarantee the transference of the text among media. The ideal text is indeed a legion.

The allegedly demonic text, if ever realized, resists conventional reading due to the fact that it is an amalgam of subtexts from various media. It challenges the readers to find their way among the texts, find or establish a semantic system and determine their reading strategy. In other words, reading an ideal text is nothing less than a challenging interpretive activity. Hence, such a text requires the reader-critic or the reader-co-author.

Hypertext is an actualization of the ideal text. The digital medium facilitates the existence of an interconnected and expandable web or chunks of text which present multiple paths to be navigated. Such texts expose their intertextual nature and incorporate too many possible paths — as many as the users — to determine directions the text could take. The links and the fragmented structure permit the reader/users to enter the text where they wish and change their reading strategy constantly. In hypertextual fiction, the non-linear feature enables the text to expand on request, and allows the readers to find different centers that may serve as the basis of a certain interpretation. The question is whether any other realization of the poststructuralist ideal text existed before the digital revolution. Barthes, Derrida and other theoreticians, whose ideas shaped the poststructural critical theory and inspired the postmodernist novel, mostly delineate the ideal text in fictional written texts. Did any realization of the ideal text appear in fiction before the emergence of digital hypertexts?

### **III.1.1 Readerly texts, writerly texts**

Reviewing Barthes' and Derrida's understanding of the text after the digital revolution, one wonders at the extent to which hypertexts embody the described ideal text. However, Barthes and Derrida discuss the significance of writer, text, reader and critic in fiction. *S/Z* is a structuralist



analysis of Honoré de Balzac's "Sarrasine." Barthes' classification of "readerly"<sup>83</sup> and "writerly"<sup>84</sup> texts can only be applied to fiction. Informative texts are written to be "readerly" and accessible to all consumers while fiction is written to be read over and over again and yet please the reader. Barthes' analysis of "Sarrasine" suggests that good fiction, a writerly text in Barthes' words, is a fabric of codes which are ordered and re-ordered in each act of reading in order to give birth to infinite interpretations. Barthes' suggestion that the ideal text encourages re-writings by readers only confirms that he had fictional texts in mind while discussing an ideal text. Although non-fiction may inspire readers in different ways, the main objective of a non-fictional text is to transfer information accurately and limit erroneous interpretations.

Confirming the ideal text as fictional gives rise to different arguments about authorship. In one of the most quoted lines of the critical theory, Barthes declares the death of the author: "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author."<sup>85</sup> Barthes' daring statement resulted in the flourish of the reader-oriented theories, however, the discussions on the role of the author never subsided. How can the significant role of the author, the fiction writer in particular, be ignored? And more importantly, does Barthes completely exclude the writer to replace him with the reader? What does he mean exactly when he uses the word "writing" to discuss the process of reading and interpretation? To explain the difference between an informative text and a fictional text

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<sup>83</sup> Barthes defines "le texte scriptible" in *S/Z*:

Notre évaluation ne peut être liée qu'à une pratique et cette pratique est celle de l'écriture. Il y a une coté ce qu'il est possible d'écrire et de l'autre ce qu'il n'est plus possible d'écrire: ce qui est dans la pratique de l'écrivain et ce qui en est sorti: quels textes accepterais-je d'écrire (de ré-écrire), de désirer, d'avancer comme une force dans ce monde qui est le mien? Ce que l'évaluation trouve, c'est cette valeur-ci: ce qui peut être aujourd'hui écrit (ré-écrit): le *scriptible*. Pourquoi le scriptible est-il notre valeur? Parce que l'enjeu du travail littéraire (de la littérature de travail), c'est de faire du lecture, non plus un consommateur, mais un producteur du texte.

In contrast, "le texte lisible" prefers reading over creation. The readers are not required to re-imagine or re-write (ré-écrire) the text, but simply read and relish the content. In brief, the text has not been designed to challenge the readers: "En face du texte scriptible s'établit donc sa contre valeur, sa valeur négative, réactive: ce qui peut-être lu, main non écrit: le lisible."

Barthes, Roland. *S/Z*. Édition du Seuil. 1970. p. 10

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>85</sup> *Image- Music-Text*, 148

in terms of authorship, I would like to introduce the concepts of “open networks” and “closed networks” in reference to such texts.

### **III.1.2 Open networks, closed networks**

An informative hypertext<sup>86</sup> is similar to an open network. It can be in contact with different networks and interact with them. The constituents of such networks can be replaced, deactivated or even excluded when malfunctioning. Different entrances may be used to enter or exit the system since, as an expanding system, the beginning or the ending points lose their functionality. Non-fictional hypertexts such as Wikipedia prove the possibility of multi-authorship. I shall strictly limit this argument to the informative texts in which the transference of accurate information is of a greater importance than the story structure, plot line or the style of writing. The main goal is to present the readers with the information that will lead them to the correct interpretation, so the denotation of the words is the primary source of the meaning. Multiple writers may add, replace or omit information in order to keep the information up to date, produce a reliable text and reduce the ambiguity that different linguistic registers may produce.

The purpose of fiction, on the other hand, is not merely to transfer a message or provide information. The writer creates a unique semantic network which can be perceived and interpreted in different ways. In comparison to an informative text, a fictional text may be considered a closed network. Additions and deletions are not as welcome as in open networks since literary features such as plot and writing style find immense significance in fiction. Therefore, a literary text seems to be much more protected and resistant to re-writings than an open network. The concept of writerly texts, which supposedly encourages re-writings and the banishment of the author in favor of the reader, appears to contradict with fiction as a closed network. An addition or omission in a

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<sup>86</sup> This argument concerns the texts whose sole purpose is to transfer information and that is why I steer clear from “non-fiction” which includes a wide range of writings from biography to newspaper ads.

closed network may cause major damage to the whole. Then how is it possible for such a text to be expanded or re-written as Barthes describes in “Death of the Author”? To answer this question, I would like to briefly discuss the significance and different functions of language in both informative and fictional texts.

### **III.1.3 Language: an oral AND written medium of communication**

The significance of language in written texts cannot be ignored. Since language can be easily captured in other media, one tends to forget that language is a medium of communication per se, and basically transforms signs, gestures or objects into sounds. According to the Saussurean definition of the signified and the signifier, language and its referents are as related and inseparable as two sides of a sheet of paper, but the relationship between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary and much more complicated than a mentioned unilateral connection. A single signified may be associated with a chain of signifiers depending on the context. The signifiers and the signifieds in language, especially when in contact with other semiotic systems, form a network of correlations or interrelations. Each word may refer to or be associated with more than one meaning or register. In short, the sense of the words may change depending on the historical and cultural context, generic features, the receiver’s background and their ability to recognize the connections and decode the semantic system. Furthermore, the ethereality of the oral language in addition to its sonic features such as tone, intonation, pauses and even speech defects creates a unique potential for the language to assign numerous and even paradoxical meanings (signified) to the same words and sentences (signifiers). Not surprisingly, the way the speakers deliver the words is as important as the content. So the written language carries potential meanings that are inactive until the text is read.

While some of these qualities such as tone or intonation disappear when language is reproduced on paper, they are not completely lost. Such features become inactive till revived through the process of reading. The reader is responsible for the activation of these dormant features

through the process of meaning-making. Moreover, language can paradoxically increase or diminish ambiguity. While informative texts benefit from the denotative aspect of the language to transfer information with the least ambiguity possible, literary texts depend highly on the connotations of the words and the symbolic aspect of language to assure the dissemination of meaning. The fact that language can be framed in other media also adds to the complexity of the reception and the meaning-generating process. While printed fictional texts seem to be closed networks which resist modification, the invisible dormant features of language open the system to different readings.

#### **III.1.4 Readerly and writerly *literary* texts**

Despite the fact that non-fiction tends toward being a readerly text and fiction toward being writerly, Barthes' analysis of *S/Z* classifies fictional texts as both readerly and writerly. A fictional readerly text does not attempt to realize the full potential of the language and consequently trains its readers to be mere consumers. In such formulaic texts, the story unfolds in a straightforward manner and the ambiguity the language creates can easily be clarified. The semantic web of such texts is limited and the prospects of new interpretations are debilitated.

A writerly text, on the other hand, attempts to add layers to the surface meaning employing the features language offers, and creates appropriate ambiguity which leads the reader to new discoveries and consequently, new interpretations. This kind of text does not simply expose the possible interpretations to the readers, but expects the readers to make an effort and encourages them to organize their own semantic system. This is not to say that readers write a text of their own, but that they follow the hidden clues, activate the dormant features of the text and interpret the text based on their assumptions in order to make sense of the ambiguity the text had offered. In other words, the skillful usage of language and the medium of print engage the readers completely in order to encourage them to clarify the ambiguities and welcome different and even contradictory

interpretations. Samuel Beckett in “Lessness,”<sup>87</sup> for instance, benefits from the fluid rhythm of language to create a text which despite its straightforward narration is highly ambiguous and confusing. The opening paragraph of the story demonstrates how the reader needs to repeat each paragraph, preferably aloud, in order to make sense of the writing:

Ruins true refuge long last towards which so many false time out of mind. All sides  
endlessness earth sky as one no sound no stir. Grey face two pale blue little body heart  
beating only up right. Blacked out fallen open four walls over backwards true refuge  
issueless.<sup>88</sup>

The readers soon realize what they had considered as random wordplays is, in fact, a highly structured piece of writing which relies on repetitions, alliteration and the rhythm of language to re-create the flow of recollections. The succession of the sentences provides the reader with a fair amount of information and the words, though confined in sentences marked by full stops, slip through sentences and create resonant sound patterns that when discovered, assist comprehension immensely. The text confidently relies on the reader to comprehend Beckett’s ideal of “accommodating the chaos”<sup>89</sup> and makes sense of it.

### **III.1.5 Author-critics, reader-critics**

The author is present in both types of texts: readerly texts that reduce the readers to mere consumers and writerly texts that promote the readers to expert literary detectives. The author of a readerly text usually limits the meaning to what he had intended. The message he wishes to communicate is far too important to him to be distorted amongst possible interpretations. He retains his authority over the text and the process of meaning-making to some extent. The author of a

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<sup>87</sup> The story was originally published in French as “Sans” in 1969. It was translated to English and modified accordingly by the author in 1970.

<sup>88</sup> Beckett, Samuel. “Lessness.” *Lessness*. Samuel.beckett.net, n.d. Web. 22 June 2015. <<http://www.samuel-beckett.net/lessness.html#top>>.

<sup>89</sup> Dearlove, J. E. *Accommodating the Chaos: Samuel Beckett's Nonrelational Art*. Durham: Duke University Press. 1982.

writerly text, on the other hand, intentionally creates a text which welcomes various and even contradictory interpretations. To achieve this effect, the author may employ either the language (James Joyce's *Ulysses*, Vladimir Nabokov's *Pale Fire*, John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*) or the features of the medium in which the language appears (the unbound chapters of *The Unfortunates*, a novel in a box by B. S. Johnson, the layout in *House of Leaves* by Mark Z. Danielewski, and the marbled and the black pages of *Tristram Shandy* by Laurence Sterne). The main goal of such playful experiments is to increase ambiguity in order to open the text to new interpretations as well as to engage the reader in an active decoding and meaning-generating process. The text may look obscure or incomplete at first glance because it requires reader-participation to make sense. The author of a writerly text, therefore, is not simply the author, but also a critic. He is conscious of the possible interpretations while leading the readers by leaving them clues. In a way, the author is also the first critic of the text, and expects the readers to take up the role of a critic too. Thus, the authors of both readerly and writerly texts have full control over the text they have created. How can we declare the death of the author in favor of readers' takeover?

Contrary to the common assumption, declaring "the birth of the reader" at the cost of the author's death is not to deny authorship or refute that the author is in command and replace him with readers instead. The significant role of the author in the creation of the text is indisputable. The reader, if empowered by the author, enters this equation to interpret the already-written text. While readers may figuratively write their own text through interpretations, they would never accomplish the task if the hints and clues they need to develop an interpretation were not already presented in the text albeit unintentionally. That is to say that the author's absolute control, in a writerly text in particular, is enfeebled when the process of reading and meaning-making initiates. However, he approves of the lack of control and welcomes the multiplicity of the meaning with which the readers endow the text at his expense. In other words, the author trains the readers to go a step further than

being mere consumers and expects them to act not only as readers, but also as critics. In short, readers do not re-write the text, but pen their interpretation of it.

To be able to function as a critic and reorganize a text, the reader needs to be aware of the mechanics of a text, the underlying structure and the way it works. The author-critic, therefore, accepts the notable responsibility of analyzing his work while writing a story. Turning the text into a behind-the-scenes tour of the fabrication process, the author-critic weaves the structural references, writing concepts and even the critical theory into the story, and sometimes even shows the readers how these techniques may lead to a possible interpretation. John Barth explains how the readers may use the hints he drops their way in order to analyze the text in “Lost in the Funhouse”:

For whom is the funhouse fun? Perhaps for lovers. For Ambrose it is *a place of fear and confusion*. He has come to the sea shore with his family for the holiday, *the occasion of their visit is Independence day, the most important secular holiday of the United States of America*. A single straight underline is the manuscript part for italics type, *which in turn* is the printed equivalent to oral emphasis of words, phrases as well as the customary type for the titles of complete works, not to mention.<sup>90</sup>

Not only does the writer draw the readers’ attention to the process of writing, but also he trains the readers to look for clues and interpret a piece of writing. Thus, the final design is a self-referential web of a text whose cogs and wheels have been willingly exposed. Such fascination with the inner mechanisms of the text and intentionally exposing them through the story — to the point that sometimes the reader forgets about the story and eagerly follows the process of creation — has earned such texts the well-deserved title of metafiction or narcissistic narratives.

### **III.2 Metafiction: narcissistic self-consciousness**

Linda Hutcheon’s use of the word “narcissism” in reference to metafiction in her *Narcissistic Narrative: A Metafictional Paradox* is not in any way derogatory. Her terminology for

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<sup>90</sup> “Lost in the Fun House,” 72

“fiction that includes within itself a commentary on its own narrative and / or linguistic identity” suggests an extreme and intentional textual self-awareness.<sup>91</sup> While it is tempting to consider the psychoanalytic connotations and declare such complicated fictions neurotic and unstable, the term only refers to the auto-referential quality of such novels and at least in Hutcheon’s register, has no negative implications. However, the myth of Narcissus foregrounds some similarities and differences with metafiction which provide us with a unique perspective into this type of text.

Narcissus’ infatuation with his representation isolated him from society and finally resulted in his annihilation. Metafiction, on the other hand, publicizes its representation and welcomes both criticism and admiration. Metafiction is narcissistically obsessed with removing the surface layers and exposing its clockwork to the reader. Not only does this process problematize the reality of fiction, but it also suggests a critical framework and encourages multiple readings. Metafiction addresses this infatuation ironically. If Narcissus fell for himself upon seeing his reflection and perished due to his self-obsession, metafiction loves not the reflection, but how the reflection is made and revived at each reconstruction. Limiting metafiction to a self-absorbed entity would neglect its self-critical aspect that brings about several playful and ironic features such as parody and pastiche which are amongst the most important attributes of metafiction.

That is not to say that metafiction is not self-involved. A metafictional text demonstrates its awareness of its artifactual condition through exposing the writer, the process of writing, the possible reading strategies and unsurprisingly, the existence of the reader. In metafiction, the text is personified and even promoted to a major character. Metafictional texts attach the same importance to the critical theory as to the story that unfolds. The text’s infatuation with the mechanism of writing is usually displayed on two levels: the language and the medium.

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<sup>91</sup> *Narcissistic Narrative: A Metafictional Paradox*, 1



### III.2.1 Self-referentiality through language

#### III.2.1.1 Forking paths: “The Garden of Forking Paths” by Jorge Luis Borges

Jorge Luis Borges’ “The Garden of Forking Paths,” which has been frequently cited as the inspiration for hypertexts, clearly explains some features of an ideal text that is indeed very similar to what we know today as hypertext. “The Garden of Forking Paths” is one of the forerunners of the fiction that actively engages the readers by giving them a choice. Although the short story does not experiment with form, it draws attention to the process of composing a text by comparing the process of writing a novel to building a labyrinth. Dr. Yu Tsun’s description of his ancestor’s novel has undeniable similarities with self-conscious novels. Dr. Yu Tsun, a former English Professor, encapsulates Ts’ui Pên’s novel in a conversation with Stephan Albert, an eminent sinologist:

“To this day,” I replied, ‘We who are descended from Ts’ui Pên execrate that monk. It was senseless to publish those manuscripts. The book is a contradictory jumble of irresolute drafts. I once examined it myself: in the third chapter the hero dies, yet in the fourth he is alive again. As for Ts’ui Pên’s other labor, his Labyrinth . . .’

“Here is the Labyrinth,” Albert said, gesturing toward a tall lacquered writing cabinet.

“An ivory labyrinth!” I exclaimed. “A very small sort of labyrinth. . . .”

“A labyrinth of symbols,” he corrected me. “An invisible labyrinth of time.”<sup>92</sup>

Juxtaposing “building a maze” and “writing a novel,”<sup>93</sup> “The Garden of Forking Paths” explains how Ts’ui Pên’s *The Garden of Forking Paths* triggers the emergence of infinite alternative worlds simply by giving readers the choice to take the path they wish. The perfect metaphor for such a text, a, “labyrinth of symbols,” elucidates how the text operates.

Ts’ui Pên’s *The Garden of Forking Paths* intentionally provides the readers with diverse options. The readers, who are naturally free to choose their path, are required to find the way out.

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<sup>92</sup> Borges, Jorge Luis. “The Garden of Forking Paths.” *Collected Fictions*. Trans. Andrew Hurley. New York: Penguin Books, 1998. p. 124.

<sup>93</sup> “Ts’ui Pên must at one point have remarked, ‘I shall retire to write a book’, and at another point, ‘I shall retire to construct a labyrinth.’ Every one pictured two projects; it occurred to no one that the book and the labyrinth were one and the same.” (*Ibid* 127)

The readers, the explorers of this amazing maze, may follow the clues the writer has left them or take a completely different path. Each wrong turn or dead-end and the resulting confusion and ambiguity may lead the readers towards a new direction and initiate a new expedition. Each exploration marks a different beginning and determines one or multiple alternative ending(s). There is no single exit, but a plurality of exits and this emphasizes the significance of the journey rather than the destination. That may be the reason why explorers (readers) will enter the labyrinth again simply to follow a different path. What is more, the readers need to be fully conscious of the structure of the labyrinth through the journey. In other words, the labyrinth/ novel constantly reminds the readers of its presence.

The labyrinth Borges describes is open to change. Ts'ui Pên's challenging novel, *The Garden of Forking Paths*, emphasizes that the reader creates multiple worlds at each turn. In other words, the world of the novel will be highly affected by the readers' choice which multiplies the possible alternative universes and determines the direction and the ending of the story:

I was sent from Oxford the document you have just examined. I paused as you may well imagine, at the sentence: 'I leave to several futures (not to all) my garden of forking paths.' Almost instantly, I saw it — the garden of forking paths was the chaotic novel; the phrase 'several futures (not all)' suggested to me the image of a forking in *time*, rather than in space. A full rereading of the book confirmed my theory. In all fictions, each time a man meets diverse alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others; in the work of the virtually impossible-to-disentangle Ts'ui Pên, the character chooses — simultaneously — all of them. He creates, thereby, 'several futures,' diverse *times*, which themselves proliferate and fork. That is the explanation for the novel's contradictions. Fang, let us say, has a secret; a stranger knocks at his door; Fang decides to kill him. Naturally, there are various possible outcomes — Fang can kill the intruder, the intruder can kill Fang, they can both live, they can both be killed, and so on. In Ts'ui Pên's novel, *all* the outcomes in fact occur; each is the starting point for further bifurcations. Once in a while, the paths of this

labyrinth converge: for example, you come to this house, but in one of the possible pasts you are my enemy, in another, my friend.<sup>94</sup>

The emphasis on the deterring role of the reader indicates two points. First, the novel is always in progress. This labyrinthine architecture has been designed to be multiplied and it opens up to the readers who consider the confusing ambiguity not a dead-end, but an inspiration to explore new paths. Secondly, the readers, who do not accept the challenge and are accustomed to a straight path, will be lost and frustrated, to use the favorite metaphor of the story. In short, the structure is highly dependent on readers to operate and readers will not be able to operate the text without the knowledge of the structure. Thus, self-referentiality becomes unavoidable in such texts due to the co-dependency between the text and the reader. “The Garden of Forking Paths” masterfully explains what an ideal text is and how it operates. The narrator emphasizes that “The future already exists” and multiple endings are possible at the same time:

The rest is unreal, insignificant. Madden burst into the room and arrested me. I have been sentenced to hang. I have most abhorrently triumphed: I have communicated to Berlin the secret name of the city to be attacked. Yesterday it was bombed—I read about it in the same newspapers that posed to all of England the enigma of the murder of the eminent Sinologist Stephen Albert by a stranger, Yu Tsun. The Leader solved the riddle. He knew that my problem was how to report (over the deafening noise of the war) the name of the city named Albert, and that the only way I could find was murdering a person of that name. He does not know (no one can know) my endless contrition, and my weariness.<sup>95</sup>

The options underline the role of the readers, Echo in Narcissus’ myth. Echo is as important as Narcissus in these narcissistic narratives. “The Garden of Forking Paths” inspired a number of experimental novels which tried to realize the labyrinthine structure that Borges describes. John Fowles’ *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* is one of the novels that successfully realized Borges’ vision through presenting the readers with three distinctive endings which let the readers determine the fate of the characters.

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<sup>94</sup> *Collected Fictions*, 125

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, 127-128

### III.2.1.2 John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*: "The freedom that allows other freedoms to exist"<sup>96</sup>

*The French Lieutenant's Woman* puts Borges' suggestion of freedom of choice into practice by providing the reader with multiple endings. Following Sarah, Charles and Ernestina's story to the climax, the readers are given the choice among three endings. The first ending imitates a traditional Victorian happy ending where Charles does not meet Sarah in Exeter, but returns, marries Ernestina and enters trade as Ernestina's father had wished. The narrator notes Charles' indifference towards Sarah's fate. While Fowles dismisses this ending as Charles' daydream, this happy end may appease some readers. Meanwhile, the story continues and the second and the third endings foreground the artificiality of such satisfying denouement and offer a commentary, if not a critique, of the traditional Victorian novel. Taking the role of the writer-critic, Fowles attempts to demonstrate how the ending should correspond to the plot line and show consilience with the character development. He subtly points out what is wrong with "a thoroughly traditional ending":

If you noticed in those last two chapters an abruptness, a lack of consonance, a betrayal of Charles' deeper potentiality and the small matter of his being given a life-span of very nearly a century and a quarter; if you entertained a suspicion, not uncommon in literature, that the writer's breath has given out and rather arbitrarily ended the race while he feels he's still winning, do not blame me; because all these feelings were present in Charles' own mind. The book of his existence, so it seemed to him, was about to come to a distinctly shabby close.<sup>97</sup>

While Fowles may not expect the reader to become a full-fledged critic after one lesson, he provides the readers with an opportunity to analyze the ending with him and raise their expectations.

The second ending initiates a sexual encounter between Charles and Sarah through which Charles finds out that Sara is a virgin and that the rumors about her relationship with the French

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<sup>96</sup> *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 99

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid*, 327-328

lieutenant are false. Driven by his emotions, he breaks his engagement to Ernestina and proposes to Sara via a letter that she never receives. The broken engagement results in Ernestina's father publicly disgracing Charles. Later, Charles' uncle marries and Charles loses the inheritance he expected when his uncle's wife bears an heir. To flee the social fall of grace and with the hope to find Sarah, Charles travels to America and Europe and finally finds her in Dante Gabriel Rossetti's house where she enjoys her life as Rossetti's assistant / model. Charles' displeasure with Sarah's newly found independence, the fact that she does not need a savior after all, and her unwillingness to get married, lead to an intense argument through which Charles accuses her of ruining his life and "revell[ing] in the thought of [his] misery."<sup>98</sup> While denying Charles' unfair accusations — "You misjudge me" — Sarah does not offer an explanation. Instead, she asks Charles to meet "a lady" who will explain Sarah's motives to him. The lady in question is a toddler who Charles recognizes as his and Sarah's daughter. This section ends rather melodramatically with Sarah and Charles embracing. While there is no certainty about the marriage, Charles is convinced of Sarah's love and the lovers finally reunite.

The second ending is not far from the false sense of closure that Fowles has already dismissed since it fulfills the romantic convention in which the lovers finally reunite after a long period of separation and many trials that strengthen their love. However, Fowles' version of a happy ending is fairly modern in the manner that the lovers reconcile, and in the absence of an explicit conclusion. Nevertheless, this ending does not satisfy Fowles who intervenes once more to criticize the introduction of two new characters, Lalage, Sarah and Charles' daughter, and Mr. Rossetti at the end of the book, as inept novel-writing. Therefore, he turns time back a quarter of an hour and manipulates his characters into doing the last scene again.

The third ending brings the readers back to Mr. Rossetti's house and to the point where Charles indignantly accuses Sarah of betrayal. Unlike the last ending, Sarah does not deny that she

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<sup>98</sup> *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 433

has betrayed him; neither does she confess her love. Enraged by Sarah's enigmatic behavior and disgusted with himself, Charles leaves the house, sees the child in the arms of a young woman as he exits taking no further notice of the child. He never looks back at the house to see the curtain of the upstairs window fall back into place. This section ends with Sarah staring down from the window at a mother and child who are making a daisy-chain.

The writer-narrator returns at the end of the third ending to clarify some ambiguities that the readers may have noticed. Comparing the text to an organism, he implies that the characters evolve independently on the basis that they have been created or that the text autonomously runs its course to the end when given an appropriate beginning. Therefore, the forced endings which do not correspond to the characterization should be immediately eliminated by the readers. He predicts what the readers may think and intentionally leads their train of thought to the destination he has in mind:

You may think, of course, that not to accept the offer implicit in that detaining hand was Charles's final foolishness; that it betrayed at least a certain weakness of purpose in Sarah's attitude. You may think that she was right: that her battle for territory was a legitimate uprising of the invaded against the perennial invader. But you must not think that this is a less plausible ending to their story.<sup>99</sup>

He states that his intervention in Sarah and Charles' fate can be compared to "random natural radiation" that may cause a mutation in an evolving organism. This way he justifies his choice to leave Sarah and Charles as two lonely and alienated individuals instead of lovers. However, he does not refrain from the questions the readers may raise, but avoids a definitive answer. In his imaginary conversation with the readers he asks and answers the questions which the readers are supposed to vocalize about Sarah or Charles after finishing this section: "There are tears in her eyes? She is too far away for me to tell [...]."<sup>100</sup> About Charles he writes, "He walks toward an imminent death? I

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<sup>99</sup> *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 445

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, 445

think not; for he has at last found an atom of faith in himself, a true uniqueness, on which to build; has already begun [...].”<sup>101</sup> The question mark at the end of the sentence is the only sign of the question form as if the narrator is repeating the readers’ questions before responding to them. Moreover, the writer’s explanation indirectly indicates the significance of the opening epigraphs and persuades the reader to re-read the chapters with an eye on these significant inscriptions.

Although the writer-narrator tries to hide his interest in the third ending by declaring the choice inevitable, — “I cannot give both versions at once, yet whichever is the second will seem, so strong is the tyranny of the last chapter, the final, the real version.”<sup>102</sup> — his thorough justification for writing the third ending at the end of the last chapter and the fact that he himself chooses the order of the endings show his inclination towards the last one. The readers are nonetheless free to choose the ending they wish in spite of the writer’s intentions. The choice of the ending enables the readers to analyze the characters in retrospect and fill in the gaps or magnify some traits in a reverse order to justify their choice of the ending. Fowles shows that it is not just the beginning that determines the ending. The inverse is also true, provided that the text has predicted enough gaps, ambiguities and confusions in order to catalyze re-readings, re-writings and re-interpretations. Sarah’s mystifying character, for instance, permits multiple re-readings and re-interpretations. The writer has already taught the readers how to read his novel. The combination of the readers’ choice and the application of what they have learned about novel-writing in the first reading revives the story in subsequent readings. The freedom to choose an endings sets the interpretive practice in motion and allows other freedoms to exist. The story is constantly multiplied. That is why Fowles refers to such freedom as the true definition of God, the creator.

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<sup>101</sup> *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, 445

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid*, 390

### III.2.1.3 The author intrusion: author-critic

An omniscient narrator opens *The French Lieutenant's Woman* with a description of Lyme Bay. However, the narrator soon makes his presence known using a first person pronoun — “I exaggerate? Perhaps, but I can be put to the test [...]”<sup>103</sup> — and this marks the beginning of his constant commentary on the events of the novel, characters, social issues in the Victorian era and the Victorian novel in comparison with his contemporary time.<sup>104</sup> The shift between the omniscient and the first person points of view makes it impossible to forget the narrator. He deliberately displays his knowledge of the characters’ personality and future to emphasize that he is visiting the Victorian era from a contemporary standpoint or writing a Victorian novel in the twentieth century.<sup>105</sup> For example, he writes explains what will happen to Ernestina in the following quotation: “Ernestina was to outlive all her generation. She was born in 1846. And she died on the day that Hitler invaded Poland.” The deliberate anachronisms function create comic effect and emphasize the fact that the story is narrated by a twentieth-century narrator who has only experienced the Victorian era through history books and novels. Moreover, he attempts to make the novel perceivable for his contemporary audience using the technological terms or historical facts with which they are familiar. Describing Sarah’s reaction to Mrs. Tranter’s friendly invitation, he says “The computer in her [Sarah’s] heart had long before assessed Mrs. Tranter and stored the resultant tape.”<sup>106</sup> In another example, he describes precisely Mrs. Poulteney’s interview techniques: “There would have been a place in the Gestapo for the lady; she had a way of interrogation that could reduce the sturdiest girls to tears in first five minutes.”<sup>107</sup> The anachronistic “Gestapo” says it all.

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<sup>103</sup> *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 10

<sup>104</sup> *The French Lieutenant's Woman* was first published in 1969.

<sup>105</sup> *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 33

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid*, 103

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid*, 26



The narrator emphasizes the distance between himself and a Victorian narrator through revisiting the texts, the schools of thought and social codes that shaped the Victorian era and facilitated the transition to the contemporary period. His 1969 standpoint enables him to explain how Darwinism and Marxism were received by the intellectuals like Charles and the common people such as Mr. Freeman, Ernestina's father. Moreover, the narrator points out the significance of Victorian thought, traditions and science, however peculiar in our modern eye, in shaping the modern society:

Nothing is more incomprehensible to us than the methodicality of the Victorians; one sees it best (at its most ludicrous) in the advice so liberally handed out to the travelers in the early editions of Baedeker. Where, one wonders, can any pleasure have been left? How, in the case of Charles, can he not have seen that light clothes would have been more comfortable? [...]

Well, we laugh. But perhaps there is something admirable in this dissociation between what is more comfortable and what is more recommended. We meet here, once again, this bone of contention between the two centuries: is duty to drive us or not? If we take this obsession with dressing the part, with being prepared for every eventuality, as mere stupidity, blindness to the empirical, we make, I think, a grave — or rather frivolous — mistake about our ancestors; because it was men not unlike Charles, and as over-dressed and over-equipped as he was that day, who laid the foundation of all our modern science.<sup>108</sup>

Looking back from a distance, the narrator draws attention to the positive attributes of the Victorians. Their exaggerated seriousness in matters that seem trivial to us, for instance, whetted the Victorian appetite for knowledge and explorations which, in consequence, laid the foundations of the modern science, the modern social order and the modern man. Regretfully, that thirst for discovery has been lost in our modern society:

They sensed that current accounts of the world were inadequate; that they had allowed their windows on reality to become smeared by convention, religion, social stagnation; they knew, in short, that they had things to discover, and that the discovery was of the utmost

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<sup>108</sup> *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 51-52

importance to the future of man. We think (unless we live in a research laboratory) that we have nothing to discover, and the only things of the utmost importance to us concern the present of man.<sup>109</sup>

Despite bringing a historical perspective to the novel, the narrator's lengthy explanations of the dress code, the moral code or the social system in the Victorian society raise the following questions: was an anthropological study the reason behind writing a Victorian novel in the twentieth century? Then why not writing an essay or conducting a study instead of writing a novel?

The imparted knowledge of the Victorian society serves a significant purpose in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The narrator intrudes whenever the readers need to be aware of social norms or historical facts in order to understand the environment that shapes the characters and so, he explains the motivation behind the characters' actions or inertness. Having been informed of Sarah and Charles' place in that particular social order, the readers feel the depth of the fear they experience when they are about to be caught by Mary and Sam in the woods.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, the narrator interrupts at the right time in the right place to draw the readers' attention to the details and educate them on how to read fiction in context. Sometimes the narrator offers explanations for the terms he employs: "You will see that Charles set his sights high. Intelligent idlers always have, in order to justify their idleness to their intelligence. He had, in short, all the Byronic ennui with neither of the Byronic outlets: genius and adultery."<sup>111</sup> On other occasions, the narrator expects the readers to take a hint and search for the required information independently: "If she visualized God, He had the face of the Duke of Wellington, but His character was more that of a shrewd lawyer, a breed for whom Mrs. Poultney had much respect."<sup>112</sup> The Iron Duke was famous for fine dressing and even the custom-made boots he wore were named Wellington Boots, but the fashion sense of the field marshal, an influential Tory member and later the prime minister, is not the only thing that

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<sup>109</sup> *The French Lieutenant's Woman* 51-52

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid*, Chapter 21

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid*, 22

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, 27

comes to mind with the mention of the conquerer of the battle of Waterloo. He is famous for his contradictions; his preference of a soldier's life to a civilian life and yet enjoying fine dining and good wine; his conservative and religious viewpoints and his notorious affairs; his image as a defensive general who led some of the most offensive wars: Argaum, Assaye, Oporto, Peninsular, Salamanca, Vitoria, Toulouse. Even the minor detail that he lost his hearing in the left ear becomes significant if read in the context of being compared to God.<sup>113</sup> Thus, Fowles gives a thorough picture of Mrs. Poultney's faith simply by stating that her God looked like the Duke of Wellington. There is no need for long descriptive passages provided the readers know how to take a hint and that is exactly what the narrator is teaching.

Although *The French Lieutenant's Woman* is set distinctly in the past, it parts ways with historical novels through presenting selective details instead of the social condition and manners. The novel only communicates information about the mentioned era when needed in order to explain the characters' decisions and encourages the readers to consider the social situation and the historical context when analyzing the characters. Learning about the Victorian era is not the sole objective of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. The interruptions constantly remind the readers of their temporal distance and display the absurdity of some social norms and guidelines to the modern eye. However, the narrator explains about the significance of the social behavior that seems strange to us and the environment that shapes the characters and justifies their actions and reactions. This way, he draws a bridge between the two time periods and underlines their impact. The goal is not merely to learn about the Victorian life style, but to learn how to read a Victorian novel in the historical context and, on a larger scale, any novel in its historical context. Furthermore, the narrator's commentary on the strengths and the shortcomings of traditional historical novels displays the novel's interest in the process of writing and the reading strategies it inspires: "By 1870 Sam Weller's famous inability to pronounce v except as w, the centuries-old mark of the common

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<sup>113</sup> Johnson, Ban. "Duke of Wellington." *Historic UK*. Historic UK: The History and Heritage Accommodation Guide, n.d. Web. 17 Apr. 2017. <<http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/Duke-of-Wellington/>>

Londoner, was as much despised by the ‘snobs’ as the bourgeois novelists who continued for some time, and quite inaccurately, to put it into the dialogue of their Cockney characters.”<sup>114</sup> In short, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*’s communicative narrator practically demonstrates how a novel should be read.

#### **III.2.1.4 Author as the author: God-complex, “the new reality (or unreality)”<sup>115</sup>**

Although the loquacious narrator of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* does not hesitate to interrupt the story and declare his presence from the very beginning, it takes him twelve chapters to admit that he knows everything about the characters and their fate because he is the writer too:

I do not know. This story I am telling is all imagination. These characters I create never existed outside my own mind. If I have pretended until now to know my characters’ minds and innermost thoughts, it is because I am writing in (just as I have assumed some of the vocabulary and ‘voice’ of) a convention universally accepted at the time of my story: that the novelist stands next to God.<sup>116</sup>

This marks the beginning of a series of fascinating comments on the Victorian novel, Fowles’ contemporary novel, the writer’s crafts and skills, his concerns and doubts, character creation, his contemporary critical theory, etc. The writer’s attitude and authority over his writing in the Victorian novel and the contemporary novel are among the most discussed. The narrator-writer states that the novelist’s significance in the traditional sense of the word is nothing less than a god. The novelist is the omnipresent, the omnipotent and the omniscient agency that creates worlds out of words.

Comparing the novel and the critical thought that shaped each historical period, the writer particularly emphasizes that he lives in the age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes and

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<sup>114</sup> *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, 47

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid*, 99

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid*, 97

therefore, he does not need to pretend to be the omniscient creator portrayed by the Victorian novels. The twentieth-century writer has no illusion that he is the God of — or that he has infinite power over — the world he has created. He explains that the novelist is not a puppet master “to pull the right strings and his puppets will behave in a lifelike manner.”<sup>117</sup> He admits that he sometimes needs to keep his distance and observe his characters in action and “in the context of [his] book’s reality.”<sup>118</sup> He is unable to limit his creations; however, they follow their given attributes. In short, it is easy to know what Sarah would never do, but her character and the cultural or historical context in which she is depicted create multiple possibilities whenever she is expected to take action. It is possible for a character to behave out of character, “but possibility is not permissibility.”<sup>119</sup> Thus, the writer cannot possibly be the all-powerful deity that he is expected to be: “You may think novelists always have fixed plans to which they work, so that the future depicted by Chapter One is always inexorably the actuality of Chapter Thirteen.”<sup>120</sup> That may be the reason why the narrator felt the need to intervene and explain to his readers how the fabricated worlds of novels actually work.

In an attempt to explain why, contrary to the popular belief, the novelist is unable to follow through with his initial plan, the writer-narrator states that “a genuinely created world must be independent of its creator.” If not, it will die. The fabricated world whether its creator(s), who wish to “*create worlds as real as, but other than the world that is,*”<sup>121</sup> intended or not, functions like an organism rather than a mechanical device. It begins to live, grow, change and set its own rules. In short, the fictional world and the characters who inhabit it gain an autonomy when created. The writer-narrator acknowledges the fact and even celebrates it by letting the characters and the fiction

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<sup>117</sup> *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, 97

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid*, 97

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid*, 98

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid*, 98

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid*, 98

follow their own path and exhaust different possibilities since “It is only when our characters and events begin to disobey us that they begin to live.”<sup>122</sup>

Admitting his lack of control over the characters, the writer-narrator declares that the contemporary writer does not intend to maintain the façade of authority. Instead, he decides to share the secret with the readers. The novelist creates a reality, not the real. “I find this new reality more valid; and I would have you share my own sense that I do not fully control these creatures of my mind, any more than you control [...]”<sup>123</sup> Therefore, he cannot — and in this case — does not intend to, eliminate the other possibilities or realities to avoid killing his creation or at least hinder its growth. Hence, he provides the readers with multiple endings. Any limitation would kill the writer’s creation or at least impede its development. Thus, the novelist deliberately flaunts the unreality of the reality he is constructing and bestows freedom upon the readers and the text for he knows that by removing the restrictions of a unified reality, texts will offer infinite possibilities. The readers’ choices, be they what the writer “planned” or not, will multiply the paths the fiction may take. In brief, the writer guarantees the text many revivals, provided that he steps down as the sole authority, and shares his power with the readers. That is exactly what the self-reflexive novel is trying to do.

[H]aving “disgracefully broken the illusion,” the writer-narrator states that the contemporary writer consciously avoids being portrayed as God and denies his supremacy, yet he keeps reminding the reader of his power by interrupting the narration.<sup>124</sup> While the readers were allowed to forget about the author when immersed in the act of reading a traditional novel, the modern writer who Fowles’ writer-narrator portrays, does not permit the readers to forget his presence. His snarky comments throughout the narrative, his direct addresses to his readers, even accusing them of being

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<sup>122</sup> *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, 98

<sup>123</sup> *Ibid*, 99

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid*, 99

a “*hypocrite lecteur*,”<sup>125</sup> and devoting a whole chapter to his standpoint on writing and the contemporary critical theory that has problematized the concept of the author prove his omnipresence. Moreover, the author is deified in the traditional novel not only because he was believed to have control over all aspects of fiction, but simply because he was the creator of the said world. The writer, even the writer-narrator who believes he has to “disrespect all [his] quasi-divine plans” for Charles, if the writer-narrator wishes him to live cannot deny that he still possesses the same power as the creator of the characters and the world in which they dwell.<sup>126</sup> How is not this standing next to God?

The writer-narrator distinguishes between the concept of God in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries. He does not picture God as an autocratic field marshal as Mrs. Poulteney does, but a liberating force: “There is only one good definition of God: the freedom that allows other freedoms to exist.”<sup>127</sup> The writer-narrator does not deny the God-like position of the writer in his novel. The writer is still the creator. What he finds different from the writer-God of the Victorian novel is that the modern writer deliberately reveals that he does not have full control over his creation, not more than a parent’s power over his children and, unlike his Victorian predecessors, the modern author is not willing to hide his lack of authority in order to keep intact the realistic surface of the world he has created:

The novelist is still a god, since he creates (and not even the most aleatory avant-garde modern novel has managed to extirpate its author completely); what has changed is that we are no longer the gods of the Victorian image, omniscient and decreeing; but in the new theological image, with freedom our first principal, not authority.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, 99

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid*, 98

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid*, 99

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid* 99

He is aware that the characters and events become real, gain autonomy and begin to live when they do not exactly obey his divine plans. By freeing the characters from following his “quasi-divine plans,” their writer lets them be alive or get permanently resurrected by the readers.

By continuously interrupting the flow of the narrative, the writer-narrator communicates his uncertainty and the characters’ freedom to change the course of the novel to the readers. His comments prepare the readers for the coexistence of the events that may seem contradictory or may even cancel each other. Contrary to the conventional novel that homogenizes the events to follow a coherent plot that progresses towards an acceptable closure, *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* presents its readers with three possible endings. The uncertainty that the writer’s confession brings to the novel encourages the readers to expect and initiate multiple threads based on the foundation the writer has laid. Sarah’s character is never going to be completely demystified because the readers have not been given the character codes that Charles’ character has offered them, the conservative scholar of modern science, for instance. The writer has denied explicit information about Sarah to free her character from the common speculations and invite infinite interpretations. The readers are welcome to re-imagine Sarah’s reactions and motives based on the few personality traits the writer has given them. Moreover, the writer-narrator has trained the readers how to read and analyze a character. In short, the writer still maintains his God-like position in metafiction. Not only has the writer-narrator of *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* created a world and its inhabitants, but he has also fashioned his ideal readers.

*The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, and metafiction in general, intentionally initiates a discussion about the place of the writer in the text. The truth is that traces of the writer’s presence through narrative techniques can be hidden, but it is impossible to truly banish the writer from the text. He maintains his place as the creator of the fictional world. What is more, the presence of the writer is more apparent in a genre that constantly attracts attention to the process of fabrication. Metafiction, as *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* demonstrates, reconfigures the deified status of the



writer, but does not deny him the rights to his creation. The writer, from the metafictional standpoint, creates a living organism that can live, grow or die. A good writer is able to produce a text with the potential to be revived and a good text should be able outlive its creator. Comparing fiction to an autonomous organism, the writer-narrator of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* points out a significant feature of the self-aware text. The text is alive. It is a character in its own right and so is the writer.

### **III.2.1.5 Author as a character**

#### **III.2.1.5.1 The writer-character: “a touch of the successful impresario”<sup>129</sup>**

The author's return to his novel as a character is the metafictional solution to the paradox of the god who grants freedom to the text, characters and readers while maintaining his place as the creator and the agency who confirms the finalized text. The fictionalized author appears either as an author-critic who explains the techniques he is employing, the subtleties of the text and its historical context, or a character who is able to enter and alter the course of action. The writer who interrupts the novel to impart wisdom and give comments functions as the almighty who intentionally bestows freedom on his creations. He keeps his narrative distance in order to observe his characters and pretends that he has no power over the flow of the narrative. The author-critic treats the characters as unruly children who decide for themselves and act as they wish. However, the writer still has the authority to determine the direction the story takes. To exercise his power without limiting the much discussed freedom, the writer generates another fictionalized persona who is able to leave his diegetic level and interfere in the course of the story. This way the writer maintains his claim and at the same time exerts his power.

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<sup>129</sup> *The French Lieutenant's Woman* 441

Fowles' fictionalized persona, a prophet-bearded man, whose companionship Charles ironically finds unpleasant, first gets on the train in chapter 55. The readers first see this curious character, who stares and seems to spy on Charles, from Charles' focalization. The writer-narrator does not give the readers any signs that he knows the mysterious man. He describes his fictional avatar in the third person and explains omnisciently: "It was true that, unobserved, he looked a little less frigid and authoritarian a person; but there remained about his features an unpleasant aura of self-confidence — or if not quite confidence in self, at least a confidence in his judgement of others, of how much he could get out of them, expect from them, tax them."<sup>130</sup> He goes on to suggest that the readers would recognize the species, the self-assured judgmental type whose intense and prying gaze makes the observed uncomfortable. He confuses the readers even more by suggesting that the readers may have even been the subject of such scrutiny: "It will no doubt suggest something unpleasant, some kind of devious sexual approach ... a desire to know you in a way you do not want to be known by a stranger. In my experience *there is only one profession that gives that particular look, with its bizarre blend of inquisitive and magistral; of the ironic and the soliciting.*"<sup>131</sup> The readers should have guessed which profession and who in particular are the subject of the discussion. The sudden shift to the first person — "Now could I use you? Now what could I do with you?" — leaves no doubt for the reader why the "massively bearded face," whose "cannibalistic" stare is directed at the sleepy Charles, is "too familiar to [him]."<sup>132</sup> The rhetorical question to show his indecisiveness about the ending of the novel reveals his identity as the writer-narrator — or one of his fictionalized selves — before he confesses "And I will keep up pretense no longer."<sup>133</sup>

Having revealed his true identity to the readers, the writer-narrator ponders the dilemma of how to end the novel. On the one hand, he has already decided to end Charles' career and "leave

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<sup>130</sup> *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 388

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid*, 389 (My italics)

<sup>132</sup> *Ibid*, 387, 389, 389

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid*, 389

him for eternity on his way to London.” On the other hand, such an ending contradicts with his statement about the freedom the modern writer bestows on his characters: “But the Victorian conventions of fiction allow, allowed no place for the open, the inconclusive ending; and I preached earlier of the freedom characters must be given.”<sup>134</sup> He admits that he knows what Charles wants, but he does not know anything about Sarah’s aspirations and wonders if he should pretend to conform to the reality as fiction usually does: “the writer puts the conflicting wants in the ring and then describes the fight — but in fact fixes the fights, letting that want he himself favors win.”<sup>135</sup> He finally decides to take both sides instead of one, meaning the writer is going to present the reader with two versions; one in which he determines the characters’ fate himself, and one in which he leaves the characters free to take the story where they wish. He tosses a coin to decide which one should be written first, a decision of which the readers will never be informed. When he finds Charles’ disapproving eyes observing him, he discreetly gets off the train after him and disappears in the throng, only to be back six chapters later.

To prove to the reader that the characters are given the free will the writer-narrator has discussed, he sends his fictionalized persona to interfere with the course of events one more time in chapter 61. Having just finished the second ending in which Sarah, Charles and their daughter, Lalage, reunite in a modern version of the romantic convention, the writer-narrator intervenes to vocalize his dissatisfaction with the previous ending that introduces minor new characters and in consequence, displays poor novel-writing skills. To correct the alleged mistake, the writer-narrator elaborates on the minor characters in question, Lalage and Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Lalage is duly dismissed in half a line. Mr. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, on the other hand, “is the sort of man who cannot bear to be left out of the limelight [...] and since I am the kind of man who refuses to intervene in nature (even the worst), he has got himself in — or as he would put it, has got himself

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<sup>134</sup> *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, 398

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid*, 390

in *as he really is*.”<sup>136</sup> He goes on to reassure the readers that Mr. Rossetti is a real person, and given the historical period, had always been there and cannot be considered a new character. Ironically, the writer-narrator was not able to keep the poet from invading his narration. Despite the writer-narrator’s statement about the incompetence of the writers who introduce new characters at the end of the novel, he has a brilliant plan to justify his own entrance into the fictional world as a character through Mr. Rossetti. His fictionalized self is also a minor character introduced (almost) at the end of the novel after all. Like the poet, the writer is a real person. He did not get himself in. He has always been there.

Using the pronoun confusion to his benefit, the writer-narrator juxtaposes Rossetti’s and his own presence, the second supposedly real “personage” in the novel, in order to enter the hypodiegetic level once more. Hiding his identity behind the third-person pronoun in the paragraph subsequent to Mr. Rossetti’s description, the writer-narrator leads the readers to believe he is still talking about Mr. Rossetti while he is actually talking about himself:

I shall not labour the implication that he was previously got in as he really wasn’t, and is therefore not truly a new character at all; but rest assured that this personage is, in spite of appearance, a very minor figure — as minimal, in fact, as a gamma ray particle.

As he really is ... and his true colours are not pleasant ones. The once full, patriarchal beard has been trimmed down to something rather foppish and Frenchified.<sup>137</sup>

Although the writer-narrator leaves a clue, the patriarchal beard, it will take a while for the reader to adjust and distinguish between the “he” in the first and the “he” in the second paragraph. The less attentive reader may read a paragraph more to get confused when the unnamed man stares back at Mr. Rossetti’s house “and with an almost proprietary air, as if it is some new theatre he has just

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<sup>136</sup> *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, 440

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid*, 440-441

bought and is pretty confident he can fill. In this he has not changed: “he very evidently regards the world as his to possess and use as he likes.”<sup>138</sup>

The similar treatment of the two so-called real characters follows two goals. First, the writer-narrator justifies the co-existence of two historical people from two different time periods in the same diegetic level. Mr. Rossetti lived in the nineteenth century, and the setting of the novel in the Victorian era justifies his presence. He really existed in that era and can be referred to even in a re-written “apocryphal history.”<sup>139</sup> On the other hand, the writer-narrator lives in the twentieth century and, as he repeatedly reminds the readers, tells the story from a modern point of view with a hundred-year time difference. However, the characters may coexist and even meet — in chapter 61 — as the writer does not enter his fictional Victorian world himself, but writes himself an avatar.

The second purpose of the writer’s fictional avatar and its similarity to Mr. Rossetti is to enable him to intervene in the story and change the ending while maintaining his statement that the modern writer grants his characters the freedom to determine their fate. Confessing to his lack of control on already-written characters and real ones in Mr. Rossetti’s case, the writer-narrator suggests once more that the characters, especially the ones who found their way into the novel from the real world, do as they please. The writer who enters the story is a character, a reflection of the writer-narrator. To keep his definition of the writer as a liberal god intact, the writer-narrator changes the ending that does not please him by creating another character. The new character, who is free to do as he wishes by the writer-narrator’s definition, will change the ending instead of the writer-narrator himself. Thus, the writer-narrator solves the paradox by projecting an image of himself into the hypo-diegetic level. No wonder that the fictionalized writer never speaks to the characters, but follows and observes them. Contemplating on alternative endings that affect Charles’ fate, he states that “I cannot give both versions at once, yet whichever is the second will seem, so

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<sup>138</sup> *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, 441

<sup>139</sup> *Postmodernist Fiction*, 90

strong is the tyranny of the last chapter, the final, the ‘real’ version.”<sup>140</sup> Then he takes out his Berguet watch, “makes a small adjustment to the time,”<sup>141</sup> and disappears from the story. As if the last fifteen minutes never happened, the characters go back to when they were arguing in order to initiate another ending.

Even though Fowles successfully induces the assumption that the writer-narrator is Fowles himself, it is noteworthy that the writer-narrator is another fictionalized character. He has the most similarities with the real writer undoubtedly and he is, as Fowles ironically mentions, the preacher of Fowles’ opinions about writing. It is safe to say that he is the real writer in disguise, but he is fictional nonetheless. Fowles chooses to keep the distance between his double and his characters by generating another clone for him in order to prolong the illusion that the writer-narrator is commenting while composing. However, as repeatedly mentioned before, the intruding writer in metafiction is a fictionalized version of the real writer and therefore, a character. The writer of metafiction usually writes a version of himself into the text. In short, almost every metafiction has two recurring characters: the self-conscious text and the writer.

Considering the writer a character makes it easier to comprehend his interaction with the other characters of the novel. He may fulfill the-writer-as-God role and keep a distance from other characters. For instance, the writer-narrator creates a version of himself to fulfill the role of the Fates<sup>142</sup> and avoids getting directly involved in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*. The writer can also directly interact with the characters. Chapter XXI of *Christie Malry’s Own Double-Entry* is an example of such communication.

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<sup>140</sup> *The French Lieutenant’s Woman*, 390

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid*, 441

<sup>142</sup> The Fates are three sister deities: Clotho (spinner), Lachesis (allotter) and Atropos (unturnable) who control the metaphorical thread of life of every mortal from birth to death.

Karas, Michael, and Charilaos Megas. “The Fates.” Greek Mythology. Michael Karas, 1997. Web. 19 Apr. 2017. <[https://www.greekmythology.com/Other\\_Gods/The\\_Fates/the\\_fates.html](https://www.greekmythology.com/Other_Gods/The_Fates/the_fates.html)>

### III.2.1.5.2. The writer-narrator: “Make him what you will: probably in the image of yourself”<sup>143</sup>

Like any other self-reflexive fiction, *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry* does not try to hide the writer to keep the illusion of reality. The writer reveals his presence in the very first page when after a paragraph to explain why Christie Malry is a simple man, he confirms “I did tell you Christie was a simple person.”<sup>144</sup> He sometimes communicates with the readers through parentheses: “So Christie started at Hammersmith branch (conveniently near his house) of this nationally-known concern one Monday morning in October. From the comparative shelter of his school (of which I shall probably not tell you much) it was a painful Transposition.”<sup>145</sup> On other occasions, he addresses the readers from the main narrative: “For the following passage it seems to me necessary to attempt transcurion into Christie’s mind; an illusion of transcurion, that is of course, since you know only too well in whose mind it all really takes place.”<sup>146</sup> Moreover, the writer is not the only one who bluntly informs the reader about the novel which is being written. The characters are fully aware of their fictionality. Christie’s mother’s statement ““My son: I have for the purpose of this novel been your mother for the past eighteen years and five months to the day [...]”<sup>147</sup> takes an ironic turn when she explains her little role in the narrative to pass on some information to the readers. Then she declares that she has served her purpose, and should now leave the novel. Since she is not needed anymore, she dies. In another example, Headlam responds to Christie’s rhetorical question about an anecdote: ““I don’t know, how could I? But since I have to be the comic relief in this novel....”” Christie confirms that he also knows about the novel by answering ““It needs it.””<sup>148</sup> The characters’ awareness of their fictionality makes the confrontation between the writer and

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<sup>143</sup> *Christie Malry's Own Double-Entry*, 51

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid*, 11(my italics)

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid*, 13

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid*, 23

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid*, 27

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid*, 103

Christie in a chapter appropriately titled “In which Christie and I have it All Out; and which You may care to Miss out” much more plausible.

The writer’s chat with Christie turns the chapter into a critique of the contemporary novel and both the creator and his creation envision its future. The writer apologizes that he is unable to take the novel much further. Christie gracefully listens to the writer’s confession which implies Christie’s imminent death, and consoles him by stating no one reads a thousand-page novel anymore and that ““The novel should now try simply to be Funny, Brutalist and Short.”” Ignoring the fact that he is going to die in the following chapters due to the writer’s mistake on page 67, Christie prefers to talk about the novel. Being a fictional character, he knows that he serves a purpose as his mother did, and he has concerns about the novel and its reception instead of himself. When he vocalizes his worry that the novel will not be read, the writer optimistically states that the people have the right not to read the contemporary novel because they are usually treated as idiots. In a moment of epiphany, Christie realizes that ““Your work has been a continuous dialogue with form?”” and happily embraces his new role: ““It’s something to aspire to, becoming a critic! Though there are too many exclamation marks in this novel already.””<sup>149</sup>

The characters’ awareness of their (un)reality emphasizes the fictitious nature of the world the novel creates. Johnson does not bother distinguishing between the writer-narrator and the characters by assigning them to different diegetic levels, or writing an avatar of himself to communicate with his characters. The in-the-text-writer is another character who directly expresses the real writer’s standpoints and comments and therefore leads the readers to the points that the real writer wants them to contemplate.

Distinguishing between the novelist as the Almighty and the novelist as the character, *Christie Malry’s Own Double Entry* approaches the discussion on the dual nature of the writer from a new perspective. The in-the-text-writer is a fictionalized version of the writer, another character.

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<sup>149</sup> *Christie Malry’s Own Double-Entry*, 166



He may be an impersonation of the real writer, but he does not have his powers. However, he is the messenger. He is the agent that the author needs to apply changes to the story he claims is being written, yet already exists on paper in the form of a complete book. He is the critic who analyzes the story and teaches the readers what to look for. This usually unnamed character is mostly written with the ability to do whatever a writer wishes to do if he could enter his own fictional world, like talking to his characters and explaining why he is writing them off on such a short notice, or addressing his readers and attracting their attention to the subtleties of the novel. The fictional writer fulfills his Hermes-like duty of communicating the writer's message to the readers and characters or affecting a change at the real writer's command, so that the real writer preserves his God-like powers while giving the characters, the readers in reality, the freedom to make a choice. The writer-character of *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry* sadly knows that the ending has already been decided and he is a vessel for the real writer's thoughts. At the same time, he is the proof of the real writer's skill and power. In a rather emotional visit to the bedridden Christie, he admits that he has become quite fond of his characters, but does not forget to renounce relapsing into clichés at the moment of extreme emotions.<sup>150</sup> He listens to Christie talking about the writer's "misshapes" on page 67 that may have caused Christie's cancer and lets Christie criticize him for his passivity in his last sentence: "[...] you shouldn't be bloody writing about it, you should be out there bloody doing something about it."<sup>151</sup> The oblivious nurse suggests that the writer leave Christie alone "[...] not knowing who I was, that he could not die without me."<sup>152</sup>

The self-reflexive novel's focus on the process of creation may problematize the traditional concept of the writer and destabilize his authority, but it reinforces the writer's dominance on his writing nonetheless. While the traditional novel lets the readers immerse in the narrative and forget about the writer, metafiction constantly reminds the readers of the writer's presence through

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<sup>150</sup> *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry*, 179

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, 180

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid*, 180

interruptions and drawing attention to the technicalities. The writer, much like the text itself, is the recurring character in any metafiction. The metafictional text has long been accused of having narcissistic tendencies. This also applies to the metafiction writer.

As *The French Lieutenant's Woman* clearly points out, the writer is still the omnipotent he used to be in the traditional novel. He is the one who creates the fictional world and determines the fate of its inhabitants according to the reality he has fashioned. What makes metafiction different is the writer's conscious decision to share more with his readers and display how he, the God of his fictional world, creates a certain reality as his novel progresses: "God has been making it all up as He goes along, like certain kinds of novelist [...].<sup>153</sup>" The metafiction writer, in short, demonstrates how a world is created and asks the readers to get involved. To impart knowledge about the technicalities of the writing process, the writer needs a fictionalized alter ego inside the novel, be it the writer-narrator who does not hesitate to interrupt when he considers it suitable, or the writer-character who shares the same diegetic level as the other characters. Either persona enables the writer to draw attention to the process of writing and character-creation, to comment on the significant parts and to analyze the characters. In brief, the metafiction-writer metafiction presents takes the role of writer, character and critic in order to foreground the writing-process and in consequence, to exhibit the fictionality of the presented world with a more important goal in mind: to fashion a skilled reader.

While metafiction is narcissistic in the sense that it puts more emphasis on the narrative, its components and its progression than on the content, it is noteworthy that the excessive attention metafiction pays itself is for the sake of another: the reader. Metafiction shifts the attention of the reader from just the story to how it is written. Like a DVD whose commentary cannot be disabled, metafiction presents the readers with the writer's notes, his train of thought, and different drafts and comments on the complexity and the technical aspects of the novel. Fowles' explanation of his

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<sup>153</sup> *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry*, 79-80

philosophy of the novel through the epigraphs that open the chapters is a clear signal to remind the readers of the importance of the paratextual material in understanding a novel. The writer-narrator's interruption to underline a personality trait in relation to the historical context in which the characters have developed may serve as another example. Disassembling a clock into its pieces is always the best way to learn how to put the bits back together. In brief, a self-aware text reflects its knowledge of itself, its creator and its reader.

### **III.2.2 Self-referentiality through form**

#### **III.2.2.1 Reader-centrality**

Metafiction is the closest realization of what the structuralists considered as the ideal text among fictional forms. It is aware of and intentionally exposes its status as an artifactual and intertextual web and shatters the illusion of reality by drawing attention to the process of fabrication as well as the medium in which the fiction appears. Such fiction trains readers, expects them to make sense of the fragmentary text and welcomes multiple interpretations resulting from its intrinsic uncertainty.<sup>154</sup> According to Patricia Waugh, the formal self-exploration of metafiction intends to reflect upon

The construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion. In other words, the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction. The two processes are held together in a formal tension which breaks down the distinctions between 'creation' and 'criticism' and merges them into the concepts of 'interpretation' and 'deconstruction'.<sup>155</sup>

Metafiction presents a seemingly complete world with the potential to be revisited and reconstructed. First, the structure cannot possibly be finalized. It is always half-done, fragmentary,

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<sup>154</sup> *Metafiction*, 4

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, 6

unfinished and imperfect. This way, the reader will get a chance to complete the structure, put the fragments together and perfect a possible final draft. Each reader accomplishes the task her or his own way and builds a slightly different final draft. This is not to say that the readers analyze and re-write the novel, but they are permitted to construct their very own interpretation using the fragments. Although it is impossible to change the words fixed on paper, the flexibility and the dormant features of language alongside the gaps and clues that the author has intentionally left the readers, enable them to re-construct the structure without really changing the text in order to welcome multiple readings and interpretations. *The French Lieutenant's Woman's* multiple endings raise questions instead of providing a closure. Depending on the readers' choice of the ending, the central meaning and the understanding of the novel change. The elusive and uncertain meaning is what triggers multiple readings and interpretations (rewritings). John Fowles states that "a planned world (a world that fully reveals its planning) is a dead world."<sup>156</sup> This uncertainty which depends on the readers for making sense of the text in selective readings may be the reason behind the immortality of writerly masterpieces such as Joyce's *Ulysses* and why such texts can be revisited, and pleasantly reinterpreted in different time periods and various contexts. It is the intentional imperfection that makes attempts at perfection possible. The last two sections have attempted to explain how the writer's interference with the narrative trains the readers to read and analyze the novel. The subsequent section will study how the writer breaks the illusion of reality and demands the reader to take part in the process of writing through formal exploration.

### **III.2.2.2 Notes, drafts, and fragments: the "slightly different idiosyncratic meaning"<sup>157</sup>**

B. S. Johnson's *Albert Angelo* underlines its status as a novel in progress even before the story starts. The page that follows the dedication presents somewhat table of contents that declares:

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<sup>156</sup> *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 96

<sup>157</sup> ——— Further, since each reader brings to each word his own however slightly different idiosyncratic meaning, how can I be expected to make my own—but you must be tired. (*Albert Angelo*, 70)

This novel has five parts:	
Prologue	9
Exposition	17
Development	61
Disintegration	165
Coda	177

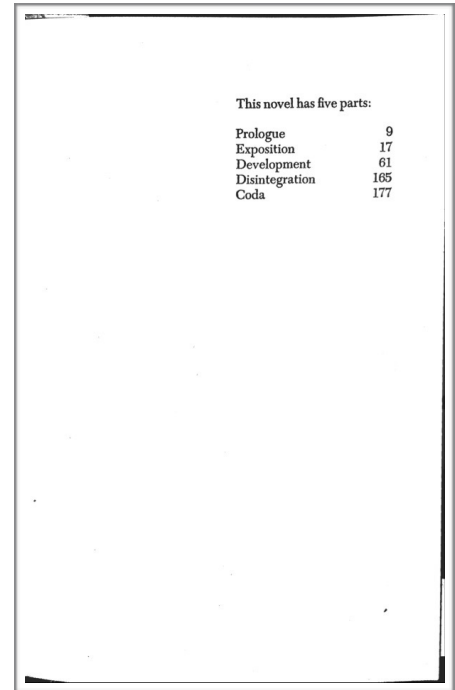


Figure III.2.2.2.P.1  
*Albert Angelo*  
 B. S. Johnson  
 p. 7

This unlikely table of contents, which looks like an editing worksheet instead of the list of chapters, warns the readers that the world they are going to enter is a fabrication. Furthermore, the writer presents the readers with a structural demonstration which later finds resonance in Albert Angelo’s profession, architecture. Comparing writing to building a monument, the writer demonstrates the process of writing a novel from the initial idea to character and plot development all the way to the denouement. Thus, the readers consider the underdeveloped characters in the Prologue and Exposition chapters as the first drafts and follow their development along with the novel. For instance, when Albert is talking about his resemblance to his parents, he has no names for them yet. So he decides to use the general term “parents”: “I shall call them parents, in any event, it seems right to call them my parents, my mother and father. My parents, to give them a name with which to be going on.”<sup>158</sup> Raising the expectations of the readers in the Prologue and Exposition, Johnson prepares them to read the Development in order to understand how a writer uses such notes and drafts in fiction writing.

Dividing the page into two columns is a good example of experimenting with form in *Albert Angelo*. In the classroom scene of the Exposition section, the dialogue between Albert and his students appears in the left column. On the right, Albert’s inner thoughts and monologues are presented in italics. Experimenting with the outline, Johnson avoids interrupting the narrative using

<sup>158</sup> *Albert Angelo*, 20

the writer persona. Instead, he foregrounds the fragmentary nature of the narrative visually as well as providing the readers with the writer's notes on a group of characters that he leaves undescribed. Moreover, this is the first day that Albert meets the students. The arrangement of his sentences shows his physical position in the classroom and / or his emotional distance from the students. He wants to be accepted. So he stands among the students and starts a real dialogue while distancing himself from his thoughts, assumptions and judgements by literally leaving them at the other side of the classroom where his teacher persona supposedly dwells.

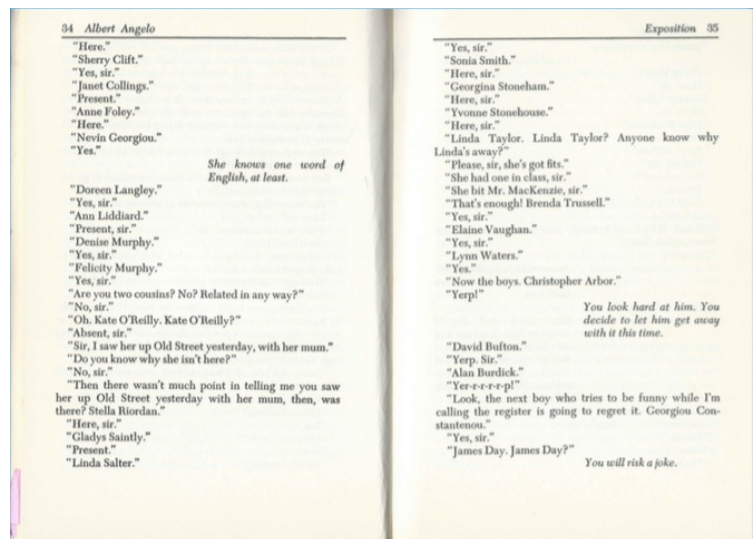


Figure III.2.2.2.P.2

*Albert Angelo*

B. S. Johnson

Exposition, 34-35

The Development section uses the same technique to develop the plot. The events of the class and the students' remarks still appear on the left column and Albert's thoughts on the right. But this time, Albert's reactions are presented through the student conversations and descriptive passages appearing in the same column. Albert is not placed among the students this time as he is writing on the board. Nonetheless, the layout reinforces the effect of the students' aggressive manner of speaking (on the left) and Albert's inner thoughts (on the right). The juxtaposition of the blocks of texts gives the page a checkered texture as if the teacher and the students are engaged in a game of chess and incite the readers' curiosity to know who will checkmate whom.

Additionally, the writer avoids time conjunctions by simply displaying where the students' remarks and Albert's thoughts overlap and leaves the reader to find the word that initiates Albert's train of thought. Therefore, the writer does not directly interrupt the narration to remind the readers of its fabricated nature and underline the important points. The positioning of the sentences

indicates the non-linear nature of the narrative and gives it an incomplete look as if the readers have received the writer's notes while reading the novel instead of a finalized version. The negative space created by the places which have been left white suggests the existence of lost or unwritten parts that should be completed by the readers. In brief, the writer wordlessly leads the readers, and trusts them with the

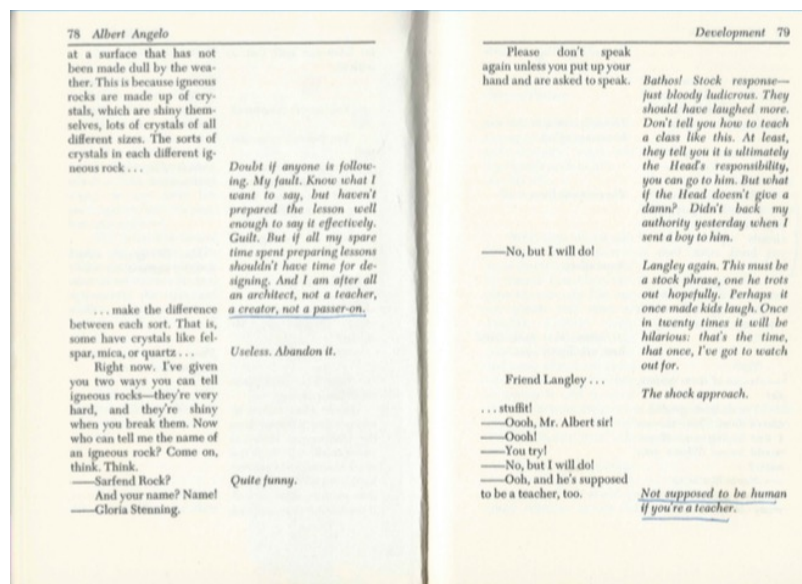


Figure III.2.2.2.P.3

*Albert Angelo*

B. S. Johnson

Development pp. 78-9

narrative. The Development section refers to the development of the narrative, as well as the evolution of the reading strategies the readers will learn to adopt.

The rectangular cut-out that appears at the bottom of page 149 through page 152 is yet another example of using the form to develop the content. Before the cut-out, Albert is reflecting on an unpleasant confrontation with his students in a restaurant. Albert's frustration with the students' unappreciative attitude makes him call them "peasants," a word that causes much hostility and annoyance among the students who are either immigrants or from the lower classes of society. The section ends with Albert being ashamed of how he behaved. Thinking about a remedy for future hostilities, he asks the students to write down how they feel about him and let out their frustration and anger. He thinks "This I hope will work out their hatred of me without it actually needing to come to violence. How about that for an idea, then?"<sup>159</sup> The usual asterisks that divide chapters or parts of a novel follow the last sentence and there appears a cut-out in the shape of a rectangle in the place of the new section / chapter. This cut that goes on for four pages frames three lines from page

<sup>159</sup> *Albert Angelo*, 149

153: “struggled to take back his knife, and inflicted on him a mortal wound above his eye (the blade penetrating to a deep of two inches) from which he died instantly.”<sup>160</sup>

The fact that the next section starts after the cut makes the reader wonder if Albert’s death is not foreshadowed by the small cut. The last section ends with Albert wishing to find a way to compromise with the students before their hatred of him leads them to violent acts. The literal meaning of cut also reinforces this understanding along with the framed sentences that refer to stabbings, mortal wounds and instant deaths. However, the subject of the framed sentences is unidentified and the referent of the pronoun “he,” the victim, is not mentioned. To know for sure, the readers have to go on reading.

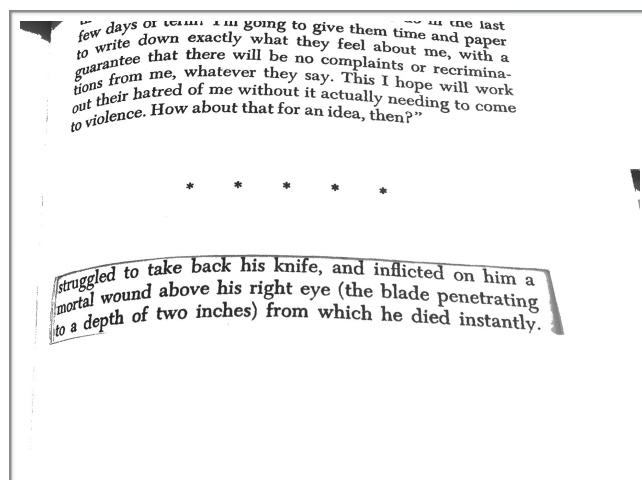


Figure III.2.2.2.P.4

*Albert Angelo*

B. S. Johnson

Development 149

Turning the page, the readers start a section titled “Cablestrasse” that is narrated in the first person, supposedly by Albert himself. Setting this section in Cable Street, London, which had a reputation for brothels, drinking inns and cheap lodgings from the Victorian times till 1950s, may be a hint for the readers to prepare themselves for a bar fight. However, according to Lawrence Philips, the German pronunciation of the word makes another bridge between narrative and architecture to predict Albert’s treatment of his students:

The Germanization of Cable Street as ‘Cablestrasse’ hints at the stereotypical constructions of Germans as methodical and ordered, as well as the possibility for such a value system to mutate into political fascism — a resonant connection to a 1960s London still pock-marked by bomb-sites — and perhaps anticipating Albert’s own predilection for beating more troublesome students into submission.<sup>161</sup>

<sup>160</sup> *Albert Angelo*, 153

<sup>161</sup> *London Narratives: Postwar Fiction and the City*, 94



Alongside the historical significance of the street in the war context which also points out the heterogeneous combination of the poor, the immigrants and Londoners such as Albert in the same place, the readers may think of John Williams, a suspect in Ratcliff Highway Murders in 1811.<sup>162</sup> While Williams was found hanged in his cell, the locals claimed that he had committed suicide in order to get the permission to stake him at an official burial. His skull was found in the 1960s when new gas pipes were being installed and given the fact that *Albert Anglo* was first published in 1964, it is plausible that Johnson had the incident in mind. But is that what happened to Albert? Is this the reason behind the load of student essays about Albert that the readers get at the end of the part titled Development? This section is followed by a) random student essays, Disintegration, in which the writer goes on an artistic rant and b) Coda which is set during Albert's funeral. The cut-out literally interrupts the narration, so the readers can insert their own version of the event.

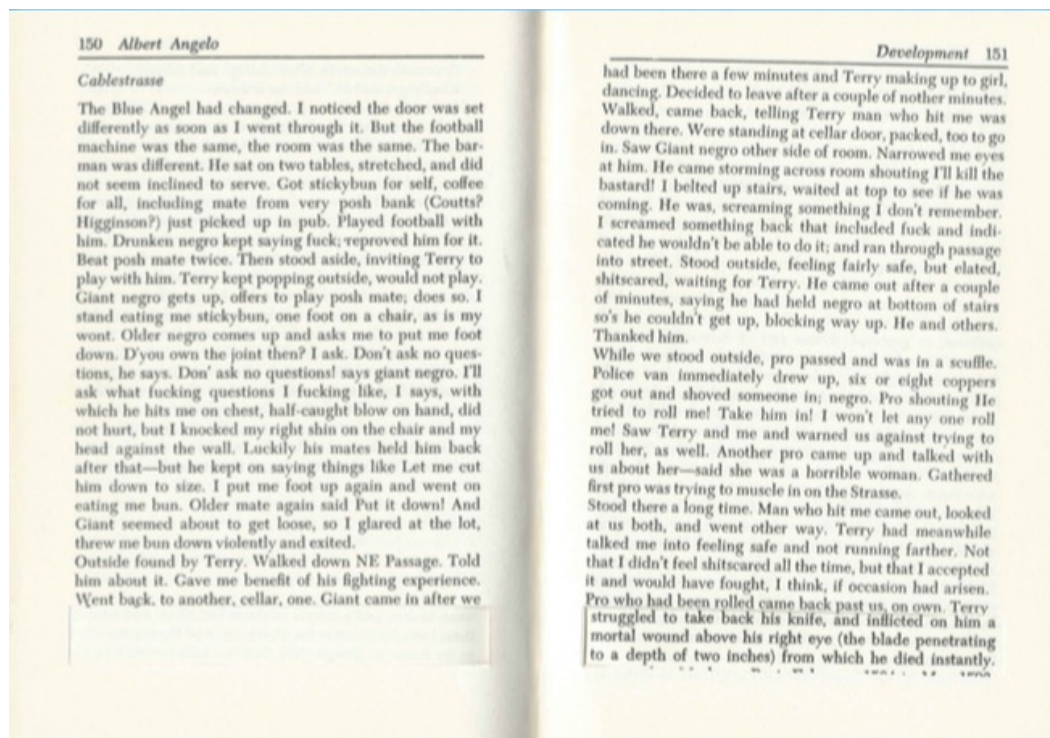


Figure III.2.2.2.P.5

*Albert Angelo*

B. S. Johnson

Development 150-151

The cut-out is shown at the bottom of the right page.

<sup>162</sup> "London Murders." *Rooftop Statues*, Knowledge of London <[knowledgeoflondon.com/murders.html](http://knowledgeoflondon.com/murders.html)>

The recurring rectangular cut-out makes a threatening effect as it continues to fit in different parts of the story and promise bloodshed and violence. Interestingly, the cut-out frames a white expansion in the previous page (page 148) as if to predict the beginning of a story of violence in the pages that follow. Functioning as a refrain in a ballad, the cut-out induces the feeling of an impending doom approaching each time the readers come across the same lines. Finally getting to the page in which the lines were initially planted, the readers find out that the passage is placed in a new section / chapter that follows Albert's first-person narration. The readers may feel betrayed specially because the lines are not even about Albert, but an account of Christopher Marlow's death.

On the contrary, the passage is undoubtedly related to the story. The previous section ends on a vague note as the narrator explains the events that *may* have followed his and his friend's exit:

Copper came up to us. What were we doing. I was just standing quietly talking to my mate about the architecture, I says, they're very nice eighteenth-century houses over there. Very reasonable copper. Not narked. Just said not the time to appreciate architecture, at this was Stepney and any minute a drunken man might rush out of a house with a knife in his hand and stick it into the first person he saw; who might well be me.<sup>163</sup>

If we accept Albert as the narrator of the mentioned passage, he clearly points out the possibility of being stabbed before the story moves on to the Marlow anecdote. The question is why the extract is repeated and framed in every single page to get to the account of Marlow's death. Does the writer intend to show how violence can flow through the pages of a novel? Is it to show the readers how a writer carries the story to term and develops a prompt into an ending? It is true that the cut opens a window to the end of this subplot and demonstrates how the story would get to that point step by step, page by page in this case? Is there a reason that Albert's death was juxtaposed with Marlow's? Albert is an aspiring architect who hopes to build a historical monument one day and although Marlow has contributed immensely to literature, he could have written masterpieces if his life had not been cut short in a fight. Can a denouncement of the violence, which runs through history with

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<sup>163</sup> *Albert Angelo*, 153

regretful results, be the goal of the cut-out windows? Are they windows to the future ? Do they pessimistically predict the repetition of mistakes made in the past? There is no definite answer. The readers are prompted to bring their own “however slightly different idiosyncratic meaning” to the text.<sup>164</sup>

The rectangular cut-outs welcome possibilities. The confusion they cause and the questions they raise multiply the probable interpretations. Their function is to remind the readers to take into consideration not only what will happen in this novel, but also what might happen if they responded to the game the novel has designed. The writer acknowledges this point in *Disintegration* as he states:

\_\_\_\_ And another of my aims is didactic: the novel must be a vehicle for conveying truth, and to this end every device and technique of the printer’s art should be at the command of the writer: hence, the future-seeing holes, for instance, as much to draw attention to the possibilities as to make my point about death and poetry.<sup>165</sup>

The Development should logically lead to “conclusion” or “closure.” Instead, the section that follows has been titled *Disintegration*. It presents the writer’s notes, opinions and comments randomly. It seems that the writer has gathered in one single chapter, all the comments that are normally made by the writer-character or writer-narrator in metafiction. But why is this chapter placed right before the ending, “Coda”? Is it to show the writer’s state of mind before ending a novel? The title of the chapter and the writer’s seemingly arbitrary comments and background information support this reading.

The chapter starts with a frustrated writer who doubts his skills and demonstrates his dissatisfaction with the novel he has written so far through foregoing punctuation and the mechanics of writing: “\_\_\_\_ fuck all this lying look what im really trying to write about is writing not all this

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<sup>164</sup> *Albert Angelo*, 170

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*, 176

stuff about architecture [...].”<sup>166</sup> He goes on to claim “\_\_\_\_\_ I’m trying to say something not tell a story telling stories is telling lies and I want to tell the truth [...].” His anger and frustration subside as he slowly picks up where he has left off, pays attention to the grammatical points, punctuations and paragraph writing rules one more time and he finally decides to finish the novel because “\_\_\_\_\_ But even I (even I!) would not leave such a mess, such a mess, so many loose ends, clear up the mess, bury the loose ends, the lot . . . .”<sup>167</sup>

Gathering the writer commentary randomly in a single chapter, *Albert Angelo* emphasizes the significance of “almighty aposiopesis.” In one of the random comments, the writer justifies the lack of coherence because his novel “\_\_\_\_\_ Is about the fragmentariness of life, too, attempts to reproduce the moment-to-moment fragmentariness of life, my life, and to echo it in technique, the fragmentariness, a collage made of the fragments of my own life, the poor odds and sods, the bric-à-brac, a thing composed of, then.”<sup>168</sup> The writer implies that the linearity and coherence we are familiar with in the traditional novel never really apply to life. Therefore, if a novel attempts to “tell the truth about me about my experience about my truth to reality [...],” it needs to mirror the discontinuous rhythms of life. Taking the writer’s comments, which are usually nested in the text in metafiction, is a celebration of “the fragmentariness of life” to some extent.

Presenting the narrative — the students’ essays in *Development*, for example — and the writer comments in *Disintegration* as independent parts of the novel, *Albert Angelo* visually underlines the novel’s non-linear nature. This effect is usually achieved in metafiction through interruptions and digressions. *Albert Angelo* accomplishes the task by foregrounding the negative space or employing aposiopeses. The blank space between the lines promises a potential to be fulfilled rather than a lost piece. The writer’s separate commentary in particular, endows the text with an unexpected touch of fluidity on paper which reminds the readers of digital hypertexts.

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<sup>166</sup> *Albert Angelo*, 167

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, 176

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*, 169

Whereas the writer-narrator of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*'s comments were fixed in the text, and had to be read in relation with a specific event or character, the readers of *Albert Angelo* are given the liberty to choose where to insert the writer's comments. They have been literally given the space to fit the comments into the page also. A comment / confession such as "\_\_\_\_ Not that I am not fond of Albert, for I am very [...], even though I have hardly provided you with a description of him, a corporate being, I know, but he stands for me, I don't need one: Albert who stands for me, poor fool"<sup>169</sup> can initiate various chains of interpretations about the novel and its writer's attitude toward his role and the novel if read alongside the passages such as "Doubt if anyone is following. My fault. Know what I want to say, but haven't prepared the lesson well enough to say it effectively. Guilt. But if all my spare time spent preparing lessons shouldn't have time for designing. And I'm after all an architect, not a teacher, a creator, not a passer-on."<sup>170</sup> The insertion of another passage such as "Of course, I would really like to be designing a Gothic cathedral, all crockets and finials and flying buttresses, but I must be of my time, rather, using the materials of my time, the unacknowledged legislators, and so on, in accord with, my age, my time, my generation, my life"<sup>171</sup> changes our interpretation completely. The out-of-place commentary enables the readers to read the novel to a point, establish some images and ideas and then add, modify or justify what they have understood after reading the writer's commentary. The fragmented nature of the novel and the commentary makes it possible for the readers to build their own interpretation. In brief, the commentary which is part of the text as in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, trains the readers to adopt a critical approach while *Albert Angelo* provides the readers with a practice drill. Either through narration, or by formal explorations, both metafictional demand reader participation.

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<sup>169</sup> *Albert Angelo*, 169-170

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid*, 78

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid*, 107

### III.2.2.3 The horrid prolific blanks: “What writer can compete with the reader's imagination!”<sup>172</sup>

In B. S. Johnson's *House Mother Normal*, the story takes place in blanks as well as in the written parts. Although the novel briefly acknowledges the reader and the writer's existence and therefore, its own fictitious status, the writer is absent from the novel. The fragmentary nature of the novel, which presents the same event from eight different perspectives and by the confused or disturbed residents of a nursing home, in addition to the absence of the author encourages the readers to fill in the inviting blank spaces using their imagination.

A narrator, House Mother, opens the novel to inform the readers that they are about to see into the minds of eight elderly patients and herself and to explain about the brief information the readers receive at the beginning of each section. She reappears at the very end to finish off for the writer. The book has been designed in eight twenty-one page chapters through which the characters recount the same event, as far as their memory and mental status permit, in dramatic monologues and rarely in dialogue. The readers get no insight into the characters apart from the information listed at the beginning of each chapter and are expected to envisage and analyze the characters in order to get a picture of the event they are thinking about.

The patient file that the readers are presented with at the beginning of each section justifies the discrepancy between different tellings of the same event and the deficiencies of each recount. They also help the readers evaluate each account in terms of reliability. The files include statistics on the patients' age, marital status, sight, hearing, touch, taste, smell, movement, CQ and pathology.<sup>173</sup> Ivy Nicholas, for instance, has better eyesight than Sara Lamson. Sara's hearing, on the other hand, is twenty percent higher than Ivy's. Therefore, the images described by Ivy are more

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<sup>172</sup> *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry*, 51

<sup>173</sup> “A CQ count, for instance, is given: that is, the total of correct answers which were given in response to ten classic questions (Where are you now? What is this place? What day is this? What month is it? What year is it? How old are you? What is your birthday? In what year were you born? Who is on the throne now? Who was on the throne before?) for senile dementia.” (*House Mother Normal*, 6)

reliable than the ones presented in Sara's account while Sara's retelling of conversations may be regarded as more authentic.

The readers' ability to see into the narrators' minds, as House Mother puts it, enables them to read the same events from different viewpoints as well as finding out about the characters' personalities, thoughts and of course the impact of their illnesses and age on their memory. It is not surprising that the chapters of a novel which mainly deals with inevitable afflictions associated with old age, would be ordered from the youngest narrator's viewpoint (Sara Lamson 74) to the oldest (Rosetta Stanton 94). This is a great help for the reader to follow the narration since Sara presents a

lucid account in complete sentences and correct punctuation. Although she pauses frequently, the readers may consider Sara being distracted and avoid associating the breaks with memory deficiencies. The pauses find a significant impact as the readers finish a couple of chapters, and find out that the gaps represent memory loss and the degeneration of the mind by the progression of age. In Gloria Ridge's opening, for example, the pauses are as frequent as the words and the reader can never be sure if Gloria is dozing off, getting sidetracked, or whether her mind goes completely blank. The growing blanks now dominate the page little by little as oblivion takes over the narrators' minds. For example, the visual impact of the white opening which represents George Hedbury's mind is horrifying.

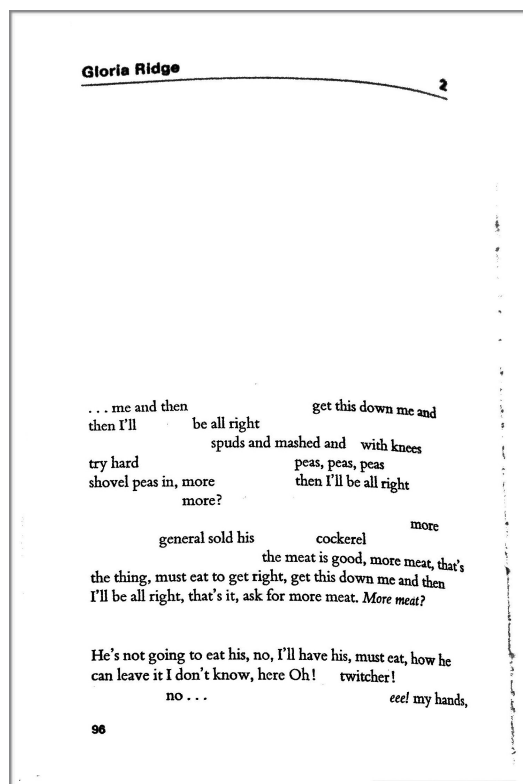


Figure III.2.2.3.P.1

*House Mother Normal*

B. S. Johnson

p. 96

Johnson brings a visual aspect to the page through layout. The impact of scattered words, solecistic utterances, unfamiliar orthography and unfinished words imprints a ghastly picture of

senility on the reader's mind. The efficacious representation of the mind through the blanks surpasses the disturbing verbal description: "I am a prisoner in myself. It's terrible. The movement agonizes me. / Let me out or I shall die."<sup>174</sup>

The visual effect of the blanks is not limited to the deterioration of the mind. Their striking presence among the words, especially at the beginning of the novel where the words appear in abundance, emphasize the holes in the narration. However, the order of the chapters, the repetition of the same song, the same conversations and the same events portray a general image, and help the readers identify and fill the gaps in the later narratives. The readers' familiarity with the story after the first chapters and their rudimentary knowledge of the other characters seen through the eyes of the narrators of the early chapters enable them to replace the lost words and phrases. This is not foolproof as we know none of the characters can be completely trusted due to the lack of sensory input. The contradictory information the readers get when the narrative unfolds makes it even more complicated. Thus, the same readers may finish the same story in different ways during several re-readings. The abundance of interpretations that different readers bring to each retelling aside, the

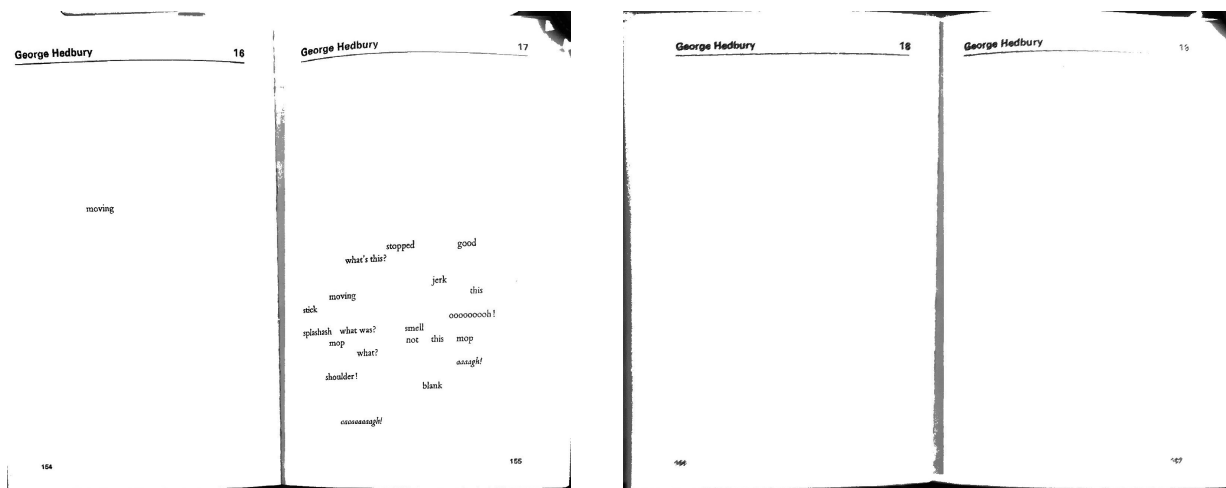


Figure III.2.2.3.P.2  
*House Mother Normal* 154-157  
George Hedbury, pages 16-19

<sup>174</sup> *House Mother Normal*, 175-176



numerous and sometimes contradictory stories let the readers experience the confusion the characters feel and the struggle they go through to remember something that happened not that long ago. It is not an overstatement to say that the formal experimentations of *House Mother Normal* let the readers experience senescence prematurely.

To complete the experience of the loss of cognitive functions, *House Mother Normal* employs other typographical techniques. Although the typefaces do not change as in the contemporary examples such as Danielewski's novels, the space between the letters demonstrate the prolonged analysis process in the mind of the patients. The sentences drag and strive to form lucid thoughts:

More glue  
Mrs Bowen, can you pass me  
your glue, please? This one's finished.

Thanks very much, Mrs Bowen.  
Yes, all right now.

There may be others  
like me. I hope so. I hope  
not, on the other hand. I  
would not wish it on  
them.

84

Figure III.2.2.3.P.3  
*House Mother Normal*  
B. S. Johnson  
p. 84

The extreme form of this technique can be found in Rosetta's section. Rosetta, whose advanced age and least sensory abilities among the residents of the house result in the least coherent (yet, the most poetic) narration, is unable to form the letters into words without the readers' help. The scattered words that follow the sentence "Let me out or I shall die" read "No, I do not get any lighter, Ivy, I intend not to get anything anymore no mor"<sup>175</sup> and the rest is silence. The dispersed letters convey the difficulty of talking, thinking, and if put into the context, moving for Rosetta. The space between the letters and the restriction they set on the fluency of reading force the reader to share the wretchedness Rosetta feels.

<sup>175</sup> *House Mother Normal*, 176

The appearance of peculiar words on the page also takes drastic measures to display the dire state of Rosetta’s mind. If George is still capable of remembering single, though irrelevant words, Rosetta’s memory has even lost the ability to recognize the words. The words are familiar, but bizarre; part of a word or combinations of two or three words. The opening of Rosetta’s section contains only eight words, none of which are comprehensible: “Galluog / lwcus / ynad / noddwr / Teg / enwog / geirwir / arabus.”<sup>176</sup> The eight consecutive accounts demonstrate how the sentences are reduced to phrases, to random words, to unintelligible words, to nothing. The typographical design keeps up with the theme to show how detailed memories of an event are diminishable to arbitrary images and indiscernible sounds. Contrary to what House Mother promised in the prologue, the characters’ minds become progressively impenetrable for the readers.

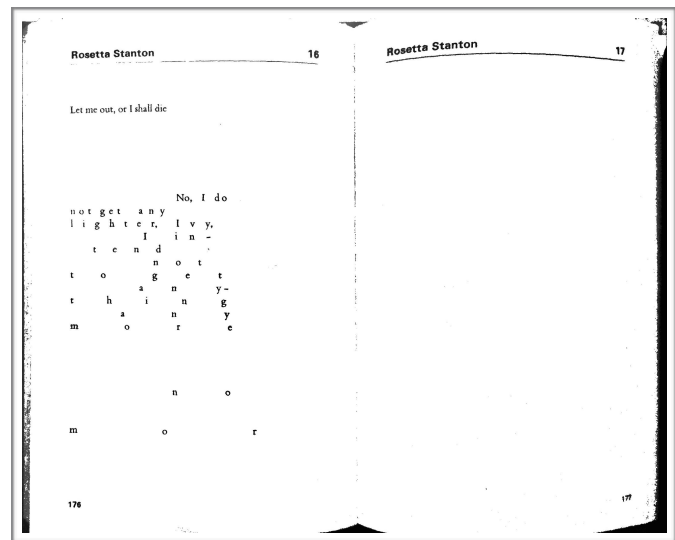


Figure III.2.2.3.P.4  
*House Mother Normal*  
 B. S. Johnson  
 pp. 176-177

Deciphering the characters’ personalities through their thoughts becomes even more difficult when the blank space in the older patients’ minds overcomes the verbal representations of thoughts and the frequent apertures in the characters’ thoughts makes it almost impossible to make sense of the random words — sometimes misspelled or unfinished — and find out about the patients. Moreover, some of the characters have not been mentioned in the earlier narratives. Therefore, the blank minds of the characters demonstrate the futility of having access to the minds and raise questions about the reasons behind such tactics. How is the reader supposed to fill in the blanks if there is nothing but the blanks?

<sup>176</sup> *House Mother Normal*, 162-163

Johnson comes to the readers' rescue by adding a chapter narrated by House Mother at the very end. As the youngest narrator (aged 42 ) whose body and senses have not left her yet, she gives an account of the story one more time and fills in most of the gaps that the readers may have skipped. While removing some confusion about the patients and the cruel trick she has played on them<sup>177</sup>, House Mother confirms her inappropriate behavior and the shady ethics the patients have already informed us about, and raises questions about her reliability. More importantly, House Mother's account is not devoid of blanks either and leaves it to the readers to accept the holes in her narrative as simple pauses, proofs of her unreliability or the early symptoms of the malignant cerebral carcinoma that has been mentioned in her file of which she has no knowledge. This way, the vicious circle of the novel will be completed by House Mother meeting the same fate as her patients, someday. Her insistence on calling the residents of the house "friends" instead of patients, as well as addressing the reader as "friend," has a moving impact even if the readers have missed the reference at the beginning of the novel. No one is immune to aging: "if you are not like our friends, friend, laugh now, prepare, accept, worse times are a-coming, nothing is more sure."<sup>178</sup>

The blanks have two major functions in *House Mother Normal*. First, they help the readers experience what the characters are going through and make amnesia, senility, difficulty of movement, shortness of breath, degeneration of mind and, in general, the misery of living in the declining years tangible for the readers. The spaces, the blanks, the italics, the orthographic and typographic deviations all serve to portray the residents' state of mind on the page visually, and make the feeling as accessible as possible. Johnson questions the accessibility of the mind in the traditional novel and suggests the impossibility of knowing a person even when we can literally read their minds. Furthermore, the blanks that mercilessly display the regression of the mind turn the page into an interactive board and create a cinematic experience for the readers.

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<sup>177</sup> House Mother wrapped her dog's defecation and presented it to the patients as the award for the game she had persuaded them to play.

<sup>178</sup> *House Mother Normal*, 204

Secondly, the blanks continuously attract the readers' attention to the elusive narrative and the information it is denying them. The blanks foreground the non-linear nature of the narrative without the conventional writer-intervention. In a rare metafictional move, the writer tries to disappear from the text and leave the readers in charge. As one would expect, the readers are reminded of the writer's presence once in the prologue and once in the epilogue by House Mother who also functions as the writer's agent in the novel and exhibits its fictionality. Other than that, it is the blanks that expose the fragmentary nature of the novel in progress and keep reminding the readers of the writer's presence. The order of the chapters, the repetition of the accounts and the arrangement of the blanks on the page invite the readers to use the information they have received in the first chapter to complete the gaps that appear in the following chapters and finally be reassured of the truth or the falsity of some of the assumptions in the last chapter. Although the readers' interpretations are guided to some extent as the writer has delineated the narrative at the beginning and the end, the readers are free to portray the characters as they wish. The readers have been given almost no physical description of the characters and are free to "Make him what you will: probably in the image of yourself. You are allowed complete freedom in the matter of warts and moles; he has at least one of either."<sup>179</sup> *House Mother Normal* provides the readers with the beginning and the ending, which correspond to Prologue and Coda in *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry*, and encourages them to develop the Development section. The blanks realize the gaps and ruptures that are usually presented through language as in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. They indicate the meta-dimension of *House Mother Normal* through form and invite the readers to view the blanks on the page, or the blank pages in George Hedbury and Rosetta Stanton's chapters, as a white screen on which they can project their thoughts and reactions, a very Shandean move indeed. Thus, the page functions as a magic screen that may reflect and include the writers' words and the readers' interpretations side by side. Nothing is impossible on a page:

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<sup>179</sup> *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry*, 51

\_\_\_\_\_ A page is an area on which I may place any signs I consider to communicate most nearly what I have to convey: therefore I employ, within the pocket of my publisher and the patience of my printer, typological techniques beyond the arbitrary and constricting limits of the conventional novel. To dismiss such techniques as gimmicks, or to refuse to take them seriously, is crassly to miss the point.<sup>180</sup>

Metafiction employs different methods to underline its fictionality and its status as a work in progress. It can be narratologically self-conscious or typographically self-referential or a combination of both. The first category which includes novels such as *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry* to some extent, exposes the novel as a fictional fabrication on both narratological and linguistic level. The writer-narrator's comments and the characters' self-awareness are among the common techniques used in narratological self-representation. Typographical self-reflexivity, on the other hand, is concerned with the graphic surface of the page including fonts, spaces, typefaces and general layout. *House Mother Normal*, for instance, leans more toward typographical self-consciousness and employs the page as a medium of presentation rather than the repository of the story. The page functions as the junction of both the verbal and the visual medium. The tension resulting from this intersection creates a unique experience for the readers. In short, *House Mother Normal's* experiments with the traditional layout and typography display a less explored meta-dimension: metafictionality through the medium. *House Mother Normal* demonstrates that the definition of self-referentiality should cover self-reflexivity within the borders of the narrative as well as the awareness of the medium, the spread of the page.

### **III.2.3 Metafiction: medium-consciousness**

The interaction between the verbal medium of communication and the printed medium of representation in *House Mother Normal* displays the potential that the meta-dimension brings to a

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<sup>180</sup> *Albert Angelo*, 176

piece of art: a “metarepresentational capacity,”<sup>181</sup> the ability to transcend the borders of a single medium. *House Mother Normal* is not merely self-conscious, but also conscious of the medium in which it is presented. In other words, *House Mother Normal* shows awareness of not only its fictionality, but of its metafictionality through its experiments with typography and layout. Acknowledging and realizing this potential, the piece surpasses self-referentiality and becomes metareferential. According to Werner Wolf, “metareferentiality can be said to denote all kinds of references to, or comments on, aspects of a medial artifact, a medium or the media in general that issue from a logically higher ‘meta-level’ within a given artifact and elicits corresponding self-referential reflections in the recipient.”<sup>182</sup>

Wolf argues that although literature, humanities and art have usually been the field of the research on the human “metarepresentational capacity,” the meta-dimension is a multidisciplinary concept and can be studied across the media. He explains the process of “metazation,” a term first coined by Klaus Hempfer in reference to metafiction,<sup>183</sup> as follows:

the movement from a first cognitive or communicative level to a higher one on which the first-level thoughts and utterances, and above all the means and media used for such utterances, self-reflexively become objects of reflection and communication in their own right [It] is a common feature not only of human thought and of language as a primary medium but also of literature as a secondary medium (using language) and arguably of all other media as well.<sup>184</sup>

The focus of B. S. Johnson’s *The Unfortunates* on the means and media of representation to reinforce the theme may serve as an instance of metaization. The novel is not self-reflexive in the conventional sense. Although the story seems to be narrated by B. S. Johnson himself and the readers frequently receive comments on the critical theory and futility of academic research

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<sup>181</sup> *Metareference Across the Media*, 2

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid* v

<sup>183</sup> Hempfer, Klaus, “Die potentielle Autoreflexivität des narrativen Diskurses und Ariosts Orlando Furioso”. Eberhard Läm- mert, ed. *Erzählforschung: Ein Symposium*. Germanistische Symposien 4. Stuttgart: 1982. Metzler. 130–156. [The quotation above was cited in *Metareference Across the Media*]

<sup>184</sup> *Metareference Across the Media*, 3

alongside the writer-narrator's opinions on writers and writing, novel-writing is not the main concern of the narrative. Johnson's role as the writer-narrator makes the references to writing inevitable. However, the significance of the chosen form and the modifications of the medium we know as printed book steal the readers' attention constantly. The experimental form adds a meta-dimension to *The Unfortunates*, also known as "Book in the Box" in order to question and comment on the novel as a genre, the writing process and the alliance between form and content in developing the themes.

*The Unfortunates* comes in an unorthodox form. The twenty-seven unbound chapters come in random order ranging from a paragraph to twelve pages. The chapters are temporarily held together with a removable wrapper and the "Note" in the left inner cover — or the inner side of the box that functions as a dust jacket — which explains that the twenty-five chapters excluding the first and the last, are intended to be read in a random order. Therefore, the readers may choose to accept the order in which they have received the sections or re-arrange the chapters as they wish.



Figure III.2.3.P.1  
*The Unfortunates*  
B. S. Johnson

In a true marriage of form and content, *The Unfortunates* follows the train of thoughts and the memories of a sportswriter, Johnson himself,<sup>185</sup> who arrives in Nottingham for a routine football reporting assignment, only to realize "But I know this city!"<sup>186</sup> His arrival in the city where Tony Tillinghast, an academic and a close friend of Johnson's lived, worked and finally surrendered to cancer, initiates the emergence of a chain of happy, painful or confusing memories that in turn bring

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<sup>185</sup> The right inner side of the box, which presents the readers with a football match report titled "Sub Inspires City Triumph" by B. S. Johnson, reinforces the assumption that the narrator is Johnson himself. Moreover, he has used the real names and places.

<sup>186</sup> *The Unfortunates*, First chapter, 1

about other memories and transform the book into a visual metaphor for memory and the process of remembering.

Johnson's random and disorderly sections, which include disconnected paragraphs containing blanks and gaps, give an accurate picture of how the mind works while remembering events and people. When the memory of Tony is triggered by the recognition of the city, the memories attack the mind of the narrator, clearly not in a linear and structured manner. Each memory interrupts the previous one and initiates another. None is complete and rarely narrated completely. Establishing an order is impossible since the mind usually stores or discards memories selectively and displays them in a non-chronological order as the remembered memory is slightly modified each time it is remembered. The latest studies show that memories may integrate new information if recalled in a new context, environment, time and area. They are highly affected by the person's mood at the time of remembering also.<sup>187</sup> Therefore, the mind can easily modify a memory based on the context in which the act of remembering takes place. *Memento* by Christopher Nolan that provides a practical example for such modification will be studied in the following chapter.

It is noteworthy that one always remembers an event in retrospective. Distorted or confused memories are the direct result of putting the events in perspective and analyzing them in the light of the events that followed: "Or yet again, do I impose this in the knowledge of what happened later? A constant, ha, distorting process, what is true about that past, about Wendy, about Tony?"<sup>188</sup> There is always a possibility that the memories might overlap, be superimposed, distorted and misplaced, or fade in parts: "The mind is confused, was it this visit, or another, this mind has telescoped time here, runs events near to one another in place, into one another in time."<sup>189</sup> The non-linear narrative

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<sup>187</sup> Paul, Marla. "News." *Your Memory Is like the Telephone Game: Northwestern University*. Northwestern University, 19 Sept. 2012. Web. 28 July 2015. <<http://www.northwestern.edu/newscenter/stories/2012/09/your-memory-is-like-the-telephone-game.html>>.

<sup>188</sup> *The Unfortunates*, The  section, 2

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid*, The  section, 6



displays the significance of randomness in the process of remembering the same way the unbound book reflects on this process by its lack of spine.

The fragmentary nature of the narrative also reflects on the episodic memories through unrelated paragraphs and blank spots. On several occasions, the narrator questions his memory: “I cannot place this, though, it will not fall into place,”<sup>190</sup> or confesses his inability to recall: “I fail to remember, the mind has fuses.”<sup>191</sup> Such comments usually follow a blank and underline the rifts and splits in the flow of the memory both visually and verbally. Although capable of remembering an obscure image or the order of past events,

the narrator can never state that his memories are accurate: “We must have talked in the pub. / Can’t remember anything we said, but something must have been discussed about the novel. The pub was on the cliffs, neon signs, a jukebox. / Nothing else? / Nothing else. / Yes, I drove, he was not strong enough, or confident enough, to drive [...]”<sup>192</sup>

nothing, that sense does not exist. We must have talked in the pub  
 Can’t remember anything we said, but something must have been discussed about the novel. The pub was on the cliffs, neon signs, a jukebox. Nothing else?  
 Nothing else. Yes, I drove, he was not strong enough, or confident enough, to drive, for some reason, again I could not understand, but I did not drive so often then, I had no car of my own, that I did not welcome the opportunity of driving to the pub. And the next day I drove as well, when we went into Brighton one afternoon to look at

The commas cut the narrative into single images such as neon signs or a juke box, and interrupt the flow of the narrative. The pauses indicate intervals through which the narrator attempts to remember or clarify a confused memory. The discontinuity of the narrated events shows how the narrator’s mind fluctuates among different and sometimes irrelevant memories. In the lines prior to the quotation above, the narrator contemplates on the disease and its origin. He states that the malady came from nowhere and then wonders whether it comes from the inside. This thought is followed by the admission that he does not understand and then his mind

Figure III.2.3.P.2  
*The Unfortunates*  
 B. S. Johnson  
 The ❁ section 2

<sup>190</sup> *The Unfortunates*, The ❁ section, 8  
<sup>191</sup> *Ibid* The ❁ section, 5  
<sup>192</sup> *Ibid* The ❁ section, 2

wonders to another thought: “Perhaps there is nothing to be understood, perhaps understanding is simply not to be found, is not applicable to such a thing. But it’s hard, hard not to try to understand, even for me who accepts that all is nothing, that sense does not exist. We must have talked in the pub.”<sup>193</sup> His mind goes completely blank as he unsuccessfully tries to remember the topic of the conversation. This leads to the single images of neon signs and juke boxes flashing in his mind which make him ask himself “nothing else?”

Another pause indicates that his mind has completely eradicated this memory, so he moves on to a random memory: “Yes, I drove.” Hesitant short sentences, the abundance of commas and the frequent pauses indicate the

unstructured manner in which he remembers the events and how unreliable the memories are. Who knows what happened and how? And isn’t presenting the flashbacks in a linear manner betraying the truth? Especially for a novelist who believes “the novel must be a vehicle for conveying truth [...]”<sup>194</sup>

Presenting “a diagram of certain aspects of the inside of his skull”<sup>195</sup> is reinforced by this book format and its lack of structure. The only marked chapters, the first and the last, impose an order of where to start and where to end, but the readers may decide the order of what comes in between. This restriction also imitates the process of remembering as one usually remembers what triggered a memory and how the episode ended, but is not necessarily aware of the directions the mind takes during the process of recollection, the reasons behind it or the time it actually takes: “Time! / It’s after two! I must get to the ground then, how my mind has been taken off.”<sup>196</sup>



Time! It’s after two! I must get to the ground then, how my mind has been taken off. Now, how to get to the

Figure II.2.3.P3

*The Unfortunates*

B. S. Johnson

The  section 1

<sup>193</sup> *The Unfortunates* The  section, 2

<sup>194</sup> *Albert Angelo*, 176

<sup>195</sup> *House Mother Normal*, 204

<sup>196</sup> *The Unfortunates* The  section, 1

The readers would for sure know of the story at the end of the first reading, but the order of — or lack thereof — the events makes it impossible to recollect the story without doubting their memory like the narrator: “that sounds wrong, I misremember.”<sup>197</sup> The traditional solution is to re-read, but the unbound chapters and the non-linear narrative make it almost impossible for the readers to find the sections they were looking for to the point that they may doubt the existence of the paragraph or line they had in mind. As one would expect, going back and forth between chapters which contain fragments of the story is frustrating and confusing. The traditional novel and the linear narrative enable readers to trace the events or quotes in chapters to some extent while *The Unfortunates* turns into a labyrinth when trying to find a previously read passage. Highlighting and underlining are not helpful either as the sentences, which have been written in a stream of consciousness manner, intensify the discontinuity imposed by the disconnected paragraphs and jumbled chapters. Like the writer-narrator, the readers have opened Pandora’s box. Memories flood in and wash any order or certainty away.

The experience bears some similarity to the writer-narrator’s hesitance about places or people related to the memories: “Tony did come to lunch, yes, that was I think sure, but not June, she was busy, I think, I cannot be sure [...]”<sup>198</sup> The struggle to remember accurately is frustrating: “Did I see him, did we see them during that summer? What does it matter?”<sup>199</sup> Moreover, the writer-narrator knows that Tony’s death has affected all his memories and associates all the past memories of this city, the places they have visited and the people they met with Tony: “[...] I try to invest everything connected with him now with as much rightness, sanctity, almost, as I can, how the fact of his death influences every memory of everything connected with him.”<sup>200</sup> The writer knows that he has unconsciously distorted, blocked or glorified some memories to deal with the

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<sup>197</sup>*The Unfortunates* The  section, 7

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid*, The  section, 1

<sup>199</sup> *Ibid*, The  section, 3

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid*, The  section, 1

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At least this is better than lunch, sometimes they can be good, as  
this is, or even very good, railway meals. And the Maçon  
honest enough, rough, to my common palate.

Figure III.2.3.P.4  
*The Unfortunates*  
B. S. Johnson  
The last chapter, 4

Can any death be meaningful? Or meaningless?  
Are these terms one can use about death?  
I don't know, I just feel the pain, the pain.

That gross laughter must be from colleagues, ha, yes, I recognize  
it, have heard it before. Why have they stayed to catch the later  
train, not having my cause?

pain and the confusion Tony's death has caused: "Can any death be meaningful?/ Or meaningless?  
Are these terms one can use about death? / I don't know, I just feel the pain, the pain."<sup>201</sup>

The accuracy of the memories is not important. What is finally left is feelings and that is  
what the format of the book has been intended to induce: frustration, incomprehension, anger and a  
sense of loss. What is more, the writer-narrator perceptively implies in the very first chapter that we  
store what we hear or see selectively. A painful memory can be completely blocked or replaced:

My visits here were long talks broken only partly by eating, what a generalization, there,  
more talk on his part than mine, far more, but I learnt, *I selected and elected to hear what I  
needed, what was of the most use to me*, at that time most use, from his discourse, yes, the  
word is not too pompous, discourse, a fine mind, a need to communicate embodied in it,  
too, how can I place his order, his disintegration?<sup>202</sup>

The writer-narrator suggests that readers follow his example and read selectively since it is the way  
that the mind stores significant memories. The readers would have forgotten some parts of the story  
even if it had been presented in a linear manner. In the end, there is no correct order of  
remembering. Memories affect people in different ways and may provoke different reactions and

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<sup>201</sup> *The Unfortunates*, The last chapter, 4

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid*, The first chapter 3-4 [My italics]

multiple chains of memories. What is left is the feeling associated with them and not surprisingly, any alternation in the order of the memories — or chapters — will awaken distinctive feelings.

While the box is a symbolic representation of the writer-narrator's mind that has kept Tony alive through memories all these years, the process of recollection is not the only concept on which *The Unfortunates* concentrates. In an unconventional understanding of “memories make the man,” the fragmentation of the narrative in a book that literally falls apart denotes Tony's disintegration. From this point of view, the box can be considered as a coffin that hides a body and the writer-narrator's attempt to put the pieces together in order to reconstruct his friend's image. He promised June, Tony's wife, an epitaph after all and never delivered. Thus, the writer-narrator and the readers are able to resurrect the man in a way. If only they could construct a coherent narrative.

The random length of the chapters mirrors Tony's state of health in the writer-narrator's mind. The length of the chapters that varies from a paragraph to twelve pages reflects Tony's cancer diagnosis, his turbulent medical treatments and recoveries, relapses and his self-assessed life expectancy. However, each period corresponds to the temporal understanding of the writer and is dragged or speeded up in his mind depending on how he has taken the news and how he has tried to deal with them. In other words, the length of the chapters does not show the different stages of Tony's illness in real time, but in the time the writer-narrator has taken to process the aggravating situation. The writer-narrator's anger and denial when he first hears the news make a lengthy chapter on *The Unfortunates* scale. He refuses to even think about Tony's health or feelings and focuses on his irritation that Tony and June would be absent from the publication party for his book instead. It takes him four more pages to return to Tony's health instead of his book and, unlike the optimistic Tony, to prepare himself for the worst: “if one single cell escaped to another part of the body, by insinuating itself into the bloodstream, then it would grow and multiply there too.”<sup>203</sup> Nonetheless, it takes him a while to understand Tony's normal-looking appearance does not

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<sup>203</sup> *The Unfortunates* The ❄️ section 8

necessarily mean recovery (6 pages): “Again I could not understand his tiredness, accepted that he was tired, but he looked the same, for the first time I realized it was serious, it was inside him, unseen, he looked the same outwardly.”<sup>204</sup> The shocking revelation of Tony’s imminent death does not take more than two pages: “Yet I could see he was very/ ill at ease, in his mind, he was no longer concentrated on ideas, arguments with the same dedication.”<sup>205</sup> The rest of the page, which was left blank, reflects the narrator’s blank mind and numb feeling.

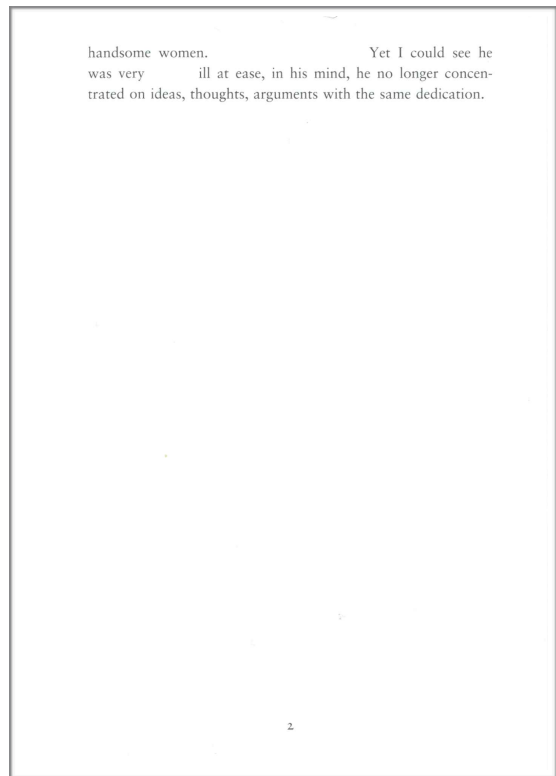



Figure III.2.3.P.5


*The Unfortunates*

B. S. Johnson

The  section 2

Tony’s death is restricted to a section of eleven lines, the shortest chapter of the book: “[...] there was no need for us to come down now, on Sunday, for he had died that evening, had not recovered consciousness that morning from his sleep [...]”<sup>206</sup> Tony’s death is revealed in a page-long chapter: “We were late for the funeral [...]”<sup>207</sup> In short, the disintegration of the book symbolically represents the deterioration of Tony’s health as if his body was falling to pieces although the writer-narrator tries hard to keep his memory alive in his mind.

Remembering a dear departed is, in a way, an attempt to bring them back to life or “keep the memory alive.” The writer-narrator’s endeavor to give a complete picture of Tony is not merely an elegy for a dear friend, but a symbolic effort to bring him back. The writer-narrator desperately tries to remember all the details and gather all the pieces to resurrect Tony in his work. Arriving in a city

<sup>204</sup> *The Unfortunates* The  section 6

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid* The  section 2

<sup>206</sup> *Ibid* The  section, 1

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid*, The  section, 1

filled with their happy and painful memories, the writer-narrator realizes that the wound has not healed yet and seeks comfort in his memories. This way, he may understand death and his own reaction to loss. The urge is so powerful and the memory still so painful that he ignores his “Let the dead live with the dead [...]” rule<sup>208</sup> and even consciously employs clichés and sentimentalizations, condemnable actions

I sentimentalize again, the past is always to be sentimentalized, inevitably, everything about him I see now in the light of what happened later, his slow disintegration, his death. The waves of the past batter at the sea defenses of my sandy sanity, need to be safely pictured, still, romanticized, prettified. He

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Figure III.2.3.P.6


*The Unfortunates*

B. S. Johnson

The  section, 2

in his opinion, to bring Tony back: “I sentimentalize again, the past is always to be sentimentalized, inevitably, everything about him I see now in the light of what happened later, his slow disintegration, his death. The waves of the past batter at the sea defenses of my sandy sanity, need to be freely pictured, still romanticized, petrified. He / used to catch a bus, [...]”<sup>209</sup>

Despite his meticulous approach to remembering, the writer-narrator admits to his inability to reach a holistic picture. Incomplete images and bits of memories are all that is left of his friendship with Tony. His search for meaning and comfort has been in vain. The confusion, the anger and the pain are still there, the inheritance of the dead for the living: “Can any death be meaningful? / Or meaningless? / Are these terms one can use about death? / I don’t know, I just feel the pain, the pain.”<sup>210</sup> He accepts the loss and admits that his search to find a transcendental meaning in Tony’s death has been futile and concludes the book, which was started with the hope to bring Tony back to life on paper, on a sorrowful note: “Not how he died, not what he died of, even less why he died, are of concern, to me, only the fact that he did die, he is dead, is important: the loss to me, to us.”<sup>211</sup> Life will go on, but the pain will not subside. That may be the reason why the last sentence was left unpunctuated.

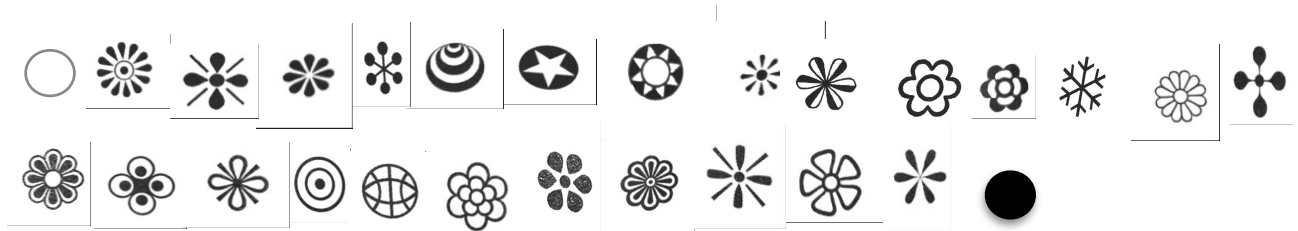
<sup>208</sup> *The Unfortunates*, The  section, 2

<sup>209</sup> *Ibid*, The  section, 2

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid*, The last chapter, 4

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid*, The last chapter, 6

The writer-narrator's self-admitted defeat turns this nostalgic look at the past into an elegy for Tony. The shape of the book reminds the readers of a coffin. The unbound pages suggest the disintegration of Tony's body and the obfuscation of his memories. Different asterisks that mark the beginning of each chapter suggest beautiful flowers to cover Tony's grave day and night, in summer or winter.



The white circle that opens the first chapter turns to black in the last one. Closing the box, the readers close the casket and the writer-narrator buries Tony and his memories. The attempt to revive Tony or to find consolation is unsuccessful and it is the time to “Let the dead live with the dead! In any case it does not matter, now his death makes so much irrelevant.”<sup>212</sup> Johnson's elegy and mourning for his friend is finally done. Except it isn't!

The writer-narrator's supposedly unsuccessful attempt in portraying his departed friend in an elegy has led to an outstanding experimental novel. *The Unfortunates* unconventional form lets the readers experience the rush of memories as the writer did, follow his train of thought and feel his emotions. The random order of the chapters in addition to the non-linear presentation of the memories which evoke other memories and follow no order enable the readers to picture Tony exactly as the writer-narrator remembers him, sometimes a distinctive image, sometimes blurry on the edge with missing details, sometimes superimposed on other events and people, and sometimes fading from a memory. There is no way that the readers remember the events in the same order that they have read them, whatever the order was. This task becomes even more difficult in the second or the subsequent readings as the readers' memory of the first reading also comes into operation. The form intensifies the experience of uncertainty and confusion and encourages the readers who

<sup>212</sup> *The Unfortunates*, The last chapter, 4



are desperate for cohesion to reconstruct the past themselves, not unlike the writer-narrator. Inducing such powerful feelings in the readers is a great achievement for a novel. But that is not all.

The writer-narrator and Tony had another relationship beside their friendship. The novel distinctly refers to their writer-critic discussions on criticism and the art of novel. As an academic, Tony considers the criticism of literature an independent field of study, “a discipline of the highest kind in itself,” while the writer-narrator vehemently disagrees: “to me, I told him, the only use of criticism was if it helped people to write better books.”<sup>213</sup> Their disagreement makes Tony challenge the writer to show him the novel as he is writing it, so he had the chance to help the writer-narrator improve his novel. The writer-narrator wistfully remembers the period as “a fertile one, it seemed the nearer Finals came, the more I wanted to write myself: the more involved I became with other people’s crap, the more I wanted nothing more than to get on with crap.”<sup>214</sup> The writer-narrator’s first reaction to Tony’s cancer news shows that he associates Tony with writing. He confesses that his novel, the one he wrote with Tony’s collaboration, was the first thing he thought of upon hearing about Tony’s illness. As if he takes it personally, he feels anger towards Tony to be too sick to come for the publication party for the novel which “was so much better for his work on it, for his attention to it. It was dedicated to [Tony and June]! This shocked me, I was annoyed, angry even, that he that both of them, should find any excuse whatsoever for missing something so important [...] *it made me think almost that he was backing out of his support for the book [...]*”<sup>215</sup> (my italics). Considering that losing Tony equals losing his critic for the writer-narrator, the person who helped him write better books, it is not surprising that his homage to Tony is to write a good novel, as if to acknowledge Tony’s significance in his writing since “everything [Tony] espoused was always the best of its kind.”<sup>216</sup> Writing one of the best novels he could, the writer pays tribute to Tony’s role in his writing. At the same time, the writer-narrator takes Tony’s comment on the possibility of

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<sup>213</sup> *The Unfortunates*, The  section 1

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid*, 2

<sup>215</sup> *Ibid*, The  section 4

<sup>216</sup> *Ibid*, The  section 7

improvement provided the critic is involved in the process of writing and puts it into practice.

Despite being presented as a finalized version, *The Unfortunates* is designed to be a work in progress. In spite of the clear beginning and ending, the chapters in between follow no specific order as if they were incomplete and the writer-narrator was waiting for the final comments of the critic to finalize the novel. The fragmentary nature of the novel makes it flexible to change. The chapters may move. Paragraphs may be put aside. That may be the reason why the chapters are not numbered and the paragraphs seem to follow no specific order. Everything and anything is possible. The writer-narrator has formed a mental image of the significance of Tony's loss on his work by designing a novel that is waiting for a critical reading to improve and end. The brilliant choice of form indicates the profound loss that the writer-narrator feels and at the same time suggests a solution: to replace that particular reading which was supposed to elevate the quality of the novel with infinite possible readings. In his search for the critic he has lost, the writer-narrator turns his readers into critics.

*The Unfortunates*, like any other metafiction, is about writing, albeit in a discreet manner. Discussing the process of writing and commenting on the novel have been the manifestation of the self-reflexive novel for long. *The Unfortunates* takes one step further by displaying its self-awareness through form and medium. The materiality of the book, which has rarely been the subject of metafiction, becomes the focal point of the novel and the writer skilfully benefits from the medium to develop the theme(s) and foreground the readers' role in developing a novel. The loose chapters provide the readers with the opportunity to practice being a reader, a critic, or a writer.

The familiar printed book induces a sense of linearity even in non-linear narratives. Despite the interruptions, the digression, the linguistic experiments, and the optional narrative paths, metafiction is usually presented in a linear manner. The book begins at the first page and ends at the last one. The writers remind the readers of the fictionality of the story and expose the mechanics of novel writing. The readers are expected to take an active interest and fill in the gaps although the

narrative is fixed on paper and reader participation happens on the language level. In a way, the printed book is the proof that the novel has been finalized and the readers have no control over the plot of the narrative that already exists on paper, except for the parts that the writer has decided to withhold or leave unclear. The meta-dimension which has been vaguely defined as self-conscious happens on the language level in most metafiction. *The Unfortunates* is a breakthrough among metafictional novels from this viewpoint.

The subject of *The Unfortunates* delineates its metafictional dimension. First, the characters that inhabit the world of the book have been fictionalized, but are not intrinsically fictional. This world is real — or has been — and the events have actually happened. That is not to say that *The Unfortunates* is a precise account of what happened. It is narrated from a temporal distance and from a writer's point of view. The conventional consciousness of fictionality may not be applicable here. Although as the book proves, it is possible that the passage of time has altered some details in the writer's mind or that the writer has taken some dramatic license. Secondly, the writer clearly states from the beginning that he has lived the events. Since the story is narrated by the writer himself, he does not need to interrupt to discuss his techniques. Writing is part of his identity and always present in his thoughts. Do these points disqualify *The Unfortunates* from being included in the genre? My answer is negative. *The Unfortunates* is a metafiction and a good one at that, but it reveals its self-consciousness in a different manner from the conventional metafiction.

To explain why I consider *The Unfortunates* a metafiction, I would like to review Werner Wolf's definition of metazaition. According to Wolf, metazaition does not specifically apply to fiction and can be applied to all aspects of human life and language provided the self-reflexivity is expressed or reflected on through a movement from a primary cognitive level to a higher one. This transition among the communicative levels may occur through language, the primary communicative medium or any other media. Any piece of art or any medium is liable to have a meta-dimension which guarantees its displacement among the media or its simultaneous existence

in two or more different media. The meta-dimension turns the piece into a multimedia entity of sorts. Wolf in *Metareference Among Media* adds new examples such as meta-music and meta-painting to the common examples such as meta-theater and meta-cinema. From this point of view, the awareness of the medium is as crucial to a meta-dimensional piece as self-awareness. A work of art with a meta-dimension is conscious of its status as a fabrication as well as of the medium it was presented in, be it verbal, visual, or musical, or a combination of all.

*The Unfortunates* is not the first novel that acknowledges the transmedia features of books and realizes the potential of the medium to develop the theme, though it is one of the most successful ones. Books are potentially multimedia entities. They have the potential to incorporate the verbal and the visual on a single page, but *The Unfortunates* shifts the focus from the surface of the page to the book itself, and chooses to expose its meta-dimension not through the language, but through the secondary medium of presentation. As mentioned earlier, *The Unfortunates* has realized several metaphors by defamiliarizing the book. The structure denotes how the mind functions when remembering the past, the profound loss the writer-narrator experiences, the deterioration of Tony's health and the disintegration of his body and last but not least, the construction of a novel.

Unlike the metafiction studied earlier in which the process of metazaition happens on the linguistic level, *The Unfortunates* reflects on the writing process through the medium. The characters have external equivalents and the writer has no intention to disguise them under fictional cloaks. Therefore, their link to the real world is so strong that exposing the poorly disguised fictionality would defy the purpose. This is not to deny the fictionality of the story because the novel is a representation of the events and characters in the narrator's mind, affected by his sorrow and filtered due to his profession as a novelist. An uncited quotation from *Tristram Shandy* on the left side of *The Unfortunates* box confirms this reading: "I will tell you in three words what the book is. — It is a history. — A history! /of who? what? where? Don't hurry yourself — *It is a history—book,*

/ Sir (which may possibly recommend it to the world) of what passes in a man's own mind.<sup>217</sup>

Therefore, the novel concentrates on the process of the construction of a novel and reflects on the significance of the writer, the readers and the critic by deconstructing the medium.

As mentioned earlier, *The Unfortunates* trusts the readers with the fragments of the novel and demands active readings to be comprehensible. The conventional metafiction in which the writer attracts the readers' attention to the important aspects of writing and underscores the thematically significant points trains

the readers to read analytically.

Experimenting with the medium,

*The Unfortunates* leaves no clues for

the readers, apart from the

beginning and the ending and asks

the readers to attentively participate

in constructing the plot. The

unbound chapters in addition to the

non-linear narrative multiply the

possible storylines infinitely. The novel has clearly been designed for multiple readings as the non-

linear narrative and disruptive structures impede fluent reading the first time. The readers who

respond to the novel's mournful challenge are required to create their own reading approach through

ordering the chapters. If *Albert Angelo* presents a Development section and shows how a writer

develops the plot, *The Unfortunates* supplies the readers with a beginning and an ending point and

the material in between and asks them to get from point A to point B.

While the readers may choose to read the chapters as they have received them or order them according to the length or the asterisk on top the first time, each reader makes his own internal

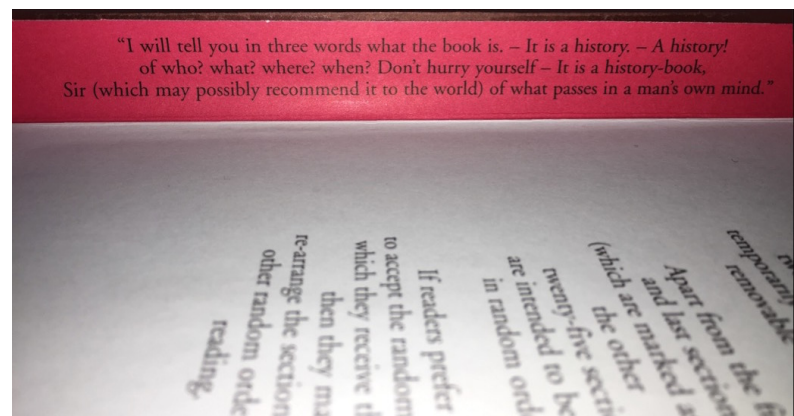


Figure II.2.3.P.7

*The Unfortunates*

B. S. Johnson

The box

<sup>217</sup> *The Unfortunates*, The quotation on the left side of the box [My italics]

connections between chapters when reading them the second time and writes his own story. One may follow Tony's declining health chronologically. The other may choose the writer-narrator as the protagonist of his story and create a plot line based on his personal life and relationships with Wendy and Ginny. The readers need to take a critical stance at the same time and justify the reason why they chose to put the chapter marked by a flower resembling a snowflake after the chapter that was marked by a flower resembling the sun.

It is noteworthy that the readers find more internal links in each reading and build their own interrelated network. Each chapter can easily be connected to the others through an event, a character or even a repetitive phrase. Finding the internal links helps readers order and re-order the chapters. The variety of options is so tempting that the readers cannot help but re-read in order to make new storylines. Although the novel has been already written, the structures give readers the opportunity to experience being a writer and a critic besides being a reader. *The Unfortunates* makes it impossible for the readers to forget they are reading and constructing a novel and even provides them with the practical drills such as developing storylines based on a single image. In brief, *The Unfortunates* realizes Fowles' argument on the writer as a God-like figure who bestows freedom upon his characters and the readers. The writer keeps his authority while the readers get to participate in composing a novel. The readers are emboldened to develop the novel and "make it better." Mourning the loss of his critic, Johnson turns all his readers into critics while respectfully confirming Tony's belief in the significance of criticism in literary studies and writing. He has composed the perfect elegy.

### **III.3 Metafiction: an extended definition**

*The Unfortunates* approaches self-reflexivity from a new point of view. The narrative is conscious of not only the text, but also of the medium of presentation. The experimentation with the

materiality of the book constantly reminds the readers of the fabricated nature of the novel and its in-progress status. What is more, the book provides an exquisite example of a writerly text, a text that can be reorganized and consequently re-interpreted by the reader. The unbound chapters and the non-linear narrative demand that the readers find internal connections among the fragmented texts and the chapters and bind the bits of narrative. Realizing an intertextual network, the readers develop their own narratives without defying the authority of the writer who has already determined the beginning and the ending, and developed the characters. Readers are permitted to affect the plot by moving the events, an action similar to what happens in their minds after finishing a book, within memory of the story. *The Unfortunates* is not merely concerned with how the writer-narrator's mind functions, but also how the readers remember what they have read. As is common with metafiction, decomposing the narrative — and the book in this case — into its basic elements provides the readers with a better understanding of the mechanics and encourages them to experience active reading, analyzing, and developing the story. Reading such a book is not unlike authoring a text or critical reading. Thus, the readers are required to plan their reading strategy. The strategies in turn lead to variations of the story and the plenitude of interpretations, the ultimate goal of any metafiction. More importantly, *The Unfortunates* broadens the definition of self-reflexive narrative by shedding light on a new dimension of self-reflexivity.

As presented so far, the most important features of metafiction are self-consciousness and reader-centrality. Metafiction is a self-aware narrative in which the text, the process of fiction writing, the critical theory, the narratological concepts such as writer, reader or critic are as significant in developing the theme as the unfolding plot. The narrative is aware of its fictionality and usually exposes it through flaunting the non-linearity of the narrative and expects the readers to take action and compose the fragmentary fiction. Having studied *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *Albert Angelo*, *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry*, *House Mother Normal*, and *The Unfortunates* with an eye on the basic definition of metafiction, I would like to give a rather expanded definition of the term in order to return to my argument about the consanguinity of hyperfiction and

metafiction.

The definition of self-consciousness — or the degree of narcissism — in metafiction is of great importance. The self-reflexivity of metafiction concerns all aspects of writing, including the language and the medium. Metafiction often reveals its awareness of its fabricated status through language, its primary medium of communication. The writer or his personas interrupt the narrative to provide extra information or evaluate part of the narrative. The characters reveal their knowledge of the world in construction and as a consequence, before the readers get a chance to get immersed in the story, the illusion of the reality is broken.

Other metafiction, such as *The Unfortunates*, choose to expose their constructed nature and draw the readers' attention to the process of composition through the medium. Experimenting with the materiality of the page, the graphic surface and the layout are among the common features of such metafiction. The metafiction that display awareness of both fiction and medium are already combining the language, the first medium of communication, with another medium of representation. The narratives whose themes are developed through the medium as well as the language, the memory function in *The Unfortunates* for instance, are already multimedia entities. *House Mother Normal* is another example. Although the novel does not induce radical modifications in the medium like *The Unfortunates*, the usage of typefaces, blanks and punctuation brings the themes to life. The combination of the visual and the verbal, the medium and the language in such experimental novels demonstrates the possibility of the fusion of media — a very limited example in both books, which reveals the potential nonetheless — and a probability of transference among the media.

The readers also have a significant role in the manifestation of the narcissistic inclinations of metafiction. The self-awareness of metafiction is not merely for the sake of self-awareness, but for the readers. One of the primary objectives of exposing the process of writing is to show the readers how a novel is written and what to pay attention to while reading fiction. The writer of metafiction



goes out of his way to write a novel, predict how it is going to be read and show the readers how to analyze it. The writer adopts the roles of writer, reader and critic at the same time in order to increase the readers' knowledge of the process of fiction-writing and encourage critical readings. Therefore, metafiction is self-reflexive, not self-obsessed like a true narcissist. The purpose of the self-reflection is to affect the readers' conception of novel-writing and trigger a variety of reading strategies. The (self-)reflection is produced for the readers and with the hope that the message will be echoed through them. Contrary to the mythological Narcissus and Echo, the self-representation is produced *for* Echo in this critical fairytale. That is why, unlike its namesake, who died to be united with his "reflection" in the river, the narcissistic narrative relives in each "echo."

The third important factor in metafiction besides the text itself and the reader is the writer. Although metafiction grants the readers more freedom in comparison to the conventional novel and demands that they participate, question, alternate and interpret, the writer is never absent from the text even when he stops commenting. The metafiction which relies on the language to convey its self-awareness benefits from an active and rather talkative writer or writer-character who interrupts, guides, comments and generally leads the readers along. The metafiction that focuses on the medium to represent its self-awareness makes it impossible for the readers to forget the (wo)man who has created all the designs, layouts and planned for the pieces of the puzzle the readers try to complete. In both cases, the curious readers strive to find the best reading strategy which would be an impossible task if the hidden clues that the writer has placed in the narrative and in the medium were not there. The self-aware novel, in short, is conscious of the text, the medium, as well as of the reader, and the writer.

To conclude, self-awareness in metafiction can be classified in three categories: a) the awareness of the text as a fabrication and consequently exposing the text as an intertextual construction that leads to the awareness of the writer's presence usually foregrounded through the non-linear narrative; b) the awareness of the readers' role and accordingly the reliance on the

readers to reach a plausible interpretation to the point that the text may seem incoherent at first glance, and c) the consciousness of the medium which facilitates the construction of intertextual — in the case of *The Unfortunates* multimedia — texts and enables the text to be spread and transported among the media. Metafiction promotes non-linear narratives because fragmentary narratives facilitate the focus on the process of writing, the emphasis on the intertextual nature of the text and breaking the illusion of reality. In addition, the writer may benefit from the non-linearity of the narrative to provide the readers with different options in following the storylines. The fragmentary narrative may be presented via media other than the language, the graphic surface of an opening for example, in order to intensify the experience. It requires active readers who take the challenge of designing their own reading strategy, putting the pieces together and reaching a comprehensible version of the story. In short, the self-reflexivity of metafiction assigns three specific features to this type of fiction: non-linearity, reader-centrality and medium-consciousness. The following section will study the mentioned concepts in *Lies*, a short hyperfiction by Rick Pryll.

### **III.4 Hyperfiction: the progeny of metafiction**

#### **II.4.1 Hyperfiction, non-linearity**

##### **II.4.1.1 *Lies*, an Introduction**

*Lies* by Rick Pryll is about relationships and betrayal. After the first line that serves as an epigraph, “You will never truly understand a person until you understand her lies,”<sup>218</sup> the readers access the opening, “Lies tell you more about a person than the truth does. Lies tell you what a person wants to be, rather than what they are. Lies are dreams, lies are fantasy. Who wants to live

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<sup>218</sup> Pryll, Rick. “Lies.” [Http://benz.nchu.edu.tw](http://benz.nchu.edu.tw). N.p., May 1992. Web. 10 Aug. 2015. <[http%3A%2F%2Fbenz.nchu.edu.tw%2F~garden%2Fflies.html](http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/flies.html)>.

the truth, when you can live a lie?”<sup>219</sup> Then they get two options, Truth or Lies and can follow the story as they wish.

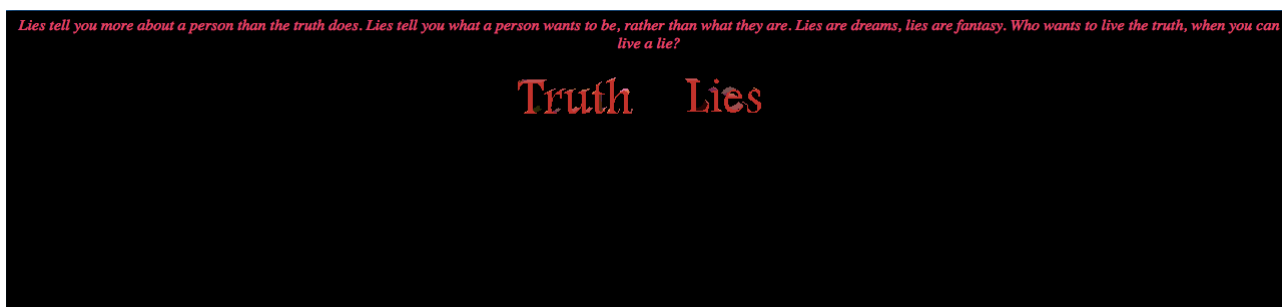


Figure III.4.1.1.P.1

*Lies*

Rick Pryll

Following the truth choices, the narrator meets an unnamed woman, usually referred to as “her.” The story opens on the night of their one-year anniversary when they dance and enjoy rum and coke. The narrator explains that although they live together and are getting serious, they had summer lovers when they were apart last summer. The narrator introduces his lover, a fiery red haired woman named Gabriella, but at this point the writer interrupts: “This card is a little hint. The author reaches down into his diorama and changes the course of everything”<sup>220</sup> and ends the story: “This is the way the story ends: The simple truth is that the two main characters find that they can be happy together despite the mistakes they both made over the summer. They decide to move in together. They argue occasionally.”<sup>221</sup> The ending is so abrupt that the readers are most likely to choose to start over as the last link suggests: “This ending is a bit too anti-climatic. I want to try again.”<sup>222</sup>

The frustrated readers, who choose to start over, will experience a completely different story. True to its epigraph, *Lies* offers much more insight into the characters if the readers follow the Lies

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<sup>219</sup> *Lies*, 1 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies1.html>>

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid*, 39 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies39.html>>

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid*, 32 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies32.html>>

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid*, 32 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies32.html>>

options. While the plot of the Lies section overlaps with Truth from time to time, one bit of information completely changes the readers' perception of the story: "Oh, I should explain. We have code words for lying. We call it 'dancing.' And to 'enjoy rums and cokes' is to enjoy telling the other about your lies and crying over it. These codes help us to be more open with each other. It's hard to tell someone that they're lying, but it's easy to say, 'You're dancing.'"<sup>223</sup> The narrator takes the matter even further when explaining that the phrase "summer lovers" is the code for journals and "cheating" for the narrator and his lover means to write in their journals. To make the narrative even more complicated, the narrator and his lover give their journals human characteristics: "Her summer lover was Antoine. Mine was Gabriella. Antoine is tall and dark, he rides a motorcycle and only wears white t-shirts and blue jeans. He is a writer and he cries a lot. Gabriella is a redhead. She is younger than I am, she listens, but she doesn't talk much."<sup>224</sup> But in the next card, the narrator finds two letters to himself and Antoine is suddenly personified: "Both letters had originally been written in her journal, but had been torn out. The letter to me described all the things she had done over the summer, and the letter to Antoine explained all of the lies she was telling me to cover for him. She was laughing at me, with him. I found both letters this morning."<sup>225</sup> The same goes for Gabriella who now the narrator claims to have slept with three times. The same card can be accessed from the Truth section. The Lies storyline ends with a quote from the narrator who has just woken up and corresponds to the beginning of the Truth section in which he met a black haired woman, "her," in a bar and they danced together. Mind that this is the first time that the content of a card appears in quotation marks:

"I awoke and turned over to try and determine where I was. An unfamiliar bed, against an unfamiliar gray wall. The bed was quite large. I was lying on the left side of the bed, and the right side of the bed radiated warmth. The right top corner of the blanket was turned down, as if someone has just climbed out. I heard someone humming in the next room. I

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<sup>223</sup> "Lies," 13 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies13.html>>

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid*, 15 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies15.html>>

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid*, 35 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies35.html>>

imagined a red-headed woman. On the night table, was a familiar sight, my journal. The door opened slowly. Beautiful long black hair. ‘We had quite a night. This morning you just completely passed out on me.’”<sup>226</sup>

As I wrote my idea for the last scene in my journal, I wondered if the end left too many questions unanswered.

This time “The End” appears on the card, but is followed by a link reading “Go back to the beginning.”<sup>227</sup> There is also another option to randomly read Truth or Lies that differs from reader to reader. Therefore, I will not focus on the random reading strategy.

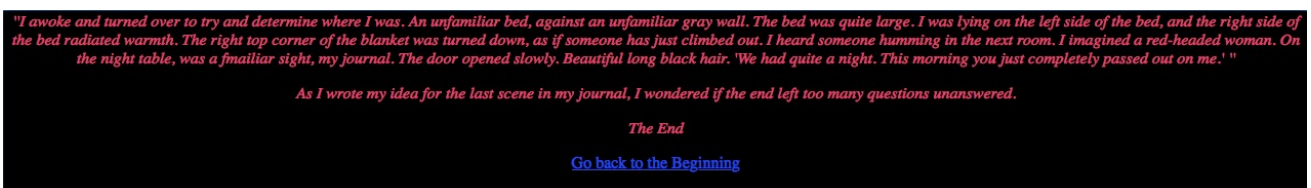


Figure III.4.1.1.P.2

*Lies*

Rick Pryll

### III.4.1.2 Literally intertextual

Links are used as first means of exposing expose the non-linearity of the narrative in *Lies*. The readers receive the story in portions: a line, a paragraph or a combination or both. Except the first and the second card that are directly linked, the readers arrive at forking paths of Truth or Lies that connect each card to the next depending on the readers’ choice. This way, the readers determine the direction of the reading. The options visually state that the narrative is presented in bits and indicate that the story is in progress at the same time as the reading is taking place. In other words, it is the reading that makes a story because before choosing among the fragments, the story exists but in disarrayed lines and paragraphs. The reading method the readers adopt is of great significance in constructing a plot. One may argue that first-time readers do not know of the content of the subsequent cards and therefore, cannot be held responsible for how the story unfolds. That is undoubtedly true about the first reading. However, hyperfiction and *Lies* in particular are designed

<sup>226</sup> Quotation marks exist in the original.

<sup>227</sup> *Lies*, 42 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies42.html>>

to be read more than once. The unanticipated ending that follows the linear choices of the Truth option is an indisputable example of how an undeveloped plot makes the readers turn back to the beginning of the fiction. The text presumably expects Truth to be the first choice of most readers and attempts to encourage new readings by providing an unsatisfactory ending. The readers do not merely seek an ending. They wish to see how the story develops toward the said ending. Even the readers who read the ending first, usually read the book afterwards to see how the ending has been justified through the arrangement of the events in the story. Therefore, encouraging multiple readings is one of the objectives of the text and the dual option each card presents seems to be the perfect technique to promote various readings.

### **III.4.1.3 The graphic surface**

#### **III.4.1.3.1 Layout**

The links are not the only device to visually expose the non-linear features of the narrative. The alignment of the text in the center, the space between the lines, the space between the last line and the Truth or Lies options whose font are exaggeratedly bigger and the noticeable space, which has been left after the options, are also significant in displaying the discontinuity of the narrative.

The alignment of the text, especially when the lines are short, emphasizes the negative space before and after the sentence, a visual absence. The alignment gives the text the unusual look of an overturned pyramid or a deformed diamond. The length of the last line in comparison with the brevity of the options draws attention to Truth or Lies while at the same time forms an arrow that points toward the bottom of the page, the space left black and blank which covers at least two-thirds of the page. Furthermore, the space between the lines varies. In the last card for instance, the space between the first paragraph and the last sentence is indicative of the shift between two narrative voices. The space also displays a change in the diegetic level. In the card where the narrator

explains how he has met “her” in a dance club, for example, the question “Would you like another?”<sup>228</sup> that appears separately in a different line interrupts his train of thought. The line that seems to be spoken by a third person from the diegetic level —perhaps the bar keeper —brings the narrator out of his reminiscence presented on a hypodiegetic level.

Figure III.4.1.3.1.P.1

*Lies*  
Rick Pryll



### III.4.1.3.2 Font and color

The font and the color also extend the intricate web of meaning in *Lies*. As italics are often used to emphasize words and phrases in a larger textual context, the completely italicized story implies the text is an extract from another extended text. This way, *Lies* draws attention to its fragmentary nature, and suggests that parts of the story are lost or have remained untold. The combination of truth, lies, and the untold or lost parts, which makes reader participation an essential element in completing the story, expands the interpretive discussion about a story of lies and deceit to a story about the nature of fiction.

The contrast between the aggressive red that appears against a black background with the familiar black on white of books affects readers in different ways. Although the first interpretation of the color symbolism is naturally love (red) vs. lust (black), I would like to draw attention to the unknown depth that the mysterious black displays. The red lines scratch the surface of many

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<sup>228</sup> “*Lies*,” 16 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies16.html>

unexplored stories which lie underneath. Besides the passion, the violence, and the rage, the color pattern also points to the stories that lurk in the dark and invite the readers to read *Lies* keeping in mind that an abundance of untold fragments are concealed in the black; the stories the readers' imagination produces; the stories that lie beneath the surface.

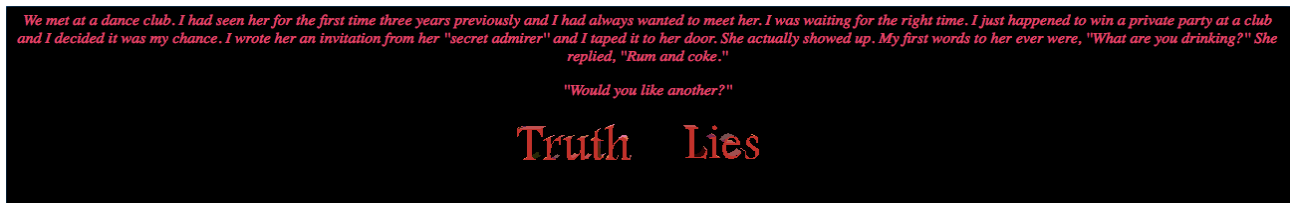


Figure III.4.1.3.2.P.1

*Lies*

Rick Pryll

#### **III.4.1.4 The invisible intertextual web**

##### **III.4.1.4.1 Temporal confusion**

Although the visual devices such as spacing and alignment are employed to indicate the non-linearity of the narrative, they only reinforce the impact of the narrative. The story is a reminiscence of a love affair and, like *The Unfortunates*, another example of memory's failures and functions. Thus, the events do not appear in temporal order, but as the narrator remembers them. Temporal conjunctions are impractical and of little significance since the temporal connections between the extracts have been lost. For instance, the present time against which the past is logically measured is never clearly stated. While the narrator mentions that the affair happened last summer, he fails to mention how long ago "last summer" exactly was and consequently, how fresh his memory is. Moreover, the obscurity of the present time denies the readers the historical context while giving it an atemporal dimension. The story may have happened in the 60s or the 90s.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> The copy right stamp indicates 1994, and suggests that the story was completed in 1990s.



Readers are allowed to bring historical background to the text and fill in the impressive blanks, black holes in this case, with their own assumptions.

The inefficiency, or in some cases, the total absence of temporal indicators in addition to occasionally two different events in the same card make it impossible for the readers to order the cards chronologically or reach any “correct” order. Even the readers who cheat and follow the numbers presented in the web address will get more than one probability to order the cards. This is not merely because of the random presentation of the narrative and the confusion that the lack of temporal indicators create, but also due to the reliability aspect that the choice between truth or lies brings to the story.

The readers of *Lies* do not simply create a plot by ordering the events, but they are also required to evaluate the accuracy of the events they choose. Although the cards already appear under Truth or Lies, the content and the word games offered in both sections —mostly under Lies — complicate the process. If the readers read the Truth cards consecutively to establish a background against which they may evaluate the narrator’s lies, the Lies cards will surprise them constantly and change their perception of the story at each turn. The first Truth card, for instance, reads:

She and I have been seeing each other for a whole year, as of yesterday. We celebrated by *dancing and drinking rums and cokes*. We live together now, and things are getting serious. We live with our lies, *we dance with our lies* and sometimes they make us cry. Kind of funny, really. *To have journals in our apartment full of lies*, to have these separate lives within our life together.<sup>230</sup>

The background information the narrator offers describes a typical couple. What is unusual about a couple dancing or drinking rum and coke after all? Even the slightly embellished description of “apartments full of lies” does not reveal something other than ordinary although it sets the tone for

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<sup>230</sup> “Lies,” 12 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies12.html>> The italics are mine.

the story of betrayal and deceit that follows after the first card. It is not until the readers come across a certain card in the Lies section that their understanding of the first card is completely challenged:

Oh, I should explain. We have code words for lying. We call it “dancing.” And to “enjoy rums and cokes” is to enjoy telling the other about your lies and crying over it. These codes help us to be more open with each other. It's hard to tell someone that they're lying, but it's easy to say, “You're dancing.”<sup>231</sup>

Replacing the words, the readers' understanding of the first Truth card will completely change. Let's read the extract again: “She and I have been seeing each other for a whole year, as of yesterday. We celebrated by *lying* and *enjoyed telling the other about our lies and crying over them*. We live together now, and things are getting serious. We live with our lies, we *lie* with our lies and sometimes they make us cry. Kind of funny, really. To have journals in our apartment full of lies, to have these separate lives within our life together.” Although having code words is different from lying, the discovery that the words on the Truth cards do not really mean what the readers expect them to mean takes the story to another level and not only questions the credibility of the Truth section, but also raises questions about the nature of truth.

Not fully recovered from the realization that the whole Truth section may be a lie, the readers face another revelation in the very next card of Lies section:

There are other codes too. “Summer Lover” is actually the names we call our journals. It started when she and I started writing letters to each other. When we were writing to each other, we were spending time together. When we were writing in our journals, we were “cheating” on each other. “Sleeping with” our summer lovers meant fantasizing about sex in our journals. She was the first to give her journal human characteristics.<sup>232</sup>

At this point, the readers have no choice but to re-read everything they have already read in order to reduce the confusion. However, the re-readings raise even more questions as the readers have to decide where to draw the line and take the words literally. For instance, the couple met at a bar.

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<sup>231</sup> “Lies,” 13 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies13.html>>

<sup>232</sup> “Lies,” 14 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies14.html>>

They danced and enjoyed rum and coke. Does it mean that they have lied to each other from the moment they met in the bar or did they simply dance? Moreover, it is also possible to apply the code word in reverse. For instance, when the narrator confesses to sleeping with Gabriella —keep in mind that Gabriella is his “summer lover” — he may simply mean “to write in his journal.” The passage which explains that the couple gave their journals human characteristics reinforces this assumption. However, accepting the journals (summer lovers) as Antoine and Gabriella, questions the readers’ very first impression of the story as a tale of infidelity. If the code words have been used in the Truth section, the betrayal the narrator talks about has never happened, even though the couple may have thought about it during the time they were separated. But again it is for the readers to decide whether the thought of betrayal is as appalling as the act itself.

Progressing in the Lies section, the readers need to go back and forth between the cards in both Truth and Lies sections in order to re-read and revise. Although underlining the non-linearity of the story is clearly one of the objectives, the constant motion follows two more goals. First, the readers lose track of the events like the narrator. Remembering what they read in detail becomes very difficult if not impossible not only because of the commute, but also due to the fact that the code words create a whole different web of meaning. Thus, the story breaks into fragments in the readers’ minds and they can never be sure which parts they have read and which parts they have added themselves. Trying to remember what they actually read resembles the narrator’s attempt to remember what happened. The picture is always blurry and the readers go through what the narrator experiences. It is not surprising that the background color of *Lies* is black, the color of oblivion among other interpretations. The truth of what happened becomes more and more inaccessible under such circumstances. After a while, the reader will not remember — or care — which segments are labeled Truth and which Lies. What is important is to explore and fabricate a good story.

### III.4.2 Hyperfiction: medium-consciousness

#### III.4.2.1 Using the medium to develop the themes, fragments and memory

Exposing the non-linearity of the text through the medium is not the only example of *Lies*' focus on the medium of presentation. *Lies* benefits from its chunk-style medium to develop the story thematically and comment on the nature of truth. The non-linear itinerary of *Lies* imitates the process of recalling past memories. The short extracts focus on one point or image and avoid extensive commentaries or descriptions. The atemporality of the story and the omission of the obvious time conjunctions suggest fading memories. The constant movement between the fragments creates temporal confusion associated with the passage of time and emphasizes that memories do not appear in chronological order. Memories are forgotten, altered, displaced or replaced over the years. Details fade and core memories may be slightly modified. The mind sometimes unconsciously disguises painful or unpleasant memories under particular circumstances. In short, memories are disconnected and sometimes even false. On the other hand, the fallibility of the memory becomes an advantage when dealing with stories and the realm of fiction. The strategy of the mind to make sense of the fragments or justify the modifications is to fill in the blanks and connect the bits in a comprehensible fashion. The mind turns history into stories, or weaves a web of lies around the solitary fragments of truth and who is to say which part is authentic and which part false?<sup>233</sup>

*Lies* exhausts the potentials of the medium to stimulate the same process in readers' minds. To intensify the effect of the non-linear narrative, *Lies* provides the readers with two different paths. Thus the readers have to put the fragments together. They also need to remember which fragment is considered to be true and which one is a lie to build an interpretation based on the truth and use the lies to analyze the characters because "you will never truly understand a person until you

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<sup>233</sup> The fallibility of memory as one of the most popular themes of hypertextual networks will be studied in length in the discussion about *Memeno* in the following chapter.

understand her lies.”<sup>234</sup> The reality is that the narrative cannot be chronologically ordered. What is more, the readers will soon forget the order and the assigned authenticity of the extracts due to the back and forth movement between the fragments. But that is not all. *Lies* intentionally makes remembering the bits more complicated through using the extract as signifiers for other signifieds and thus unsettles the opposition of truth and lies.

*Lies* creates another referential web that can only exist in language. Assigning new meanings to words and phrases, summer lover as journals for instance, *Lies* destabilizes the readers’ belief in the reliability of the Truth section and problematizes the untruthfulness of lies. To clarify, both sections qualify as truth if the true sentences are coded and euphemistic lies. Moreover, some cards appear in both the Truth and the Lies sections and consequently, are both true and false. It is for the readers to decide how to read them. Lines such as “She came up to me and asked if I wanted to dance. I told her that I don't dance. I drink. She bought me a rum and coke.”<sup>235</sup> can be taken literally or figuratively — “I don’t lie. I drink.” — depending on the readers’ decision. “Actually, I love to dance. She is the one who enjoys rum and coke. Her summer lover doesn’t dance. You know, my summer lover didn’t dance either.”<sup>236</sup> is another good example. The readers may take the literal meaning or replace the words with the code words and read the line as “ Actually, I love to lie. She’s the one who enjoys telling me about her lies and crying over them. Her journal doesn’t lie. My journal doesn’t lie either.” The significance of the line in the story depends on the signified the readers assign to the words. In true Derridean style, each word or phrase becomes a signifier for another and the expansion of the chains of signifiers differs, yet multiplies the meaning. *Lies* clearly demonstrates that hypertext is an imitation of a much more complicated interconnected web that exists in language. If it is the writer/designer who decides how to link the bits in a hypertextual interface, it is finally the readers who connect or dismiss words and pieces, and determine which

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<sup>234</sup> Pryll, Rick. “Lies.” [Http://benz.nchu.edu.tw](http://benz.nchu.edu.tw). N.p., May 1992. Web. 30 August. 2015. <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies.html>>

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid*, 5 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies5.html>>

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid*, 6 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies6.html>>

direction the story takes. This process, though brought to attention in hypertexts, is not specifically a hypertextual feature. Regardless of how the fiction is presented, the story is cut into fragments and later reordered in a comprehensible manner in readers' minds. The flexibility of hypertexts makes it possible to embrace all different versions of the story and steer clear of a "correct" order. The correct order does not exist as the story is taken apart in readers' minds and then re-ordered in the inter-referential network that the readers' minds produce. This may be the reason why memory, its strengths and failures, and the way it functions are the recurrent themes of hyperfictional texts. Trying to imitate how readers approach the story and to predict the reading strategies they may adopt, hyperfiction presents a replica of the invisible network which exists in readers' minds.

#### **III.4.2.2 Multimedia and intermediality**

*Lies* is not an example of advanced hyperfiction. There are no integrated audio-visual material or complicated story paths for instance. In fact, the simplicity of the interface that bears a similarity to the opening of a book encourages the debate over multimedia features in digital hyperfiction and the printed fiction. Accepting *Lies* as a hypertextual fiction is a confirmation of its multimedia qualities, as hypertext in media studies is almost synonymous with hypermedia. There is no doubt that *Lies* combines some features of the digital medium such as direct links, background color, and fonts with the language, the primary medium of fiction, to intensify the impact of the story. Given the book-like view of the interface, *Lies* raises questions about the significance of multimedia in fiction. How different *Lies* is in comparison to a printed fiction and whether the same effect can be achieved on paper will be the focus of this section.

While presented in the digital medium, *Lies* is comparable to a printed book from different aspects. The rigidity of the book imposes an order even if the story does not follow a linear path. The beginning and the ending of the book are marked by the front and the back cover. *Lies* follows

the same model as the first card and the last card(s) are fixed. This aspect of the story brings *The Unfortunates* to mind as the printed equivalent. However, the readers may decide whether the first card is simply a title page containing an epigraph or the beginning of the story. Although the pronoun “her” in the first sentence that states “you will never truly understand a person until you understand her lies” suggests the sentence is part of the story, the readers need to click on “Begin” for the story to officially begin. The abrupt ending simply summarizes the events in a “happily ever after” manner. Being aware of the dissatisfaction that happy endings arouse, *Lies* provides the reader with a way back to the story through the link “This ending is a bit too anti-climactic, I want to try again”<sup>237</sup> to reach a more gratifying ending. This card usually appears if the readers choose Truth consecutively. Moreover, the more conventional readers are likely to take the card marked by “The End” as the real ending. This card will mostly appear if the Lies options are chosen continuously. In fact, the most distinctive difference between a printed story and *Lies* is the imposed links while ironically the reader of a book has more than two options to access the previous or the following pages. *Lies* proves this point perfectly on the linguistic level through weaving an intricate inter-referential web in the language.

The interactive pages of the digital medium enable the readers to access at least two (virtual) pages. *Lies* benefits from the advantages the digital medium provides, the simplicity of adding color or changing the typestyle for instance and affects the readers psychologically through the interface. The combination of links, fragmented narrative and colorful interface draws attention to the medium, and foregrounds the emergence of fiction outside its usual medium of printed books. In other words, *Lies* limits its multimedia features to the skillful union of two media: the written language, the primary medium of communication in fiction proficiently planted in a secondary medium, so the story may benefit from both media to develop its themes. The effortless display of multimedia features of *Lies* and its undeniable resemblance to a book make the readers wonder if

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<sup>237</sup>Pryll, Rick. “Lies.” [Http://benz.nchu.edu.tw. N.p., May 1992. Web. 30 August. 2015. <http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies32.html>](http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies32.html)

the effect is hard to achieve on paper and whether the self-reflexive narrative has already experimented with the same concepts.

The similarity between the virtual cards of *Lies* and an actual opening of a book facilitates the discussion on books as multimedia entities. The overfamiliarity of books usually impedes the recognition of books as the secondary medium in which the primary medium of language is realized. Although most books are still printed in the conventional way with which everybody is familiar, the medium has not exhausted its potential yet. Conventional fiction chooses the primary medium of language over the secondary medium of print and reveals the story almost exclusively through language. Such fiction usually maintains the realist surface of the world the fiction builds and attempts to hide the traces of non-linearity. Experimental fiction, on the other hand, benefits from the possibilities of both media — or more— to develop the story. As foregrounding the medium is the unavoidable consequence of actively involving the secondary medium in the development of the story, such experimental fiction is usually self-reflexive to some extent. The usage of spacing or the color black in *Lies* can be easily traced back to the blank page or the marbled pages of *Tristram Shandy*. Although experimental masterpieces such as Sterne's book that recognize and realize the multimedia potential of the page are not published as frequently as more conventional books due to the difficult printing process and the expensive cost, their rare appearance is the proof that the written fiction intrinsically appears in at least two media: the primary medium of the written language and the secondary medium in which written language is captured. We readers are so accustomed to the familiar look of the book that we almost forget that the fiction we read, either on paper or on the screen, is the realization of oral language on paper ,and is already a multimedia entity. The simple interface of *Lies* in comparison to hyperfictions that include audio-visual clips, variable images or complicated color codes and tpestyles draws a parallel between the fiction on screen and the fiction on paper. This easily proves that the printed fiction is already multimedia and indicates the potential that is left to be explored. Thus, contemporary novels such as Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* and *Only Revolutions* that use



the page as a multimedia screen and attempt to realize its unexplored potential bear undeniable resemblance to digital hyperfiction.

The collaboration of several media in the creation of a work of multimedia nature facilitates the transference or the progression of the said piece in any of the components. A multimedia piece is inevitably fragmentary as it is made of bits of texts presented in different media and therefore, in need of users/readers to make sense of the multimedia segments. The piece also shares some qualities with the media in which it appears and therefore has the potential to be transferred among the media or re-located in a single constituent medium. *Lies*, for instance, can be retold orally or continued on or offline in written form. The primary medium of communication, language, is the primary medium of *Lies*. Therefore, the story may reappear as different realizations of language. The oral and written retellings are probably the most likely to appear. However, the story may be transferred among other media that use language. It may be reproduced in the form of a song for example. The secondary medium of the story also enables it to be continued in the same or the related media. Fanfiction is the most common example in this case.

Intermediacy can also be traced in conventional fiction. The written fiction that uses language as the primary medium of presentation and the printed book as its secondary medium, may be retold orally or continue in another book by the same or by a different author. The spurious volumes of *Tristram Shandy*, classic examples of fanfiction, may serve as good examples in this case. While intermediacy in books is rather inconspicuous, the concept is fully foregrounded in a hypertextual environment in which texts from different media can be practically combined to form a hypertext. That is why hypertext and hypermedia are synonymous in computer studies.

### III.4.2.3 Text as a character

As established earlier, metafiction treats the text as a character. The significance of the text in metafiction is underlined by constant interruptions and comments. The progression of the text is as important as the development of characters. The composition and the analysis of the text, either through language or form, is one of the major themes of the metafictional novel. Hyperfiction treats the text in a similar manner, but uses the structure to foreground the text and comment on it. It is impossible to forget about the text as hyperfiction is usually decomposed to its components. It is the readers' responsibility to put the parts together and determine the direction the text will take.

As a multimedia entity, *Lies* shows awareness of both constituent media. While its consciousness of the digital medium is evident in using the medium to develop the theme of betrayal and encourage active reading, it employs the well-known strategy of metafiction to reflect on the verbal medium and present the text as a character. Metafiction figuratively regards the text as a character and records its construction and developments along with the unfolding of the plot and therefore interrupts the story to focus on the construction of the text. *Lies* literally employs the text as a character.

Foregrounding the textuality of fiction through medium, *Lies* takes self-awareness to another level by actually personifying the text. The unnamed narrator of *Lies* and his beloved literally bring their journals to life by giving them "human characteristics": "Her summer lover was Antoine. Mine was Gabriella. Antoine is tall and dark, he rides a motorcycle and only wears white T-shirts and blue jeans. He is a writer and he cries a lot. Gabriella is a redhead. She is younger than I am, she listens, but she doesn't talk much."<sup>238</sup> The personification of the text, which is also the playful manifestation of keeping journals as cheating, finds a practical aspect in *Lies* since the conflict of the story is formed due to Gabriella and Antoine's intervention. There is no need to interrupt the

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<sup>238</sup> Pryll, Rick. "Lies." [Http://benz.nchu.edu.tw](http://benz.nchu.edu.tw). N.p., May 1992. Web. 5 September. 2015. <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies15.html>>

story to display the production of the text since the progression of the text (or Antoine and Gabriella's characters) and the development of the story overlap. Therefore, *Lies* basically follows the process of characterization along with the development of the text from the initial idea to the fully developed version. Readers are assured of Antoine and Gabriella's existence when the narrator finds his lover's letters to Antoine and confesses to sleeping with Gabriella himself. The fact that Gabriella and Antoine do not act on their own initiative, but cause the conflict of the story by their mere presence, indicates the same co-dependence between the text and the writer as demonstrated by metafiction. Antoine and Gabriella are created through writing and, in turn, bring the writing to life. Unfortunately *Lies* does not develop the Antoine and Gabriella characters much further. This unique understanding of the fictional text, its elements and their function displays the fiction's consciousness of its primary medium of communication also. It is noteworthy that *Lies* bears more similarities with the conventional metafiction such as "The Garden of Forking Paths" and *The French Lieutenant's Woman* which reveal their self-awareness through language. Most hyperfictions follow the example of *The Unfortunates* and *House Mother Normal* and display their consciousness of the first medium of communication through the second one. This quality that can serve as an appropriate example in the discussion on metafiction as a multimedia entity points out more similarities between hyperfiction and metafiction through their similar view of the text. In short, both fictions are aware of the media of presentation and they may choose to flaunt their self-awareness through one or all of the constituent media.

#### **III.4.2.4 The writer**

*Lies* makes the conscious choice of presenting the text as a character or literally demonstrating how the text and the characters are developed, thus permitting the fiction to combine the writer-narrator and the writer-character concepts which have been already discussed in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. However, the writer-narrator of *Lies* is not a professional fiction writer

who intervenes or comments on his fiction. Instead, his keeping a journal that is a combination of truth and lies, much like fiction itself, and his reflection on the nature of truth manifest the presence of the writer and elaborate on his opinions toward writing. There is no need for the writer to interrupt and comment on his fiction or intervene as a character like the writer-narrator of *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. This goal has already been accomplished through the personification of the text and the readers' choice between truth or lies.

The readers of *Lies* are permitted to read the truth or lies from the very beginning. Interestingly, the story which has been presented in the truth section proves to be nothing more than ordinary life, ends in a short note that informs the readers of the fate of the characters and in brief, leaves the characters underdeveloped and the readers unsatisfied. In this way, *Lies*, whose very first sentence states that to know a person, you need to study their lies, invites the readers to move on to the Lies section. In this part, the writer-narrator rewards the readers by showing what lies beneath and confessing that the betrayal he has talked about in the truth section was merely another name for writing. Writing himself into the story as both narrator and character and later posing as the writer of the journals, the writer-narrator loses credibility when he reveals how he has subtly deceived the readers. However, reading the lies cards in comparison to the truth cards, the readers reach a better understanding of the text as promised by the very first card and generally get a much better story. The problem is that the Lies section blurs the line between truth and dishonesty and makes the readers wonder about the essence of truth and whether it is ever accessible without lies. Lies are merely truth in disguise. Thus, the writer-narrator demonstrates how fiction is made of a combination of truth and lies without even interrupting the story.

What makes the concept of the writer in *Lies* even more interesting is the third reading strategy through which the readers randomly click on truth or lies. Some of the cards only appear during this type of reading as if some cards are left for the ones who recognize the pointlessness of

truth or false segments and acknowledge the significance of a good story, even if it is partly false. Among the extra cards, two stand out. In one, the narrator poses as a character and reveals that

“I wanted to get her attention by claiming to be an artist. I decided to write a short story about a woman who lived at an artist colony. She would have no talent artistically, but she would give all the other artists the inspiration to masterpieces. Her talent would be her beauty, her charm, her mystique. There would be one scene where she would guide a sculptor into the bowels of the city’s subway system at night.”<sup>239</sup>

Although integrated into the story, the writer-character reveals that he wrote a story and interestingly, the following cards confirm that the woman in question has the same features he had included in the story he wrote to impress her. To underline the self-referentiality, the following cards usually reveal how the story whose summary he gives here unfolds and expose him as the writer. For example, the mentioned card is followed by the woman’s statement that “a sculptor’s hands [...] have a natural rhythm in the dark. They create expressive contours that sights deprive them of previously.”<sup>240</sup> The writer-narrator has created the woman by writing a story about her. What is more, while the woman is talking about sculpture, her description of a sculptor’s work seems uncomfortably familiar for the reader who witnesses the red words on a black screen.

The second hidden card that appears after the sculptor card in most readings provides the readers with one of the rare occasions where *Lies* hints at the writer from the diegetic level. The writer-narrator explains his strategy to win a woman’s affections, and proves himself to be a character in the story, while the writer who speaks in the newly revealed card claims to be the real writer and not a character:

Actually, this never happened. I am a writer, and I wrote a story about an artist colony where this woman, whose craft is inspiration, guides all the painters, writers, sculptors and

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<sup>239</sup> Pryll, Rick. “Lies.” [Http://benz.nchu.edu.tw](http://benz.nchu.edu.tw). N.p., May 1992. Web. 15 September. 2015. <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies18.html>> Quotation marks exist in the original.

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid*, 18 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies18.html>>

poets to different places in the city. Her favorite places are the bus depot and subway tunnels at night. She helps to expand people's mind with her beauty and her mystique.<sup>241</sup>

Despite being poorly disguised, the writer reveals himself to the readers who willingly accept the challenge and celebrate the versatility of *Lies*. In short, *Lies* chooses both writer and text as characters and therefore, elaborates on the process of writing and developing the story as well as the theme of betrayal.

The writer makes another appearance in one of the endings where the writer-narrator wakes up in an "unfamiliar bed, against an unfamiliar grey wall," but he sees his journal on the table. He imagines a red-haired woman, but another woman whose hair is black enters the room. The shift from the writer-narrator to the writer is underlined through the quoted and unquoted sentences. In contrast with the summarized paragraph that appears in quotation marks, a single unquoted sentence ends the story: "As I wrote my last idea for the story in my journal, I wondered if the end left too many questions unanswered."<sup>242</sup>

*Lies* manifests awareness of its hypertextual status through acknowledging both media of presentation. While it intentionally employs the medium in developing the theme through links, font and color, it also displays clear textual-awareness by contemplating on the elements of writing. *Lies* playfully exposes fiction as being a combination of truth and lies and challenges the supposed reality assigned to fiction. The fact that the story acknowledges the presence of the writer does not impede its questioning of the concept and stating that any writer in a fiction, whether he appears as writer, narrator, or character, is fictional. *Lies* demonstrates how writing brings Antoine to life, and leaves enough clues to raise the readers' suspicion that the alleged real writer, the writer-narrator and Antoine are the same person to point out that all characters are bound to reside in the text and show how the story is developed. The elements of the text are co-dependent and cannot be studied

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<sup>241</sup> Pryll, Rick. "Lies." [Http://benz.nchu.edu.tw](http://benz.nchu.edu.tw). N.p., May 1992. Web. 15 September. 2015. <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies19.html>>

<sup>242</sup> "Lies," 42 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies42.html>>

in isolation. Despite different cameos from various writers, it is the exposed mechanism, both hypertextual and narratological, that constantly points to its creator.

### **III.4.2.5 Hyperfiction: reader-centrality**

The fragmentary structure and non-linear narrative let self-reflexive and medium reflexive fiction engage readers actively. The self-reflexive experimental fiction expects the readers to play the roles of the critic and the writer as well as the reader. That is not to say that readers get to overwrite the fiction in the same medium, but that they have been given the choice to develop their own reading strategy through re-ordering the fragments. *Lies* usually demands the readers to select one of the Truth or Lies options and take the story to the next level. The readers may choose to follow the Truth cards, the Lies cards or randomly click on Truth or Lies and create multiple plot lines. The first and the second strategy have already been discussed. The third strategy shall be the focus of this section despite the fact that the arbitrariness of this strategy turns each reading into a unique experience.

As Fowles states in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, the modern writer attempts to give the characters and the readers the freedom of choice and at the same time maintains power over his fiction. This is much easier to accomplish when the text or the extracts are fixed on paper in a conventional book. The writer knows the readers begin reading at the first chapter and end wherever (s)he decides. In this way, (s)he provides them with gaps that cause ambiguity which is the suitable method to multiply and direct possible interpretations.

The writer of a hyperfiction, on the other hand, needs to predict how the readers approach the text and to provide them with choices that lead them in the direction(s) (s)he has intended. In *Lies* for instance, each card is linked to two other cards and although the randomness of the readers' choice multiplies the plot lines and the interpretations, it is the writer who determines which cards

are connected and in what order. Reading a hyperfiction would be much more limited in comparison to reading books if the hyperfiction writers did not use non-linearity, the imagination and the memory of the readers to their benefit.

Having predicted that most readers may take a linear approach toward the text, *Lies* presents the readers with a non-linear, but uncomplicated story if the readers simply follow the Truth options. The cards appear in the same order at each reading. The story is concluded in a brisk happy ending and unsurprisingly, leaves the readers highly unsatisfied. Following the Lies options systematically is not that different either, though some new cards, the code card for example, will appear. The fact that some cards are shared between both options questions the authenticity of the Truth cards. But what brings the story to life is the third approach that rewards the readers who acknowledge the non-linearity of the fiction with random choices.

*Lies* presents the readers with some cards that only appear if the readers choose to read a combination of truth and lies as was shown earlier. To state that fiction is a construction of lies and truth, this version of the story displays a strong meta-dimension. It introduces new themes mostly concerned with writing, provides the readers with a new ending that never appears in the linear readings and as expected, the alleged real writer makes an appearance. The new cards give new insight into the story. First, the writer-narrator confesses that he is writing the story while up to this point, he had hidden his true identity behind a simple character who keeps a journal. Second, the people and the events he claims to write about appear in the following cards and emphasize the process of writing. The writer-narrator even has the audacity to add a new ending here and confess that everything was a lie:

You want the truth? It goes something like this. The narrator is me. The other main character is my girlfriend, with whom I now live. Our summer lovers were real, but they had different names. The journal stuff was true, too. Those books are forbidden reading now, since we talked the whole thing to death. We haven't decided to destroy the books, which ironically enough, look exactly alike, because we agreed upon a few principals to try



and keep our relationship in good working order. 1) You can't leave in the middle of an argument (no running away from problems.) 2) Honesty (no matter how much it hurts) is the foundation of our relationship. 3) Writing is sacred.

For a long time, I lied about my summer relationship. I maintained that I hadn't ever slept with her. When I finally admitted that, to my girlfriend and to myself, I took the first steps towards accepting what she had done to me. Toward accepting her. Toward accepting her lies.<sup>243</sup>

The readers who have experienced the story from at least three different angles will soon realize that the writer-narrator has used the same method he used on his beloved to keep them interested. It is no wonder that "The End" is followed by "Go back to the beginning."

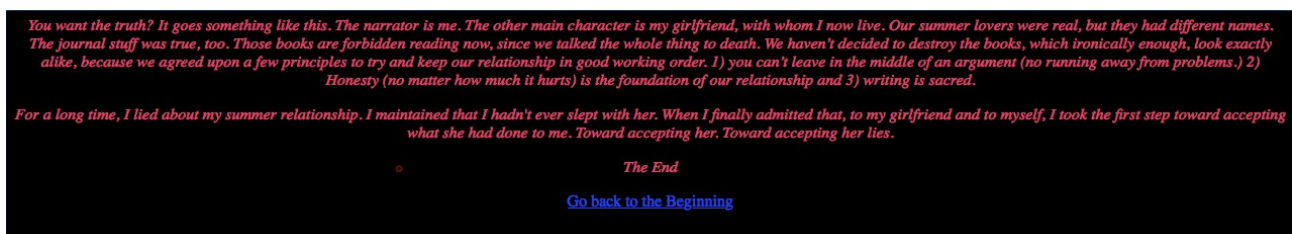


Figure III.4.2.5.P.1

*Lies*

Rick Pryll

Like its ancestor metafiction, hyperfiction always thinks of the readers and the reading strategies they may adopt. The readers of hyperfiction are usually allowed to determine the direction of the story within the borders the writer has planned. Contrary to popular belief, hyperfiction does not provide the readers with infinite choices. It is even a more closed network in comparison to printed fiction, as hyperfiction limits the readers' choices in following the story to several links. However, hyperfiction relies on its non-linear narrative, fragmentary structure and the readers' memory and creativity to reach an abundance of meanings. In *Lies*, the writer vaguely mentions that his plan to keep the woman interested involves *Alice in Wonderland*, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* and a key to a bus station locker.<sup>244</sup> The readers who experienced the story from different

<sup>243</sup> Pryll, Rick. "Lies." [Http://benz.nchu.edu.tw](http://benz.nchu.edu.tw). N.p., May 1992. Web. 24 September. 2015. <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies41.html>>

<sup>244</sup> "Lies," 21 <<http://benz.nchu.edu.tw/~garden/lies/lies21.html>>

perspectives can easily identify with both characters. They have indeed walked through a textual Wonderland and accomplished the almost impossible task of making sense of a multi-layered non-linear story, much like Jonathan the Seagull whose unwillingness to conform and his passion for “higher plane of existence” enabled him to uncover the secrets of universe. As Alice would confirm, if you do not have a fixed destination, then it does not matter which way you go.<sup>245</sup> It is the journey that counts. Despite all the maps and predicted reading strategies, *Lies* encourages the readers to take what they choose from the story. Authenticity is not important as long as you can tell a good story. The key the writer has referred to is to willingly get involved in the game and acknowledge, to quote *Alice in Wonderland* again, “we are all mad here.”

### III.5 The final word

As with the realizations of the post-structuralist concept of the “ideal text,” an ever-expanding network which actively engages the readers and welcomes the plurality of interpretations, metafiction and hypertextual fiction share a number of similarities the most prominent of which are non-linearity, medium-consciousness and reader-centrality. These three features confirm the consanguinity of metafiction and hyperfiction as the actualization of the ideal text in two different media.

Metafiction is defined by its self-reflexive quality. The elements of fiction and the process of writing are among the recurrent themes of metafiction such as *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and

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<sup>245</sup> ‘Cheshire Puss,’ she began, rather timidly, as she did not at all know whether it would like the name: however, it only grinned a little wider. ‘Come, it’s pleased so far,’ thought Alice, and she went on. ‘Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?’

‘That depends a good deal on where you want to get to,’ said the Cat.

‘I don’t much care where—’ said Alice.

‘Then it doesn’t matter which way you go,’ said the Cat.

‘—so long as I get *somewhere*,’ Alice added as an explanation.

‘Oh, you’re sure to do that,’ said the Cat, ‘if you only walk long enough.’

Carroll, Lewis. "Chapter VI: Pig and Pepper." *Alice in Wonderland*. [www.gutenberg.org](http://www.gutenberg.org). Web. 6 Oct. 2016.

<<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11/11-h/11-h.htm#link2HCH0006>>

*Albert Angelo*. Other metafictional works such as *House Mother Normal* also employ the expanse of the page and the mechanics of writing — and in special cases such as *The Unfortunates*, the book itself — to reveal their knowledge of being a fabrication in language.

One of the common methods to comment on the writing process is to expose the non-linearity of fiction. To accomplish this goal, metafiction interrupts the fluency of narrative through linguistic or graphic techniques. Decomposing the narrative, metafiction easily attracts attention to the process of composition that usually requires reader-participation and exposes fiction as an intertextual web. In brief, metafiction simulates the experience the writer undergoes while writing for the readers and encourages critical readings by providing models and commentaries.

The non-linear features of hyperfiction are usually exposed through the medium since the chunks of texts are linked and can be displayed on request. In addition, the medium permits hyperfiction to include audio, visual and kinetic bits and present the text not only as an intertextual, but as a multimedia network. The intermedia qualities, whose traces can be found in metafictional texts also, enable the core text to be transported among or developed in other media.

Both hyperfiction and metafiction show awareness of the media of communication. While the conventional metafiction such as *The French Lieutenant's Woman* usually prefers to use its primary medium to comment on its fictitious status, hyperfiction benefits from the digital medium to intensify the non-linearity of the narrative and encourage reader participation. Needless to say, certain metafictional works such as *The Unfortunates* or *House of Leaves* also benefit from the secondary medium while hyperfiction, *Lies* by Rick Pryll for example, highly rely on the verbal medium. Medium-consciousness in metafiction, however limited, points out the multimedia qualities, even though not fully explored.

Finally, metafiction attempts to educate the readers through exposing the underlying clockwork, as well as entertaining them. It promotes the reader from merely a consumer to a literary

detective, a critic or a co-writer. The incomplete and ambiguous fiction, along with the writer's guidance in the conventional metafiction trains the readers and encourages them to make arguments or form new and even contradictory interpretations. This does not in any way reduce the authority of the writer. First, fiction, even on the web is a closed network and second, it relies on readers' contribution to be interpreted. The intricate textual web just points to the mastery of the (wo)man behind it.

The writer and / or designer of a hyperfiction also needs to keep the readers in mind when planning the hypertextual web. A successful hyperfiction plans its intertextual web by predicting various reading strategies while integrating the themes in the medium. In short, the author(s) behind both hyperfiction and metafiction compose writerly texts that are liable to be read in various ways and still maintain the potential to function autonomously. Above all, both kinds of fiction, conscious of their fictionality, eager to be exposed and welcoming new experiments, try to push the boundaries of fiction.

#### IV. From hypertext to hyperfiction

Defining hypertext by its three main characteristics non-linearity, user-centrality and medium consciousness, the previous chapter attempted to genealogize hypertext, hypertextual fiction in particular, and confirm its consanguinity with metafiction and the poststructuralist critical theory. In a closer look at hypertextual fiction, the present chapter will accentuate the differences among different types of hypertexts in order to re-define hyperfiction as a narratological term. This section relies on the definition of *text* in hypertexts in order to reach a classification for hypertexts and distinguish hypertextual fiction from hypertext and hypermedia which have been employed broadly and synonymously by the prominent theoreticians of computer science such as George Landow.<sup>246</sup> To achieve this goal, I shall first introduce the concepts of “core text,” “hypertextual networks,” “wreaders,” and “branching texts” and then focus on specific characteristics such as self-referentiality, acute medium-consciousness, reader-centrality and the meta-dimension in different types of hypertexts.

The first section of this chapter titled “Putting *text* in hypertext” will concentrate on a feature that I call “the library of Babel effect.” Hypertexts regard the text as a multimedia entity with the potential to multiply and expand. The plurality of the text is the result of the inaccessibility of the underlying digital urtext, which leads to an abundance of representations on the screen. The fragmentary nature of the text enables the readers to adopt different reading strategies. The variety of reading methods creates the possibility of infinite combinations, which are essentially similar and yet, different in details. Hypertexts celebrate their multiplicity, which has been envisioned by Borges in “The Library of Babel.”

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<sup>246</sup> “Hypermedia simply extends the notion of text in hypertext by including the visual information, sound, animation, and other forms of data. Since hypertext, which links one passage of verbal discourse to image, maps, diagrams, and sound as easily as to another verbal passage, expands the notion of text beyond the solely verbal, I do not distinguish between hypertext and hypermedia.” Landow George P. *Hypertext 3.0*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 2006. P. 3.

The expandability of hypertexts, which leads to the creation of “hypertextual networks,” is the result of intertextuality and intermediacy of the text. Hypertextual networks, discussed in a section of the same title, usually emerge from a single text, their “core text.” The intertextual texture of the text creates the potential for expansion from within and places the text in an already existing web of texts. The multimedia structure of the text, on the other hand, triggers off the external expansion of the core text, its connections to other texts and its transference among the media. Therefore, studying the internal and external ties of a text and its potential to branch out and turn into a hypertextual network becomes of great importance in reading the text, even an isolated singular one. The readers who actively take part in decoding the text, reordering the fragments, and launching new interpretive processes are the catalyzers for both reactions, pluralization and expansion. The non-linearity and the ambiguity of the text create the potential for the text to be decomposed and re-composed. Although the readers are not allowed to overwrite the underlying urtext, they engage actively in producing new representations of it. The readers, who engage in decrypting writerly texts and co-author the text figuratively, deserve the title of writer-readers or wreaders.

“Open and closed networks” will study hypertextual networks in terms of nature and function. To reach a better understanding of hypertextual networks, this section will classify hypertexts under open, semi-open, semi-closed and closed networks with regard to the degree to which the networks employ the medium in developing the themes and engaging the readers as well as authorizing reader contribution. Open hypertextual networks such as *Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog* advocate for complete reader / user participation. The intermediacy of the core text as well as the medium of distribution facilitates extensive expansion among the media. The fusion of genres in the multimedia core text provides the potential for dispersion and the hypertext welcomes and legitimizes various attempts at re-production or reconfiguration. Moreover, *Dr. Horrible* owes the direct exchange between the authorial group and the audience to its medium of presentation, the

internet. The series has used the medium as a virtual meta-level where the fictitious and the real co-exist and the author(s) and the audience may interact. Such open networks which encourage and legitimize the readers' contribution in the form of branching texts, however possible, are rare. In a movement towards closer hypertext, the texts exercises more control over the content and restrict the production of branching texts to the authorial group.

BBC's *Sherlock* will be studied next as an example of semi-open branching texts. The series is the result of an exemplary exercise of wreading which has transferred the written text to the small screen successfully. It is worth mentioning that *Sherlock* is not a mere adaptation of the core text, but an attempt at extending it since the series re-imagines the character in a new time frame and in situations that do not exist in the core text. The series has benefited from the potential the core text, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, has created to bring Sherlock Holmes to the twenty-first century in an innovative branching text. Focusing on the detective and his complicated character instead of the adventures, the series has drawn on the stories to understand the character, examine his complexities in given situations and respond to the character traits such as cold-bloodedness that sometimes verges on callousness. *Sherlock* employs two major techniques to respond to the ambiguities of the core text and create potential for further expansion by developing existing characters and introducing new ones. Moreover, the series benefits from the medium to visualize Sherlock's inner thoughts and help the audience follow the process of deduction as it takes place in the character's mind. Although *Sherlock* is an outstanding example of wreading, the hypertext does not support the idea of wreading by anyone other than the authorial group. The websites and the social media of the series only serve to give information and do not engage audience in the process of creation.

*Memento* by Christopher Nolan marks the beginning of the discussion about closed networks. In general, reader contribution in closed hypertexts is restricted to interpretive activities. The text uses the medium to create the potential for multiple, and sometimes even contradictory,

interpretations. These networks demand that the readers pluralize the core text through interpretation, but do not really support expansion. Wreading is defined as close examination of the text, unveiling the clues left by the author(s), filling the gaps, and hypothesizing. The branching texts, which have been created by the audience of *Memento*, have appeared on the internet in the form of fan theories or fan art; however, they are not going to be considered as canon under any condition.

Closed networks usually educate the users on how the text functions and then, encourage them to apply the acquired skills in solving the mysteries of the text. *Memento*, a forking text of a short story called “Memento Mori,” uses the medium to put the audience through the same experience as the character and therefore, engages them actively in solving the murder mystery. The part on *Memento* will also explore how *Memento* triggers off and brings the interpretive process to completion.

The last category discussed in this chapter is closed hypertextual networks, hyperfiction in particular. This category is the only class of hypertexts which usually determines a dominant medium of presentation among its constituent media. Hyperfiction, which prefers the written language to other media, belongs to this category. Choosing the dominant medium increases the author’s control over the content, which is presented in the extremely protected core text. That is to say that the text has been mapped out and finalized. The reading paths the readers may take have been predicted and the way the fragments have been linked corresponds to the author(s) plan to train readers and lead them to desired destinations. The text is an intertextual entity which, in the case of Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl*, proudly exposes its internal connections. However, it is not concerned about external expansion at the hand of readers and restricts the readers/ users contribution to interpretive processes, albeit exceedingly invigorating ones. The mentioned qualities foreground the similarities between hyperfiction and metafiction. Additionally, hypermedia can easily be distinguished from hyperfiction since hypermedia does not determine a dominant medium.



Neither does the structure guide the users toward certain conclusions. *Pieces of Herself* by Juliet Davis shall be studied as an example of hypermedia in comparison to Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*. Studying this pioneer hyperfiction, which is a branching text of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and L. Frank Baum's *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, will clarify the definition of hyperfiction and demonstrate how it trains and engages the readers by employing the medium in the creation of the story.

#### **IV.1 Putting *text* in hypertext: the library of Babel Effect**

##### **IV.1.1 Urtext: enlightened, solitary and perfectly unmoving**

I am probably misled by old age and fear, but I suspect that the human species — the *only* species — teeters at the verge of extinction, yet that Library — enlightened, solitary, perfectly unmoving, armed with precious volumes, pointless, incorruptible, and secret will endure.<sup>247</sup>

The extended definition of *text* in hypertext has caused much ambiguity in studying hyperfiction as a literary work. The familiar text as written words on paper has suddenly turned into an ethereal entity liable to constant growth or change with the potential to be realized in different forms and various media. The immense possibilities that hypertextual fiction offers writers and readers are paradoxically the cause of major problems for critics, and raise the relevant question of methodology. How should a text that changes at each reading be critically analyzed? Although readers of a certain text never approach it the same way in future re-readings, the traditional book that entraps one text on paper, ironically makes re-readings and re-interpretations possible. Hypertexts, on the other hand, deprive the text of its solidity and expose its unstable nature by beclouding the borders. The critics of a certain *hypertext* might never analyze the same text as it changes at each reading.

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<sup>247</sup> *Collected Fictions*, 118

The plurality of the text that hypertexts trigger blemishes the legend of urtext. That is not to say that hypertext denies the existence of an underlying text. Interestingly, digital hypertexts strongly rely on their urtext which is only accessible to the group of writers, engineers and designers who create the hypertext. However, unlike the printed text that recognizes a certain original such as the first manuscript as the urtext and encourages various readings and interpretations based on the appointed original, hypertexts deny readers access to the urtext while presenting them with a number of possible and incomplete representations. The urtext, in its complete form and as intended by the author(s) and designers, is rarely exposed to the readers. Instead, the readers are encouraged to trust their instincts and literary skills and order the fragments they have been given. In other words, hypertexts let the readers generate a secondary representation of the initial representation of the urtext and consequently, create the illusion of reconstituting the urtext. The allegedly random fragments, or first-hand representations, that have been meticulously designed by the authorial group enable the readers to visualize and trace the process of interpretation on screen, similar to what takes place in their minds when reading books. It is noteworthy that neither the printed text, nor hypertexts authorize changing the urtext and yet they adopt different approaches when acknowledging its representations.

While hypertexts avoid recognizing the on-screen representations as their urtext, the printed text glorifies the urtext usually captured in a manuscript which is sometimes so valuable that it is showcased in museums. An immutable version of the urtext is handed over to readers in its totality. The layout, font and graphic features distinguish the original text from supplementary material, namely paratext. In brief, the contamination of the original text is strictly prohibited. The representations created through the interpretative process or any attempts at re-writing or expansion by people other than the original writer are considered as fraud, plagiarism, fan reaction and

consequently, not “canon.”<sup>248</sup> This point of view regards the printed text as the finalized version, open to various interpretations, and yet unable to expand. Favoring the urtext over representations, the printed text defines the interpretive process as an attempt to stabilize the urtext and explore its implicit meanings. The concreteness of the printed text makes it possible to define distinctive boundaries between the original text and its representations which emerge through the interpretative process initiated by readers.

Contrary to popular belief, digital hypertexts do not negate the existence of the urtext. However, adopting a different standpoint toward the produced representations is what makes all the difference. Digital hypertexts celebrate new representations of their urtext as its equals. Denying readers access to a complete representation of their urtext, hypertexts pretend that the urtext does not exist in its totality and that the readers need to get involved in the process of authoring the text in order to give coherence to the allegedly random fragments. The readers of such texts have no choice but to create new representations. Forming a text out of pre-written fragments is highly dependent on the readers’ reasoning, literary background and different approaches to literature. This process, which bears striking similarities to the process of interpretation, underlines that readers have different perceptions of the same text, even if the underlying text remains the same. Denying access to the complete urtext except for the authorial group, digital hypertexts simulate and stimulate the interpretive process, and emphasize that each re-reading may be a re-writing of the text. The wreaders, to use David Kolb’s words, co-author the text through analysis and interpretations the same way the first readers of the early novels did.<sup>249</sup> Similarly, the readers are not allowed to change the urtext. The w in “wreaders” is mute!

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<sup>248</sup> “Canon” is a well-known term in internet culture and is used to distinguish the events that originally happened in the text from the ones added or modified by fans.

<sup>249</sup> “Hypertext has been celebrated as freeing the reader, making them co-authors, “wreaders”, yet that presumes a kind of dedication in the reader that the Web does not encourage.”  
Kolb, David. “Hypertext Structure Under Pressure”. *Reading Hypertext*. Bernstein, Mark and Diane Greco. (eds). Watertow: Eastgate systems, 2009. p. 201.

#### IV.1.2 Wreaders: the “eternal travelers” of the library <sup>250</sup>

The term “wreader” borrows the silent w in “write” to suggest that although the process the readers go through when interpreting a non-linear text resembles the process of writing undeniably, the readers do not really modify the urtext in any way. That is to say that hypertexts have not changed the definition of readers as the intended recipients to whom the text is addressed. However, hypertexts accentuate some lesser-known aspects of “being a reader” which are responsible for realizing the hypertexts’ potential expandability. The readers of hypertexts do not write or re-write the text. The text has been finalized by the authorial group including the writer(s), technician(s) and designer(s). However, the wreaders co-author the text. To clarify this, I shall exemplify my point on the urtext and its numerous representations focusing on Rick Pryll’s *Lies* which served as an example for a typical hypertext in the previous chapter. The readers of *Lies* never access the whole story, but the fragments. That is not to deny the existence of an underlying structure. On the contrary, hypertexts, *Lies* in particular, need to plan a meticulous story with the potential to be decomposed and re-composed. Moreover, the authorial group needs to predict the reactions of the readers and their reading habits — and psychological responses in this case — in order to link the fragments that lead to a plausible finale and design an appropriate interface. To briefly mention the basic responses to the story as studied in detail in the last chapter, *Lies* has been designed to inspire doubt in its readers and to question the truthfulness of truth. The story, therefore, leaves clues in the truth cards so the readers may identify them as lies and connect the truth cards and lie cards as the pieces of the same story. The fiery red-haired woman, Gabriella, for example, is one of the invisible links between the truth and the lies cards. She may easily attract the attention of readers who link the fragments thematically and focus on the theme of infidelity. The readers who structure their reading by imposing an order on the story, that is to say by following the truth or lies cards in a certain order, may read Gabriella as a figment of the narrator’s overactive imagination that turns his

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<sup>250</sup> *Collected Fictions*, 118

“journal” into a “summer lover.” Keeping the underlying story, which has been expressed in forty cards, shrouded, and opening the readers’ access to it in parts result in numerous possible combinations and an abundance of representations. In brief, despite the allegedly random fragments the readers receive, a complete version of the text or the story to which only the writer(s) and designer(s) have access exists. The fragmentary text, if bared to its simplest structure, is a translation of a complete underlying text in the digital language of zeros and ones, which in turn may be a translation of a handwritten or printed urtext. The urtext, analogous to the “enlightened, solitary, infinite” and “perfectly unmoving” library of Babel in which “there are no two identical books”<sup>251</sup> multiplies in its representations. The urtext may be solitary and unmoving, but the representations are not. Each representation is “unique and irreplaceable” even if they “differ by no more than a single letter, or a comma.”<sup>252</sup> Thus, while the urtext is supposedly limited and finalized, the proliferative representations provided by either the writer(s) or the readers of hypertexts can propagate infinitely: “I declare that the library is endless.”<sup>253</sup> Hypertexts recognize and celebrate each and every representation of the urtext, and consequently enable the text to expand through its readers. The first representation of urtext that henceforth I am going to call “the core text” can be re-written in a new genre, transmitted to another medium or be implanted in a new narrative platform. To discuss core text and the characteristics that help it branch out, I shall first introduce the notion of “hypertextual networks.”

## **IV.2 Hypertextual networks: the extensions of memory and imagination**

### **IV.2.1 Intertextuality**

Of all man’s instruments, the most wondrous, no doubt, is the book. The other instruments are extensions of his body. The microscope, the telescope, are extensions of his sight; the telephone is the extension of his voice; then we have the plow and the sword, extensions of

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<sup>251</sup> *Collected Fiction*, 115

<sup>252</sup> *Ibid*, 116

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid*, 112

the arm. But the book is something else altogether: the book is an extension of memory and imagination.<sup>254</sup>

The materiality of the book may induce the belief that the front and the back cover are the frontiers of the book, but in practice, texts surpass these hypothetical borders. Literary texts constantly allude to, refer to, quote, translate, parody or even plagiarize each other and create an interrelated network of references that spreads beyond the limited pages of the book. Recognizing the allusions to the sacred and classic texts and the subsequent contextualizing come so naturally that one of the earliest forms of intertextuality is usually neglected. For instance, the “To be or not to be” soliloquy implies an existential dilemma wherever it appears; be it in Malcolm X’s speech or a *Star Trek* movie screenplay.<sup>255</sup> Similarly, *Joseph Andrews* parodies and criticizes *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded*, and yet both novels are separate and independent works. Using parts of the previous work in a new tissue turns the text into a coded field of potential meanings waiting to be formulated and explored. Such texts paradoxically underline, and yet undermine, the influence of their creators. They reinforce the writer’s power because it is he who has designed this intricate “new tissue of past citations”<sup>256</sup> and they compromise the writer’s control because the readers’ understanding of the quotations or any other loans from the precedent works may change the dynamics of the current text and lead to various, and sometimes unsolicited, interpretations and representations of the core text. Therefore, each reading of these so-called codes and each inevitable decoding may represent a slightly different reading of the core text that, while bearing astonishing similarities with its origin, may be considered an independent text in itself. Such texts that display the library of Babel effect are appreciated as the interpretations of the core text. The texts inspired by the core text belong to the same category. However, they are rarely regarded as the extension of the core texts. In books,

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<sup>254</sup> Muallem, Shlomy. *Borges and Plato: A Game with Shifting Mirrors*. Madrid: Iberoamericana Editorial Vervuert S.L.U: 2012. P. 227.

<sup>255</sup> *Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country*. Directed by Nicholas Meyer. Performances by William Shatner and Leonard Nimoy. CBS, 1998.

<sup>256</sup> Pennington, Eric Wayne. *Approaching the Theatre of Antonio Buero Vallejo: Contemporary Literary Analyses from Structuralism to Postmodernism*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc: 2010. P. 175

the core text ends with the back cover. The connections with other texts remain unacknowledged unless mentioned in paratextual material such as footnotes or annotations and thus, the potential for extension remains dormant.

By contrast, hypertexts expose their interconnected nature and recognize the representations of the core text as part of the canon. These features are responsible for the hypertextual potential for expansion. Digital links usually visualize the non-linear, yet interconnected structure of hypertexts while the uniformity of font, color and typeface in the printed texts — experimental works such as *House Mother Normal* or *House of Leaves* excluded — submerge the network underneath, and suggest continuity even if the text is written in a non-linear Shandean style. Additionally, the look of the book as a finalized product hinders the perception of extension via other texts. The book or any printed text appears to stand alone and independent of the texts on which it was based or the texts on which it made an impact. Hypertexts, on the other hand, take advantage of digital links to expose their interconnected web. If *Robinson Crusoe* is ever realized as a hypertext, the exact lines that were inspired by Alexander Selkirk,<sup>257</sup> Robert Knox's disappearance story<sup>258</sup> or Hayy ibn Yaqdhan<sup>259</sup> may link the core text to its sources in the same way a link may extend the universe of Robinson Crusoe to include the twentieth-century *Foe*,<sup>260</sup> whose ironic title echoes of Daniel Defoe's name and confirm its kinship with *Robinson Crusoe*. In brief, hypertexts embrace their intertextual texture and create an immense network of interrelated texts. This network includes the

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<sup>257</sup> Alexander Selkirk (1676-1721): a Scottish sailor whose five-year residence on an uninhabited island of Más a Tierra in the South Pacific is considered to have inspired *Robinson Crusoe*.

"Two Extraordinary Travellers Alexander Selkirk - the Real Robinson Crusoe?" *BBC Homepage*. BBC, n.d. Web. 8 Apr. 2016. <[http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/europe/oddities\\_europe.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/scottishhistory/europe/oddities_europe.shtml)>

<sup>258</sup> Robert Knox (1641-1720): an English sea captain in the service of the British East India Company whose abduction at the hand of the king of Ceylan, published in "An Historical Account of the Island Ceylon" may have been Defoe's source for *Robinson Crusoe*.

"The Collection." *Captain Robert Knox of the East India Company, 1641-1720*. Royal Museums Greenwich, n.d. Web. 08 Apr. 2016. <<http://collections.rmg.co.uk/collections/objects/14298.html>>

<sup>259</sup> *Hayy Ibn Yaqdan* by Ibn Tufayl is the first Arabic novel written in early 12th century. The story was based on an 11th-century philosophical romance by Avicenna and is considered to be one of the sources of *Robinson Crusoe*.

Ibn Tufayl. *Ibn Tufayl's Hayy Ibn Yaqzan: A Philosophical Tale*. Trans. Leon Evan Goodman. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009.

<sup>260</sup> *Foe* (1986) is a novel by South-African Nobel laureate, J. M. Coetzee. A pun on the name of the writer of *Robinson Crusoe*, *Foe* explores the relationship between language and power as Susan Barton, a survivor of a mutiny on a ship to Lisbon who lands on the same island as Robinson and Friday tries to persuade Daniel Defoe to write her story.

core text, the sources, all the representations and consequently, it gives the core text the potential to branch out while maintaining its status as an independent work.

Hypertexts' recognition of their textual nature sets the text in, and emphasizes its connections with, a network of preceding texts. Digital links are the visual indicators of this function and suggest an interrelated web of texts underneath each text. However, it is hypertexts' position toward their representations that catalyses their extension outside of the core text. Hypertexts' acknowledgement of their representations as part of the canon gives the text the potential to be expanded by different readers / users and make new connection with other texts. The fan forums or the fan fiction sites for novels or TV series can serve as appropriate examples. Such sites have been inspired by the core text, a digital version of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* for example, and develop new stories or fan art based on it. The digital version of the book makes it possible for the core text to be connected to its descendants. While the authenticity of the core text remains intact, the subsidiary texts expand the canon via a simple link to the core text.

As strange as it may sound, the printed novel functions the same way. While the solidity of the book may conceal the intertextual features of the text, the readers who identify the references and quotations bridge among texts when reading or interpreting. In Julia Kristeva's words: "Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another. The notion of intertextuality replaces that of intersubjectivity, and poetic language is read as at least double."<sup>261</sup> Intertextuality, as a result, questions the traditional notion of authorship since "all literary production takes place in the presence of other texts; they are, in effect, palimpsests or collages."<sup>262</sup> This intersection of texts may take place in a single text or among several texts.

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<sup>261</sup> Kristeva, Julia, "Word, dialogue and novel," *The Kristeva Reader*. Toril Moi (ed), Oxford: Basil and Blackwell: 1986, p. 37

<sup>262</sup> Pennington, Eric Wayne, *Approaching the Theater of Antonio Buero Vallejo: Contemporary Literary Analysis from Structuralism to Postmodernism*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc, 2010. P. 175.



Although *Joseph Andrews*' readers do not need to read *Pamela*, the connection between the two texts is what sets the ironic tone, encourages multiple understandings, and more importantly, increases the pleasure of reading Henry Fielding's novel. The references and interconnections are occasionally explained in footnotes or endnotes in annotated editions, either by the writer or the editors. Moreover, the readers may also make connections other than the ones intended by the writers. The readers may find similarities in content or form between an eighteenth-century text and a contemporary one and make interconnections that at least one of the writers had not predicted as her/his text predates the other one by three hundred years. In brief, connecting texts through weaving an invisible web of interrelations is an integral part of the act of reading and interpretation. To put it in other words, each reading potentially triggers the formation of a hypertext.

Digital hypertexts, unlike books, demonstrate a strong tendency to expose their intertextual nature by using the medium to their advantage. Digital links enable hypertexts to include the paratextual material in the text the same way metafiction do. Hypertexts visualize the invisible web of references that each reading creates through links and suggest the existence of a network of interrelated texts including a core text with the potential to branch out and therefore, an abundance of subsidiary texts that can, in turn, function as core texts for other hypertextual networks.

Up to this point, I have limited my argument to written texts and their intertextual features. However, hypertexts consider "text" as a multimedia entity. That is to say that a *hypertext* may spread out among language-based or non-linguistic texts. Therefore, a *hypertext* such as a flash video<sup>263</sup> can potentially be made of video and audio texts, illustrations, kinetic material and of course written material. From this point of view, a Youtube video with comments and optional links to suggested videos in the sidebar is considered a text the same way a lengthy entry in *The Victorian Web*, possibly with a few illustrations, is regarded as a text. While the interconnections among the

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<sup>263</sup> Flash video is a file format that delivers digital video files over the internet.

ELMCIP. "Flash." *Remediating the Social (E-Book)*, ELMCIP, 1 Jan. 1996, <[elmcip.net/platformsoftware/flash.](http://elmcip.net/platformsoftware/flash.)>

articles of *The Victorian Web* display the strong intertextual features, the same relations among the texts produced in various media problematize the concept of intertextuality. What happens when the frontiers among multimedia texts disappear? Hypertexts suggest a new concept to solve the dilemma: intermediacy.

#### **IV.2.2 Intermediacy**

In Mexico City they somehow wandered into an exhibition of paintings by the beautiful Spanish exile Remedios Varo: in the central painting of a triptych, titled “Bordando el Manto Terrestre,” were a number of frail girls with heart-shaped faces, huge eyes, spun-gold hair, prisoners in the top room of a circular tower, embroidering a kind of tapestry which spilled out the slit windows and into a void, seeking hopelessly to fill the void: for all the other buildings and creatures, all the waves, ships and forests of the earth were contained in the tapestry, and the tapestry was the world.<sup>264</sup>

As priorly mentioned, the majority of computer science theoreticians do not distinguish between hypertext and hypermedia. George Landow in *Hypertext 3.0* explains that hypermedia simply extends the notion of hypertext by linking the verbal discourse to the extracts from other media such as images, diagrams, audiovisual or kinetic material. Regarding the text as an extendable multimedia entity inevitably extends the definition of intertextuality from the profusion of the texts created in the same medium, written texts for example, to the profusion of texts created in various media. Contrary to the common belief that intermediacy is specifically a hypertextual feature and a multimedia text cannot appear on paper, different media can indeed intersect on paper. Printed texts can also combine numerous non-verbal and verbal texts from different media. It seems that intertextuality in printed text is mostly considered as the convergence of other printed verbal texts. The truth is that the printed verbal text is usually so dominant that it inevitably hides the traces of other texts originally produced in other media or demotes them to complementary texts and paratexts, as for book illustrations. However, the appearance of heterogeneous texts on paper is

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<sup>264</sup> Pynchon, Thomas, *The Crying of Lot 49*. New York: Harper & Row, 1966. p. 5.

not as rare as it seems. Any combination of text and illustration which requires readers to look for connections between the printed text and the image can serve as a simple example of a multimedia text.

The expansion of the page is the screen on which different media converge. Sir John Tenniel's illustrations for *Alice in Wonderland* have affected multiple generations' understanding of Lewis Carroll's classic novel. Comprehending Shel Silverstein's poetry — "Deaf Donald", "Something Missing" and "Missing Piece Meets Big O" to refer to a few examples — is so dependent on the connections readers establish between the poems and the illustrations that the poems seem vague and incomplete if read without the illustrations.<sup>265</sup> Interestingly, Theodor Nelson, the prominent figure of information technology who coined the terms "hypertext" and "hypermedia," suggests that any form of non-linear writing manifests hypertextual tendencies, even on paper.<sup>266</sup> Thus, it is safe to assert that even intermediacy is not a distinctive feature of hypertexts and that the intertextuality in multimedia texts will inevitably result in intermediacy, be it on paper or on monitor.

Hypertexts' approach toward their representations is what allows the multimedia text to be transferred and continued in a new medium, a process which usually results in intermediacy. By contrast, the multimedia potential of the printed texts usually remains unexplored. As priorly mentioned, hypertexts define their canon as a collection of urtext, core text and its possible representations which can potentially turn into a hypertextual network. Therefore, it is logical to assume that the extension of a multimedia text can take place in all media that have created the core text. In other words, intermediacy is the logical consequence of intertextuality in multimedia texts. Not only do written texts intersect, but also the visual, audio or kinetic texts. When the frontiers of texts fade at a junction and texts of different media collide, the narrative may be transferred and

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<sup>265</sup> Silverstein, Shel. *A Light in the Attic*. Harper Collins Publishers, New York: 1981.

<sup>266</sup> Nelson's opinions about hypertext and hypermedia have already been discussed in "II.2.1 Theodor H. Nelson."

pursued in any of the constituent media. The texts can be compiled, superimposed or homogenized in the medium in which the core text appears as well as in all the media to which the components of the core text belong. In brief, it is time to stretch the concept of intertextuality to include connections in and among multimedia texts which enable the core text to be completed, transported or implanted and transplanted in different media. Intermediacy is the inevitable result of intertextuality realized in multimedia texts.

I have already argued that hypertexts welcome the representations of their urtext into their canon and accept them as the extension of their core text. The position hypertexts take on their representations

alongside their multimedia structure provides them with the potential to turn into networks. The tendency of digital hypertexts to flaunt their intertextuality by visually exposing the interrelated network that exists underneath, is not a new textual feature. Any text is a frontier where different texts intersect. What digital hypertexts amplify due to their medium is the possibility of access to the constituent texts directly, thanks to digital links. In other words, digital hypertexts include the material regarded as paratext in the printed medium — notes, citations, quotations, references, etc. — within the core text for immediate access. Moreover, they benefit from their multimedia nature and encourage branching out in their own medium as well as the media in which their components were originally made. Embracing all the readings, representations and interpretations as canon, hypertexts metamorphose into expandable networks.



Figure IV.2.2.P.1

"Deaf Donald"

Shel Silverstein

*A Light in the Attic*. p. 143

At a practical level, some conditions need to be fulfilled for the core text to be able to transform into a hypertextual network: a) *intertextuality and intermediacy*: The exposed intertextuality of the core text in solely verbal texts makes it possible for the narrative to be transferred to different narrative platforms in the same or other media. The same effect in multimedia core texts leads to fusion and distribution across various media or intermediacy which is essential for the expansion of the core text and/or its transformation into different yet recognizable forms. b) *Meta-dimension: self-consciousness and medium consciousness*: Both exposed intertextuality and intermediacy result in the creation of a meta-dimension. Both verbal or multimedia texts demand a strong meta-level in order to acknowledge their status as artifacts, “self-consciousness,” and recognize and address the merits and the delimitations of the medium in which they appear, “medium consciousness.” c) *User-centrality*: The meta features of any core text attract attention to the structural elements of the piece, demand reader-participation to reach coherence, and occasionally provide the readers with instructions and reading strategies. Since the expansion of the core text usually takes place thanks to its users/readers who respond to particular features of the core text, the readers and their perception of and reaction to the core text find great significance in the creation of a hypertextual network. The self-consciousness or the medium-consciousness of the text plays a remarkable role in catalyzing this process by drawing attention to the potential of the medium or even providing instructions while the multimedia structure of the core text guarantees its effortless transference among media. When meeting the mentioned requirements, any hypertext can become the fount of a series of branching texts and trigger the construction of a germinating network.

While it seems that the dissemination of texts and the expansion of the canon is the inevitable consequence of reading hypertexts, in practice, the authorial group affects the development of the core text by restricting the network. In the previous chapter, I argued that hypertexts can be characterized as open or closed networks, and offered two simple examples:

informative hypertexts such as Wikipedia as an open network and fictional hypertexts such as *Lies* by Rick Pryll as a closed network. Having discussed hypertextual networks and how they proliferate, I would like to argue that there are at least two sub-categories, semi-closed and semi-open, in between the binary pair. In general, the expansion of hypertexts depends on the degree of accessibility that is determined by the authorial group. The more the hypertext cuts its connections with the real world, the more the expansion of the network becomes exclusive to the authorial group and the hypertext favors reading as interpretation over wreading as expansion through interpretation. That is why the hypertextual networks that consciously address their artifactual status and bridge between the fictional world and the real world bear striking similarities to metafiction. To discuss this issue further, the subsequent parts shall discuss four types of hypertextual networks, and study their formation and function: first, *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog*, an open and already extended hypertextual network that encourages bifurcation at the hand of both the authorial group and the audience, second, BBC's *Sherlock*, a semi-open hypertextual network and an extraordinary example of the expansion of the core text by the wreaders, third, *Memento*, a semi-closed network that illustrates how the text inspires diverse interpretations, and last, *Patchwork Girl* by Shelley Jackson, one of the first and now classic examples of hypertext fiction whose closed network points out the distinctions between hypertext and hyperfiction.

### **IV.3 Open and closed networks and how they function**

As implied in the title, *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog*, the core text of *Dr. Horrible's* extended universe, provides an excellent example of an open hypertextual network. This mini-series

that first appeared on the web during the writers' strike of 2008,<sup>267</sup> has been since released as a DVD including a musical commentary, turned into a multimedia book, *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog, The book*, and become the core text of a new comic book series, *Dr. Horrible and Other Horrible Stories*. The first issue is available in print and electronically on Kindle. The speedy spread of the network among the media by both the authorial group and the audience makes it an appropriate example of open hypertextual networks.

### **IV.3.1 Open hypertextual networks: *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog***

#### **IV.3.1.1 The origins**

*Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog*, was written by Joss, Jed and Zack Whedon and Maurissa Tancharoen. This musical drama-comedy mini-series that was directed by Joss Whedon himself was exclusively released on the web in 2008. The series tell the story of an aspiring supervillain, Dr. Horrible played by Neil Patrick Harris, his nemesis Captain Hammer, played by Natan Fillion and their mutual love interest, Penny, brought to life by Felicia Day. *Dr. Horrible* consists of three acts of approximately 14 minutes — total running time: 45 minutes — which were released separately on 15, 18 and 20 July, 2008 on Hulu.<sup>268</sup> The enthusiastic reception, estimated 200,000 hits per hour, crashed the site only hours after the release of the first installment. After the web meltdown, the creators soon made it possible for the series to be downloaded at the iTunes Store in July. The DVD release was announced on *Dr. Horrible's* official web site on November 28, 2008, with plenty of

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<sup>267</sup> 2007–08 Writers Guild of America strike, also known as The Television's Writer Strike, started on November 5, 2007 and ended on February 12, 2008. Writers Guild of America, East (WGAE) and Writers Guild of America, West (WGAW) labour union which represents film, television and radio writers conducted the strike which sought increased salaries for writers. This strike, which lasted 100 days, was partially successful as the writers' negotiations resulted in a new percentage payment on the distributor's gross for digital distribution.

CNN Library. "Writers Guild of America Fast Facts." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 2 Mar. 2016. Web. 25 Oct. 2016. <<http://edition.cnn.com/2013/08/26/us/writers-guild-of-america-fast-facts/>>

<sup>268</sup> Hulu is an American video on demand service owned by The Walt Disney Company, 21 century Fox, and Comcast. Time Warner also joined this consortium in 2016.

"About Hulu." *Huhu.com*. Web. 26 Oct. 2016. <<https://www.hulu.com/press/about>>

extras including a musical commentary of fourteen original songs.<sup>269</sup> The lovable supervillain and his adventures have found their way to Emmy Awards (“Dr. Horrible interrupts 61st primetime Emmys,”) comic books (*Dr. Horrible and Other Horrible Stories* written by Zack Whedon and released by Dark Horse Comics in print and on kindle), books (*A Joss Whedon Film, Dr. Horrible’s Sing-Along Blog, The Book*), the stage in different theaters of Georgia, Seattle, Ireland and Glasgow, and concert halls. The series finally debuted on television on The CW on October 9, 2012, for the 9 pm slot, and the audience’s enthusiastic reception led to negotiations in order to produce the second season for television.

The series was planned in three acts which focus on Billy Buddy / Dr. Horrible’s application to join The Evil League of Evil. Act I opens as Billy in his Dr. Horrible costume directly addresses the audience / readers of his (video)blog and informs them that he is adding final touches to his freeze ray and waiting for an answer from The Evil League of Evil. The arrival of his friend/sidekick, Moist, with his mail including a letter from the ELE that requests committing “a heinous crime” as an evaluation project, leads to Billy’s decision to pull “a major heist” and steal Wonderflonium. While Billy finally gets the substance, Captain Hammer intervenes and Billy inadvertently introduces his nemesis to Penny, the love of his life. Act I includes four songs: “My Freeze Ray,” “Bad Horse Chorus,” “Caring Hands” and “A Man’s Gotta Do.”

Act II marks Billy’s endeavors to complete the freeze ray, and shows his pining over Penny who is currently dating Captain Hammer. Billy/Dr. Horrible’s latest attempt to prove himself is defeated by LAPD and Captain Hammer who have been informed of Billy’s intentions through his blog posts. The ELE disapproves of Dr. Horrible’s latest defeat and declares assassination as the only way to consider his application now. While Billy is in conflict over the murder he has to commit, a chat with Penny at the laundromat leads to an encounter with Captain Hammer who

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<sup>269</sup> Wortham, Jenna. "Flood of Fans Crashes Dr. Horrible Website." *Wired.com*. Conde Nast Digital, 15 July 2008. Web. 25 May 2016. <<http://www.wired.com/2008/07/dr-horrible-fan/>>



taunts Dr. Horrible/Billy by saying that he is dating Penny just to spite him. Dr. Horrible's final song indicates his decision to kill Captain Hammer in order to ensure his admission into the ELE. This act includes four songs: "My Eyes," "Bad Horse Chorus: Reprise," "Penny's Song" and "Brand New Day."

Act III begins with Captain Hammer's crusade to help the homeless in order to impress Penny while Billy secludes himself to work obsessively on his new Death Ray. Captain Hammer's work with the homeless earns him the title of the city's new hero. A statue of him will be unveiled (in his honor) on the night of the opening of the homeless shelter. Billy interrupts Captain Hammer's acceptance song in full Dr. Horrible attire to kill him and also to reproach the residents who cannot see through Captain Hammer's hypocritical deeds. However, Billy hesitates when aiming at Captain Hammer. This gives him the chance to knock Billy across the room. Billy's fall damages the death ray and thus, when Captain Hammer tries to use it against him, it misfires and causes an explosion. Billy soon finds Penny injured by the shrapnels. Ironically, Penny's death in his arms is the murder that confirms Billy's admission into the ELE. The act ends with Dr. Horrible's entrance to the meeting of the league of supervillans — Fury Leika, Snake Bite, Dead Bowie, Tie-Die, Professor Normal, Fake Thomas Jefferson, and Bad Horse who proves to be an actual horse. The last scene of the series shows a numb Billy without his Dr. Horrible costume who addresses the readers of his blog in a final post: "And I won't feel .... a thing" and the shots fades to black. The list of songs in Act III includes: "So they say," "Everyone's a hero," "Slipping," and "Everything you ever."

### IV.3.1.2 Breaking the ninth wall<sup>270</sup> : a commentary on television, the internet and supervillains

While *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog* inarguably possesses the three conditions of non-linearity, user-centrality and medium-consciousness that are the prerequisites for the formation of hypertexts and guarantee their extendability, its creative approach to fulfilling these conditions is what makes it a fascinating specimen of hypertextual networks. First, the non-linearity of the series was realized by employing and adapting itself to the blog form that is read in reverse order (the latest posts are usually on top and thus, the content is usually presented in medias res. This characteristic lays the ground for flashbacks and prequels. Moreover, the distribution of the series at intervening times creates the illusion that the story is happening in real time and can be developed by either the authorial group or the audience in the future. Second, the authorial group of *Dr. Horrible* started communicating with their audience even before the series was released and benefitted from the Whedon fanbase in order to promote and distribute the series. *Dr. Horrible* owes its success partly to the Whedon fanbase. The role of the audience was also emphasized on the fictional level. Billy / *Dr. Horrible* establishes a relationship with his viewers/readers by addressing them directly, and creates the illusion that the audience is not merely observing the events, but they are part of the story, and thus able to affect the current of events. This way, the series intensifies the impact of the tragic ending and leads to the emergence of alternative stories produced by the frustrated audience. However, it is the remarkable medium-consciousness that facilitates the expandability of *Dr. Horrible's* network. The series benefits from the internet to produce a multimedia and multi-genres core text and employs it as a transitional platform, a virtual diegetic

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<sup>270</sup> Jed Whedon, one of the writers and producers, says “Joss, that song had no content. It wasn't even about the movie. It was about itself. It's like breaking the ninth wall” following his song, “A Heart Broken,” in the musical commentary. In this song, Joss Whedon expresses his dissatisfaction with the public appetite for paratextual material that averts attention from the main narrative. Since the series has surpassed several boundaries and problematized and re-defined so many concepts and functions that Jed's playful exaggerated phrase, “breaking the ninth wall” seems like the proper description of it.

Whedon, Joss and Maurrisa Tancheroen, Jed Whedon, Zack Whedon. *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog, The Book*, London: Titan Books: 2010. p. 69

level to launch the expansion of the network. The core text of *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog* will be the focus of this section and the creative usage of the internet as a virtual diegetic level, a virtual meta-level to be exact, will be discussed in the subsequent section.

#### **IV.3.1.2.1 Transmedia intertextuality: the fusion of movie genres and literary traditions**

The unique core text of *Dr. Horrible* has a significant role in the emergence and the speedy spread of the network. The core text of this open hypertextual network is a homogenized patchwork of interwoven genres whose primary medium of expression is neither television (if we consider *Dr. Horrible* a generic series), nor the internet. However, this miscellaneous quality that I would call transmedia intertextuality catalyzes the transference of the narrative among the natural media for the formative genres of which the core text has been composed. This section will first study the diversity of movie genres and literary traditions that create the potential for the narrative to be transmitted from the internet to other media and then it will focus on different media in which *Dr. Horrible* has already branched out.

The titles of *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog* and *A Joss Whedon Film, Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog: The Book* clearly indicate the significant role of hybrid genres and media in the creation of this web-series.<sup>271</sup> This less-than-an-hour web-series benefits from the audiences' prior knowledge of literary traditions and movie genres to retell an old story from a new perspective. Presenting the story of the battle between a hero and his nemesis in the form of a blog diary, the series flaunts its major theme, the struggle between good and evil. The characters, their names and costumes directly remind us of celebrated comic book superheroes such as Superman, Dr. Strange

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<sup>271</sup> To be more accurate, all the quotations were taken from the script of the series published in *A Joss Whedon Film, Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog: The Book*.

and X-Men and their fight against mad scientists and evil forces that threaten the world(s), yet there is something new about *Dr. Horrible*.

The series parts ways with the traditional superhero stories simply by changing the perspective. First, the story is told from the point of view of the would-be supervillain. In an unconventional turn on the roles of the protagonist and the antagonist, *Dr. Horrible* casts the supervillain as the hero, which results in presenting the superhero as his opponent. The protagonist of the series is not the dim-witted and brawny Captain Hammer who is a celebrated hero in the fictional society of *Dr. Horrible*, but the brainy Dr. Horrible who intends to become a supervillain and change the said society. While Captain Hammer is as strong as the superheroes the audience already know, his social behavior and selfish character prevent him from getting any sympathy from the viewers. Different from the well-known superheroes who usually lead a double life and whose strength is usually the result of scientific experiments, Captain Hammer is “naturally like this”<sup>272</sup> and his moral codes and intentions leave much to be desired. On the contrary, Billy, who uploads his blog diary under the name of Dr. Horrible, is portrayed as a sympathetic and intelligent character who is shocked when his so-called sidekick, Moist, suggests murdering an old woman as the required assassination to get into the Evil League of Evil. The audience who watch this inverted world cannot help wondering about the reasons behind Dr. Horrible’s desire to become a member of Evil League of Evil. The fact that the question has never been answered in the series provides an extraordinary opportunity for the story to be continued in the form of comic books.

While singing supervillains may sound strange and impractical, *Dr. Horrible*’s theatrical extensions are highly dependent on the ties of the series to musical theater and movies. *Dr. Horrible* delivers dialogues, monologues, soliloquies and asides through songs, duets and solos. This way, the individual episodes add a theatrical aspect to the series, and pave the way for future stage

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<sup>272</sup> A Joss Whedon Film: *Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog*, *The Book*, 45.

productions. Not surprisingly, *Dr. Horrible* was presented in three “acts,” instead of three “episodes” which is common in televisual terminology.

The inverted universe of the series, however, problematizes the traditions of the musical genre. The genre raises the expectations of the audience who are familiar with the customary happy ending in musical movies. The love triangle and the good-versus-evil struggle prepare the audience for poetic justice and the final triumph of good. Although Act I with the introduction of the hero, the sidekick / confidant, the antihero and the love interest promises a pure musical to some extent, the same act plants the seeds of a much darker story when establishing its perception of a modern hero. The following acts part ways with classic examples of the musical genre such as *Mary Poppins*, *Singing in the Rain* and *The Sound of Music* and approach the despondent worldview of recent musicals such as *Dancer in the Dark*. Moreover, *Dr. Horrible* shakes the known definitions of good and evil as it challenges the genre and frustrates the expectations of the audience when the antagonist of the series wins the girl and Billy bitterly foretells “There's no happy ending / So they say / Not for me anyway.”<sup>273</sup> If “It's a brand new day / And the sun is high,” “All the birds are singing / That you're gonna die.”<sup>274</sup> This way, *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog* consciously questions the audience's perception of musical movies while at the same time mellows down the tragic ending with the magic of music. Whedon has wisely chosen the musical genre to keep the balance between tragedy and comedy and to oscillate between ordinary and epic stories, the feature that makes it possible to turn anything into a musical movie or play. This ambivalence enables *Dr. Horrible* to communicate with various types of audiences and appeal to different tastes as well as laying the groundwork for musical covers and future theatrical performances. After all, the series demands singing along in its title. It is noteworthy that the musical genre has also been used to create a sense of detachment between the audience and the characters that in turn, has provided Whedon with the

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<sup>273</sup> *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog, The Book*, 56.

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid*, 48.

opportunity to create a meta-dimension that is realized in the form of a musical commentary which comments not only on the series, the industry, the cast and the production process, but also comments on DVD commentaries and how their role has been compromised. The musical commentary will later be discussed separately as it is the first bifurcated text .

The Western is the other genre which appears in *Dr. Horrible's* transmedia world. Although the visual presence of the Western is limited to the singing cowboys who deliver Bad Horse's messages, *Dr. Horrible's* choice of cowboys as the trademark of a genre that tells simple morality tales about the adventures of a usually nomadic cowboy cannot be ignored. While the references to the Western genre reminds the audience of poetic justice and codes of honor, the visual representation of Western movies and the cowboys who work for the Evil League of Evil suggest an inverted reading of the traditional Western. The fact that the cowboys' work for Bad Horse subtly refers to this upturned universe where cowboys, who are famous for horsemanship, are ruled by a horse.

While the appearance of cowboys in an obvious superhero story may seem strange, it is not the only reference to the Western genre. The encounters between Billy and Captain Hammer have been depicted as duels at least three times: their confrontation after the first heist, their rivalry in the laundry sequence, and the final battle which determines the fate of the heroes. Although *Dr. Horrible's* urban setting is far from the vast landscapes of the wild West, the struggle for survival in a fairly modern city, the isolated hero who feels the need to “destroy the status quo,”<sup>275</sup> and the moral barrenness the series evokes suggest a strong resemblance. On the other



Figure IV.3.1.2.1.P.1

*Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog*

Joss Whedon

00:06:28

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<sup>275</sup> *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog*, 16

hand, the fights between superheroes and their nemeses are the modernized equivalent of Western duels. This wasteland of society celebrates and condemns the wrong people as heroes and villains and ironically turns the potential heroes into villains.

As in Western movies, the majority is always on the side of the winner with no regard for his ambiguous moral values. The heroes are replaced quickly and the victims are forgotten just as rapidly. The newspapers title for Penny's death reads "Country Mourns Whats-Her-Name."<sup>276</sup> Following the tradition of the best examples of the genre, spaghetti Westerns included, no real change takes place and the outcast who intended to change the society either conforms to the standards he abhorred, gets the girl, and becomes part of the system, as sheriff for instance, or in more realistic examples, leaves the city behind towards a disheartening sunset. The generic last shot of the western movie usually emphasizes the loneliness of the outcast hero in the city he has just saved. The following pictures demonstrate how Captain Hammer's obsessive groupies who kept his laundry cleaning bill form a Dr. Horrible fan club after Captain Hammer was defeated. As indicated under the pictures, they are only ten minutes apart in the series and indicate how fast the society changes sides according to the situation.



Figure IV.3.1.2.1.P.2



Figure IV.3.1.2.1.P.3

*Dr Horrible's Sing Along Blog*

Joss Whedon

00:28:06

00:38:41

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<sup>276</sup> *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog*, 65

*Dr. Horrible* follows the darker path that the Western genre presents. It avoids featuring stock characters and the imposed happy ending through which good always conquers evil and the celebrated hero ends up with the girl of his dreams. Instead, *Dr. Horrible* questions our definition of hero and villain by placing the characters on the grey scale, encourages a more realistic worldview through the death of the love interest, Penny, and Billy's excruciating sense of loss ("I won't feel a thing")<sup>277</sup> in the shallow society which immediately replaces its beloved hero with its former villain.

Science fiction has an incontrovertible presence in *Dr. Horrible*. Not only do the gadgets such as the remote control of the van and the death ray emphasize the prominent role of science, but Billy's lab also induces the assumption that the resulting inventions and discoveries will lead to disaster. As for musical and Western movies, *Dr. Horrible* chooses the dystopian aspect of the genre and suggests that science is unable to save humanity. Billy Buddy's first attempt at making the freeze ray is to stop time in order to try and make "real audible connection" with the love of his life: "With my free ray I will stop the world / With my freeze ray I will / find the time to find the words."<sup>278</sup> Later, he decides to use the device for more significant causes because "this world is a mess"<sup>279</sup> and a scientist's responsibility is to improve the world using his abilities. However, an accountable scientist in this upended world is unable to avoid destruction. Billy believes he has to destroy "the status quo, ... because the status is **not** quo."<sup>280</sup> But there is always a dear price to pay in order to make any fundamental changes and like Victor Frankenstein, Billy fails to improve his situation or save his loved ones through knowledge. The monster he creates is even more horrendous than Dr. Frankenstein's unfinished creature. It is an evil version of himself.

By creating Dr. Horrible, Billy Buddy re-creates an evil persona in a Dr. Jekyll manner. While Dr. Jekyll unleashes his demonic alter ego through scientific experiments and later sacrifices

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<sup>277</sup> *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog, The Book*, 69

<sup>278</sup> *Ibid*, 20.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid*, 16

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid*, 16



himself to protect the world from his diabolic alter ego, Billy sadly believes that joining forces with the evil side is the only way to be effective in our gloomy world. Thus, contrary to *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *Dr. Horrible* sacrifices the innocent Billy Buddy to save its Mr. Hyde, Dr. Horrible. The change in Billy's outfit from a simple white lab coat to a red and black robe after Penny's death and his admission into the ELE, visually marks Billy's metamorphosis into a different version of himself. The fact that the series never really explains why Billy Buddy finds no solution but to join the Evil League of Evil in the first place and the resulting ambiguity lays the ground for later backstories and future prequels. Later, *Dr. Horrible and Other Horrible Stories* by Zack Whedon, indeed elaborated on the backstory and traced the reasons in the medium of graphic novel.

In all the above mentioned examples, *Dr. Horrible* imitates and follows the rules of the genre with the aim of upturning and questioning them. However, subtle parodies are not the only literary tradition the series employs to construct an intertextual core text. The discussion concerning the divergent genres in *Dr. Horrible* would remain incomplete without a brief mention of Jonathan Swift's satirical fiction, *Gulliver's Travels*. After the initial amusement about a horse as the head of the ELE, we can easily trace the origins of Bad Horse back to *Gulliver's Travels*. When the audience finally meet the character and find out Bad Horse is literally a horse instead of a nickname, they naturally relate Bad Horse to the Houyhnhnms in Swift's book. Keeping in mind that Gulliver considers Houyhnhnms as the "perfection of nature"<sup>281</sup> and regards horses as reasonable and peaceful creatures in comparison to savage humans, the Yahoos, a horse as the head of the most corrupted organization of this fictional world attracts the audiences' attention and amplifies the image of an upturned society where good and evil have lost their meanings.

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<sup>281</sup> "The word Houyhnhnm, in their Tongue, signifies a HORSE, and in its Etymology, THE PERFECTION OF NATURE." Swift, Jonathan. *Gulliver's Travels*. part IV, chapter III. Kindle.

Satire, sometimes coupled with parody, is one of the genres that is used to create a meta-dimension in this series with the aim of drawing attention to the process of fabrication and simultaneously questioning established definitions. *Dr. Horrible* does not follow the rules of any genre closely. Instead, it employs and takes advantage of the aspects that might be helpful in the development of the story and problematizes the common clichés of each genre in a playful manner. For instance, *Dr. Horrible* focuses on the fundamental roles of hero and antihero in comic books and simply points out the flaws in assuming any vigorous man to be the hero with no regard for his intellectual faculties or moral values. It also makes the viewers emphasize with the affable anti-hero by telling the story from the point of view of the soon-to-be supervillain. By adopting the villain's perspective, the series turns into a commentary on the heroism encouraged by the society and the formation of heroes and anti-heroes. Instead of another black and white representation of good and evil, *Dr. Horrible* juxtaposes Captain Hammer's exaggerated egotistical features as the hero and the vulnerability of Billy as an aspiring scientist and challenges our perception of the self-sacrificing hero and his fiendish nemesis. The audience cannot help but sympathize with Billy not only because of his pleasant personality and intelligence, but also because his rival, the so-called hero, reminds them of arrogant bullies they have faced at some point in their lives. On the other hand, Captain Hammer is not portrayed as a villain, but a flawed human being whose personality has been formed by the expectations of the society. Thus, the series aims to criticize the society whose most important issue is "Who's gay?"<sup>282</sup> instead of the well-being of the homeless and avoids passing judgement on individuals such as Captain Hammer and his groupies who have internalized shallow values of the society. In a continuous process of raising and frustrating the audiences' expectations, the series indirectly draws attention to the genre and the medium of presentation as the audiences constantly compare the series with traditional examples, and analyze the similarities and differences.

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<sup>282</sup> A Joss Whedon Film: *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog*, *The Book*, 55.

Although regarding *Gulliver's Travels* as an inspiration for Bad Horse may appear to be questionable, Joss Whedon's reputation for visual references to literary works makes the inclusion of such an unusual character as the head of the ELE far from coincidental. Looking back at Whedon's famous works, we will find numerous subtle references to classic and modern literary works in his now classic series such as *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, and *Firefly*. The fourth season of *Buffy, the Vampire Slayer*, for instance, mainly deals with her attempts to defeat a monster ironically named Adam who has been created out of human remains, demon body parts and advanced technological devices in military labs. Adam's appearance, his relationship with Maggie Walsh, the female scientist who created him and his quest to understand himself and his surroundings have strong similarities with Mary Shelly's *Frankenstein*.

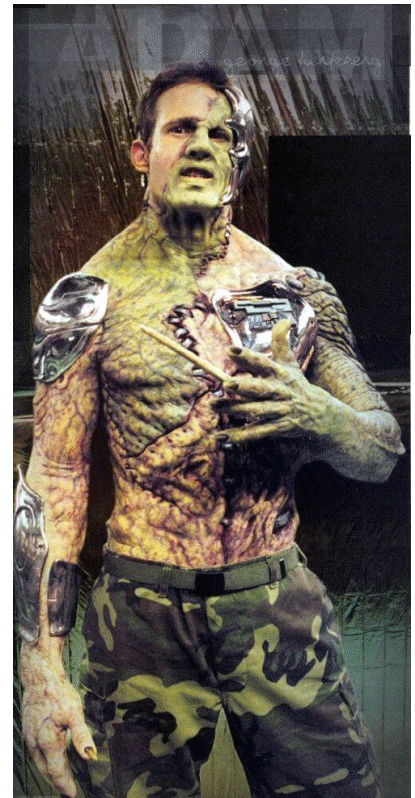


Figure IV.3.1.2.1.P.4  
George Hertzberg as Adam in  
*Buffy, The Vampire Slayer*  
Joss Whedon

Another example is "I Was Made to Love You," episode 15 of the fifth season of the same series that was inspired by *Pygmalion*. Warren, one of the notable enemies of Buffy and her friends, builds a female humanoid robot, April who is the embodiment of female beauty and devotion. April, however, cannot live up to his unrealistic expectations and Warren finally leaves her. April, who was designed to love her creator, embarks on a hopeless quest to find her lover/creator. Her journey turns the episode into a serious contemplation on the true meaning of love, as well as a commentary on the formation of female identity in the still patriarchal society of the twenty-first century.

Shakespearean references are also common in Whedon's works. One the most recognizable references marks the ending of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. In the last episode when two lovers, the vampire and the vampire slayer, who are supposedly natural enemies, not unlike Romeo and

Juliet,<sup>283</sup> hold hands, their hands ignite. Judging from the endless fan fictions that have attempted to replace the ending, the problematic finale of the series left the audience frustrated when Spike did not believe Buffy's love confession. Nevertheless, he died to save her life and the values she represented. However, Whedon's visual reference to *Romeo and Juliet* leaves no doubt about Buffy's deep affections and concludes the star-crossed lovers' story.



Figure IV.3.1.2.1.P.5  
“Chosen,” the last episode of  
*Buffy, The Vampire Slayer*  
Joss Whedon

Whedon's modernized version of *Much Ado About Nothing* (2012) is another indication of his deep affection for re-reading Shakespearian texts, and confirms the assumption about the intertextual nature of Whedonverse to use the term frequently employed by the fandom. Therefore, literary references such as Bad Horse can safely be seen as non-coincidental. However, it may be argued that taking Bad Horse as a reference to Houyhnhnms is reading too much into the text, and the similarities might not be intentional. If so, my whole argument on the connection between *Dr. Horrible* and *Gulliver's Travels* illustrates how the intertextual core text creates the potential for expansion, and how the readers, the audience in this case, expand the hypertextual network in different directions according to their own knowledge and literary background. The following section will focus on the bifurcations originating from the *Dr. Horrible's* intertextual core text and their spread across the media.

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<sup>283</sup> “Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much, / Which mannerly devotion shows in this, / For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch, / And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.”

Shakespeare, William. *Romeo and Juliet*. Gutenberg Project. Gutenberg.org, 25 May 2012. Web. 7 June 2016.  
<<https://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1112/pg1112.html>>

#### IV.3.1.2.2 Intermediacy: transitioning into various media

Commentaries create a meta-dimension for DVDs the same way as the intruding author of metafiction. The authorial team reflects on the process of production, shares back stage stories, and sometimes even hints at possible interpretations. Similar to metafiction, commentaries draw attention to the fabricated status of the piece. However, while the format of the book makes it clear that the real world to which the fiction refers is also a fictionalized version of itself, the vivacity of movies or audio files hinders the fact that components of an artwork have been selected and polished. In short, commentaries do not reflect reality in its totality. The readers of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* distinguish between John Fowles, the writer, and John Fowles, the fictionalized writer, who keeps interrupting the course of the story. This distinction is more difficult to make when you watch backstage documentaries in DVD features or listen to the audio commentaries by cast and crew. The audience usually recognizes the movie as fictional and the features as real and ignores that the authorial team produces, selects, and edits the features with commercial interest in mind. The problems, arguments, or anything that may affect the sale will not find their way to the commentary. Moreover, although DVD commentaries may be switched on and off on command, they are categorized under paratextual material, and therefore, are part of the text.

*Dr. Horrible*, however, has taken a different position toward commentaries. Including two commentaries, one regular and one musical, in the DVD, *Dr. Horrible* demonstrates the double function of this feature. On one hand, commentaries indeed bridge the real and the fictitious worlds. On the other hand, commentaries are produced by the authorial group and may be in part or completely fictional. The regular commentary of the series exemplifies the first and the most common function. The musical commentary, on the other hand, demonstrates how commentaries can be orchestrated and fictionalized. The series benefits from the meta-dimension of commentaries where fact and fiction intersect and turns the musical commentary into a collection of stories about

the series, the process of production and the cast. The result is a piece of fiction realized in another medium and can be considered as *Dr. Horrible's* first bifurcated text.

#### **IV.3.1.2.2.1 The meta-dimension and the creation of “a most uncommon commentary”<sup>284</sup>**

The release of *Dr. Horrible's* DVD (2008) marked another original achievement for the series: a musical commentary for a musical blog. The features and DVD extras usually add a meta-dimension to the movie by focusing on the process of production. The production team discusses the piece and offers possible explanations and interpretations in the voice-over. Short videos concentrate on different stages of production and provide information about costumes, set designs or special effects. Some DVDs even include outtakes and alternative endings for the viewers who may not be satisfied with the final product. Although the release of the DVD is the proof of the finalized text, the movie, the possibility of adding an event to the plot or choosing an alternative ending opens the text to the audience and permits them to modify part of the story in their minds.

Commentaries have the most significant role among all the features DVDs offer because through them the production team directly communicate with the audience. The commentary sound tracks function as a removable meta-level which contains explanations and reflections provided by the production team. If activated, this soundtrack opens a door into the real world and juxtaposes it with the world of fiction by affixing a supposedly real layer to the constructed world of the movie. The resulting tension provokes a meta-dimension that blurs the border between fact and fiction. The ambivalence between the fictitious and the real, and the resulting tension are the main source of speculations and future interpretations and/or reproductions. However, DVD commentaries and the excessive information they provide, may paradoxically impede controversial understandings and lead the audience toward a pre-designed conclusion.

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<sup>284</sup> *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog*, 82

*Dr. Horrible's* musical commentary reflects upon the dual function of commentaries as vessels for both fact and fiction: first, the core text may take advantage of the built-in meta-dimension in commentaries to expand itself and trigger more bifurcations. The outcome is either purely fictional or a combination of fact and fiction. This aspect that is realized in all songs of the commentary shall be discussed using the song "Nobody's Asian in the Movies" as an example. The second function and the familiar aspect of most commentaries is to draw attention to the process of production in order to improve the audience's understanding of the text by demonstrating the underlying forces that make the text operative. In brief, educating the audience and creating potential for new interpretations is one of the objectives of commentaries or any material with meta-dimension. This aspect is compromised when the added material clarifies ambiguities in favor of a certain interpretation. *Dr. Horrible's* musical commentary draws attention to the hazards of undermining the main narrative by abusing the meta-dimension and adding conclusive material. This issue will be discussed using "A Heart, Broken" as an example.

As the track titles that follow demonstrate, *Dr. Horrible* turns its commentary into a medium-conscious reflection on commentaries. The meticulously written piece added 14 more songs to *Dr. Horrible's* sound track, and marked the first expansion of *Dr. Horrible's* hypertextual network. The musical numbers appear in the following order:

1. "Commentary!" performed by the cast and the writers
2. "Strike" performed by the writers
3. "Ten-Dollar Solo" performed by Stacy Shirk and Neil Patrick Harris
4. "Better Than Neil" performed by Nathan Fillion
5. "The Art" performed by Felicia Day
6. "Zack's Rap" performed by Zack Whedon, backing vocals: Maurissa Tancharoen
7. "Moist" performed by Simon Helberg
8. "Ninja Ropes" performed by Jed Whedon, Neil Patrick Harris, and Nathan Fillion
9. "All About Me" performed by Steve Berg, David Fury, Marti Noxon, Rob Reinis, Stacy Shirk,

Maurissa Tacharoen and Jed Whedon

10. “Nobody’s Asian in the Movies” performed by Maurissa Tacharoen

11. “Heart, Broken” performed by Joss Whedon, backing vocals: Jed Whedon, Zack Whedon,

Maurissa Tacharoen

12. “Neil’s Turn” performed by Neil Patrick Harris

13. “Commentary! (Reprise!) performed by the cast and the writers

14. “Steve’s Song” performed by Steve Berg

As is clear from the list above, contrary to usual DVD extras that feature the director or the actors, both the cast and the creators of *Dr. Horrible* get a chance to sing their own song. However, the songs do not hide the fact that the audience receives a slightly distorted or exaggerated reality. The musicality of the commentary underlines the pre-written status of the extra material instead of the spontaneity that commentaries claim. It is impossible for the cast to break into song on cue autonomously. The total authenticity of DVD commentaries is questionable similarly. Any extra material featured in commentaries is selected, edited or approved by the authorial group. Commentaries may claim that “You see everything inside / No matter what the movie tries to hide,”<sup>285</sup> but the truth is the audience will receive a combination of fiction and fact, or even fiction and fictionalized facts.

The musical commentary surprisingly covers almost everything the audience needs to know about the series, characters and the cast and even the current issues, but it also raises awareness about the less glamorous side of the industry such as low wages, condescending attitudes and racial discrimination that common commentaries avoid to discuss. “Strike,” for instance, provides the audience with some background information about the strike that triggered the creation of the series. Rightfully sung by the writers, “Strike” bitterly recalls the unjust treatment by the studios that led to an unsuccessful “strike for the living wage.” However, the song concludes that “I’m proud that I walked the line / With writers, fans and friends of mine / But now I ask what was it

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<sup>285</sup> A Joss Whedon Film: *Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog*, *The Book*, 88.



finally about.”<sup>286</sup> The actors’ reaction, although not the real response from the actors who appeared in the series for free, reflect the disturbing indifference of the public in this matter. Nathan Fillion says “that’s a fascinating piece of information! If you are a boring person,” and Neil Patrick Harris dismisses the song saying “I never knew a song could feel like a really, really long history class. Maybe, it’s time we heard from the actors.”<sup>287</sup>

“Nobody’s Asian in the Movies” also takes the core text to a new direction in order to raise awareness about the lack of diversity in cinema and television. Maurissa Tancharoen, who is herself of Asian descent, reviews the clichés roles such as “a ninja, a physician / Or a goofy mathematician / Or a groupie in the chorus”<sup>288</sup> that Asian actors play in the movies or on television and in an ironic reference to how the industry casts colored actors, puts herself at the end of the long list of “A Mexican”, “A black”, “A Persian, or a Cajun, or an Indian / Or an American-Indian played by a Mexican.” The song concludes with Jed’s hurtful remark that “But Maurissa, movies couldn’t even be / made without Asians. We need them to play the parts we’re not / willing to.” This powerful song that accentuated racial diversity on the screen tells the story of an Asian writer and singer who cannot even get the part she wrote and sung for on the demos. As influential as the message is, the Whedon fans know that the song has generalized Maurissa Tancharoen and fictionalized her character and relationship with the production group. Even if the audience does not recognize Ms. Tancharoen for her skills as a writer, song writer, singer, actress and in brief, a valuable member of the production team, they can easily perceive from the paratextual material offered on the official site, on the fan sites, in the book, and in both commentaries how highly esteemed she is. That is beside the fact that she is married to Jed Whedon and sister-in-law to Joss Whedon, and can probably get any roles she sets her heart on. Nevertheless, the song attracts attention to the ugly side of the movie industry. It may not be true in the case of the *Dr. Horrible*

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<sup>286</sup> *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog, The Book*, 82.

<sup>287</sup> *Ibid*, 82

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid*, 89

production process. But it applies to numerous real examples that common commentaries lose a great chance to address and possibly make a change by creating a glamorous yet counterfeit image of the production process. *Dr. Horrible's* "most uncommon commentary" benefits from its meta-dimension, where fact and fiction intermingle, to tell the story of making movies and question commentaries. This way, the first bifurcated text of the series emphasizes that what the audience receives in commentaries has been fictionalized. The fictional aspect of commentaries lays the ground for future fictional bifurcations while the connection to the real world may trigger serious discussions about the industry and the production process.

The musical commentary also recognizes the destructive impact of exposing paratextual material excessively. While some songs such as "Strike," "All About Me" and "Nobody's Asian in the Movies" refer to real events and deal with serious issues, others such as "Better than Neil" or "Neil's Turn" portray a comically distorted image of the cast and their off-stage relationship and provide the audience with funny, but redundant information. In a parodic portrayal of DVD commentaries, the songs performed by the actors reveal the rivalry, narcissism and pretentiousness instead of camaraderie that commentaries usually exhibit. As the opening song states, the public interest in the behind-the-scene footage including outtakes, gag reels and interviews is what increases the DVD sales: "Moments like this sell DVDs / We need to sell more / We've only sold four."<sup>289</sup> The musical commentary, "A Heart, Broken" in particular, states that DVD features are mostly used to increase sales instead of drawing attention to the process and encouraging the audience to think independently. The producers give the costumers/audience what they have paid for: happy yet banal stories about the relationships among the cast and crew, endless praise for director(s), actors and writers, and possibly a glimpse into the creation of special effects in order to keep the audience interested. The disputes and jealousies that disfigure the image of popular actors will not find their way into the commentary. Thus, the commentaries follow the same formula to

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<sup>289</sup> *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog, The Book*, 82.

satisfy the public and the real story remains untold: “Everyone loves these “making-of”s / The story behind the scenes / The way we got that cool shot / And what it all means / We’ll talk about the writing / We’ll probably say “It’s great!” / And the acting — so exiting / Except for Nate.”<sup>290</sup> Contrary to common commentaries, the musical commentary benefits from the public interest in behind-the-scenes so as to draw attention to the pointless information to which commentaries expose their audience, and how this futile attempt at satisfying the audience undermines the narrative. Blending fact and fiction, songs such as “Better than Neil,” “Neil’s Turn” and “Zack’s Rap” provides the audience with a fictionalized version of the actors which the audience easily recognize as fake whether from prior knowledge about the cast or by drawing a comparison between the two commentaries. Although these songs emphasize how commentaries can be altered, they raise a more important question: to what extent does the micro-information offered by commentaries, or extra features in general, help the audience’s understanding of the narrative? In *Dr. Horribles’* case, the fact that the audience already knows about the falsity of the information makes it easier to prove the point that the rivalry between the actors, Mr. Fillion’s narcissistic references to his good looks, Mr. Harris’s pompous references to his achievement, and Zack Whedon’s shady business and criminal affiliations do not help our comprehension of the text in any way. Such trivia, despite dramatic impact on the sales, do not work in favor of the text. On the contrary, such pointless information consumes the potential of the meta-dimension to create branching texts that neither interpret the core text, nor create a pertinent descending text. Such branching text falls short of the promises of the core text and in some cases, it can even be considered a separate text and consequently, cause rupture in the network. The musical commentary points out the risk of stretching the network for redundant information by moving from the mentioned songs to “A Heart, Broken” by Joss Whedon himself, an author’s lament over the narrative.

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<sup>290</sup> *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog, The Book*, p. 82.

Although all tracks of the musical commentary contemplate upon commentaries contradicting their purpose and exploiting the extra material for financial profits, the song “Heart, Broken” performed by Joss Whedon stands out, as it demonstrates the creator’s reflection on this degrading process. Commentaries realize the potential provided by the meta-dimension and while the meta-dimension usually welcomes re-constructions in order to open the work to infinite interpretations, unneeded information offered by commentaries contradicts this purpose. The detailed explication of the making process by cast and crew interferes with the natural process of interpretation. Clarifying all the ambiguities, commentaries leave the audience nothing to explore and bring the deconstruction and reconstructing process to a halt. Such commentaries threaten the revival of the text in three ways. First, they determine a certain interpretation of the text and consequently, seal the text. Second, the poor extra material they offer does not create the potential for the extension of the text. Thirdly, they train the audience to be consumers instead of readers who are able to analyze and create.

“Heart, Broken” performed by Joss Whedon is a reflection on the possible problems caused by misemployment of the meta-dimension. In a humorous remembrance of the past, the tone of which is in contrast with his woeful voice, Joss Whedon laments the good old days when commenting on your own work and presenting the audience with extra material were not obligatory or fashionable. In his witty reference to prehistoric cave paintings, he sings that the cave people would discuss the painted bison instead of asking the artist “why paint a bison if it’s dead / When did you choose the color red? / What was the process in your head?”<sup>291</sup> The song concludes that the artist simply creates and leaves the audience to interpret. The reign of the author is over when the production process ends. It is the audience’s task to unveil the clockwork beneath and reach an

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<sup>291</sup> *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog, The Book*, 90.

understanding of the text. Clarifying ambiguities through extra material would impede this process. The author needs to leave the text and stop elucidating. “We are not supposed to.”<sup>292</sup>

Whedon rebukes the expectations the industry imposes on the authors and warns against the harmful impact of unnecessary explanations on the narrative by making references to *The Odyssey* in the second stanza. The incongruousness of the classic epic story with the terminology of television industry intensifies the abnormality of adding explanatory soundtracks or features to a finished work perfectly:

Homer’s Odyssey was swell  
A bunch of guys that went through hell  
He told the tale but didn’t tell  
The audience why  
He didn’t say, here’s what it means  
And here’s a few deleted scenes  
Charybdis tested well with teens.  
He’s not the story  
He’s just a door we open if  
Our lives need lifting.<sup>293</sup>

One of the directly critical songs about the industry alongside “Strike!,” “Nobody’s Asian in the Movies” and “All about Me,” “Heart, Broken” focuses on the predicament of expendable extra material used solely for commercial purposes. Whedon’s whimsical song accentuates a prominent problem: the involvement of the authorial group and the consequent oversimplification of the text stop the process of interpretation and re-construction, the process of wreading. As Whedon mentions, the author should not explain the text or his process. As the song simply puts it, the author is not the story, but a portal to the story. The audience has to experience the text individually, and form their own opinion of the text. In short, the author needs to know when to leave the audience alone with his work. To exemplify, Whedon ends the song with saying good bye, and

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<sup>292</sup> *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog, The Book*, 90.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid*, 90.

literally leaves the stage. This so-called “out of date philosophy”<sup>294</sup> that echoes Barthes’ statement that the death of the author triggers the birth of the reader is reinforced by the refrain sung by the authorial group who threateningly repeat “we are gonna pick pick / Pick pick pick it apart / Open it up to find a tick, tick, tick of a heart / A Heart, broken.”<sup>295</sup> The text if demystified and analyzed by the creators, as commentaries usually do, has nothing to offer readers. Dismantling the text should be left to the wreaders. “Heart, Broken” states that the misemployment of the meta-dimension, the unique aspect of the text that can guarantee its proliferation, can easily sterilize the text. As the song mentions, such a text “is broken by the endless loads / Of making-ofs and mobisodes / The tie-ins, prequels, games and codes / The audience buys / The narrative dies / Stretched and torn.”<sup>296</sup> The comma between “heart” and “broken” visually confirms this understanding.

#### **IV.3.1.2.2 The forking paths: *Dr. Horrible* across the media**

While *Dr. Horrible*’s first branching text warns against the dangers of misusing the potential of the meta-dimension for insignificant extra material, the other bifurcated texts of the network illustrate the prolificacy of meta-dimension if employed for creative purposes. The fusion of genres, which is responsible for the adaptability of the series to different media, finds a significant role in this transition. The following section will focus on the potential *Dr. Horrible* creates that may realize in form of musical productions, weblogs, or another series and will discuss another branching text, *Dr. Horrible and Other Horrible Stories*, that exemplifies how the potential, which has emerged from the miscellany of genres, has been put to use and expanded the core text in a new medium while laying the ground for further multiplications.

The variety of genres in *Dr. Horrible* creates the potential for growth and results in the fusion of media. This attribute enables the series to benefit from the specific features of the

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<sup>294</sup> *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog, The Book*, 90.

<sup>295</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid*

distribution platforms on which each genre normally develops. It is noteworthy that the series is already a multimedia text and *Dr. Horrible's* addition of songs and insistence on the blog form coupled with the fusion of diverse genres provide the potential for further expansion of the core text to stage and movie theaters, as the musicals are usually produced as movies or stage performances such as Broadway shows. That is not to say that the production of a purely musical TV series is impossible, but it is rare. Alongside a large number of the musical movies that find their way to television, some stage productions are filmed and adjusted to appear on the TV screen. The similarities between the aforementioned media make it possible for musical movies or plays to be transported to television. Moreover, the nature of television and its representation of everyday life is responsible for the infrequency of musical televisual productions. It is unbelievable for the characters to break into song while eating breakfast or studying in the library for example. Therefore, television productions usually need a pretext such as the music club in *Glee* to produce musicals. Otherwise, the production of a musical is restricted to one episode for special occasions using a justifiable excuse such as brain injury in *Scrubs* or a near death experience in *Grey's Anatomy*. To summarize, the musical aspect of the series can be developed in its related medium, movies, television or musical shows. The amateur attempts at staging *Dr. Horrible* prove the series' adaptability to the theatrical medium.

The similarities among television, cinema and theater facilitate the continuation of the web-series in each medium. However, *Dr. Horrible* assures its expansion in written form through presenting the series as weblog entries. Using blog and vlog (video blog) posts as the medium through which Billy communicates with his readers/viewers opens the text to reproductions in written form. In blogs, the information is transmitted through writing posts and commenting. The writer-reader relationship is direct and each post has the potential to turn into a live discussion in the comment section provided both parties are online, or to be continued through emails and comments. Either way, the medium permits both writers and readers to extend a certain post.

Although the posts of *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog* mostly appear in the form of videos, Billy's supposed correspondence with his viewers/watchers takes place in written form and confirms the textual nature of the blog. The first act finds Billy in his Dr. Horrible costume answering emails. Billy's responses to the characters who are introduced as readers/viewers provide the audience with some background information about himself and trigger the first flashback where his relationship with Penny is explained. However, these secondary characters are never fully developed due to the time restriction.

The series adapts itself to the blog format and catalyzes the emergence of the written representations of the core text. The reverse structure of blogs makes it possible for the story to shift between the present and the past. The acts that begin in medias res liken *Dr. Horrible* to a blog whose posts are usually read in reverse order while the medium enables the series to move both forward and backwards. The viewers have to sit through Billy's interaction with his readers for about four minutes — a third of the first act— for an explanatory flashback. The other acts follow the same formula as Billy interrupts the story repeatedly to answer the comments and emails, and comment on the current events. The vlog format enables Billy to directly address his fictional viewers and the actual audience. The combination of the second person or you narrative and flashbacks functions on two different levels. First, the direct address to the audience coupled with the story, which unfolds in flashbacks, turns Billy into the narrator of the story and combines a first person point of view, Billy's account of the events, with a third person point of view, the flashbacks in which Billy appears as a character. The fluctuation caused by breaking the narrative for comments keeps the audience aware of the embedded narratives they are witnessing as well as constantly reminding them of both media, a web series and a video blog. The second function of the blog-like order of the acts is realized in Billy's breaking the fourth wall in the form of direct narration, comments, and reflections. Billy's addressing the camera affects the development of the narrative as well as triggering further continuation. On one hand, Billy's comments on the course of



events in front of his readers/viewers' eyes add a meta-dimension to the series. His interruptions and fixed stares into the camera as if he saw his audience bring the intrusive author of metafiction to mind. While talking, Billy adjusts the cameras, turns devices on and off and in brief, indirectly attracts the viewer's attention to the process of posting on a vlog. The songs also have a strong alienation effect and the story is punctuated by frequent cuts to single shots of Billy that bring the audience back to reality. Akin to the fictionalized author of metafiction, Billy's comments and interruptions also help the development of characters and the plot. For instance, Billy's heist, which results in the ELE request for an assassination to let him join, fails simply because "I also need to be a little bit more careful about what I say on this blog. Apparently the LAPD and Captain Hammer are among our viewers."<sup>297</sup> This format, if developed, can easily turn into a self-conscious narrative.

On the other hand, Billy's conversations sometimes go further than simple online interactions. In these rare moments, he thinks aloud and reflects on the events as if he has forgotten about the audience's presence. In his recount of the heist, for example, his mind wonders and his narration shifts between the accounts of the robbery and his distress over having introduced Penny to Captain Hammer. His sincerity draws an analogy between the blog and a diary, as the blog is intrinsically public in comparison to diary that usually promises privacy. The reader of a diary is usually the writer himself while a blogger knows that by posting his memories and thoughts online, he may attract a broader audience. A blogger who is concerned about his privacy may hide behind a pen name or censor his narration self-consciously. Billy's honest account of the happenings and the visual absence of the readers from the blog except through Billy's reactions to their comments, point out the resemblance between Billy's blog and a diary. Keeping in mind that a weblog is the modern equivalent of a diary, *Dr. Horrible* raises expectations, which might be fulfilled later in the form of a fictional diary, through these moments of absolute honesty that also provide the viewers / audience with some insight into the character. One of the most effective moments is the last shot of

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<sup>297</sup> A Joss Whedon Film: *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog*, *The Book*, 41.

the series, when Billy transforms into Dr. Horrible by changing his white costume for a red one, and joins the Evil League of Evil after Penny's death. The images show that he has achieved his goal and turned into a supervillain. He sings "Now the nightmare is real / Now Dr. Horrible is here / To make you quake with fear / To make the whole world kneel"<sup>298</sup> and the doors shut behind him. The image fades to black as we hear Billy's voice saying "And I won't feel." He completes his sentence by uttering "A thing"<sup>299</sup> as the picture opens to Billy, the real Billy dressed in his usual clothes, staring at us with empty eyes, for the last shot. That blank stare is haunting and the way Billy utters "a thing," heartbreaking. At the same time, the ending is pregnant with possibilities. Although the viewers of the blog know that it will not be updated now that Billy has joined the league, they cannot help wondering about what will come next; whether Billy has lost his moral compass after Penny's death and will turn into a full fledged supervillain, or whether he still has some humanity left in him, as displayed in that desolating last shot. The last scene seems to be a beginning instead of an ending. As strange as it sounds, *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog* begins and ends in medias res paving the way for both prequels and sequels.



Figure IV.3.1.2.2.2. P.1

*Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog*

Joss Whedon

00:39:10



Figure IV.3.1.2.2.2.P.2

00:39:46

<sup>298</sup> *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog, The Book*, 67.

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid*, 69

The undeniable resemblance of these “genuine” moments to soliloquies, asides and stream of consciousness also clears the way for both theatrical and fictional productions. However, it is not Billy who is put in the spotlight, but his blog readers/viewers and on a bigger scale the real audience. Billy’s fictional viewers / readers such as Johnny Snow and the actual viewers of the series are addressed in the same way as Billy looks into the camera and talks directly to his audience. Billy’s longtime watchers / readers are invited to communicate through comments and the real audience is challenged to “sing along.” The fact that the series is unable to elaborate on all the characters and events in its short running time leaves a lot to be developed and once more, the audience is cordially invited to play a role in expanding *Dr. Horrible’s* network. For instance, there is not much information about Billy’s life, his background, his feud with Captain Hammer and more importantly, his reasons for joining the Evil League of Evil. These gaps create the potential of expansion for the audience or even the production group. *Dr. Horrible and Other Horrible Stories* deploys this potential to flesh out the story.

Comic books and graphic novels may be the most reasonable choice to expand *Dr. Horrible’s* network not only because the series borrows a lot from the superhero genre, but also because it is the perfect blend of images and written words. Although comic books have more in common with animated stories, another possible medium to extend this network, the choice of comic books to continue this particular web series definitely makes sense. The panels of *Dr. Horrible and Other Horrible Stories* by Zack Whedon bear strong resemblance to freeze frames from the series. Each story was drawn by a different artist and the difference in style makes the characters slightly different from the actors and even the same character in other stories of the book. However, a one-page drawing of the characters with no panel and strong resemblance with the actors confirms the affinity between the series and the comic book at the end of each story.

The book consists of five stories: “Captain Hammer: Be Like Me,” “Moist: Humidity Rising,” “Penny: Keep Your Head Up,” “The Evil League of Evil,” and “Dr. Horrible.” As the titles

clearly show, each story focuses on a single backstory, develops the character and her/his relationships with the others and sometimes introduces new characters into *Dr. Horrible's* universe. Among the stories, The Evil League of Evil may serve as the best example of the expansion of *Dr. Horrible's* network as almost everything that has been explained in this story is missing from the series.

“The Evil League of Evil” is a pure bifurcated story, as it takes the characters barely introduced by the series and develops an independent story based on the character. Telling the illuminative backstory of the league of villains of whom we have heard so much and glimpsed before Billy closed the door on us, “The Evil League of Evil” concentrates on Bad Horse, also known as The Thoroughbred of Sin, and his cabinet consisting of Fake Thomas Jefferson, Professor Normal, Fury Leika, Snake Bite, Dead Bowie, Tie-Die and their powers and personalities. Fake Thomas Jefferson, for instance, appears to be a boastful opportunist who easily claims others’ achievements. Although everybody knows him as fake, he insists that he is the real Thomas Jefferson and therefore, two hundred and sixty-seven years old. He even invites the league to his “magnificent country home” called Monticello “between the hours of nine a.m. and five p.m.”<sup>300</sup> His amusing character triggers one of the most important moments of the comic when he pretends that he has understood Bad Horse’s neigh, and accepts to be his vice president. Bad Horse ruins his plans by saying “I said, “Nice work. You idiot””<sup>301</sup> and reveals his ability to speak in the very last panel of the story, an interesting subplot to be explored later.

The story also depicts each villain’s superpower besides their personality. Dead Bowie, for instance, has hypnotic powers and can persuade people to do as he wishes. His appearance was inspired by David Bowie and his famous lightening bolt makeup for his sixth album, *Aladdin Sane*, a pun on “a lad insane,” that surprisingly suits a supervillain like Dead Bowie. However, the

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<sup>300</sup> Whedon, Zack. *Dr. Horrible and Other Horrible Stories*. Milwaukee: Dark Horse, 2010. p. 39.

<sup>301</sup> *Ibid*, 52.

lightening bolt on Dead Bowie’s face turns into a sort of supervillain mask and the same pattern appears on the face of his victims, possibly an homage to David Bowie’s hypnotic power to mesmerize his audience.

Although two female supervillains appear in the ELE, this story only portrays Tie-Die in action. She is able to induce destruction by enraging people. This story pictures her creating chaos by moving among a group of peace-loving hippies and moving her dance ribbons which turn them into “an army of rage-fuelled destruction addicts.” However, her backstory, personality and other abilities, if any, remain untouched for further exploration in future issues. For instance, she wears a necklace with a peace symbol pendant around her neck that demands explanation, and raises the question if Tie-Die, is a frustrated idealist like Billy.

In addition to the creation of the potential for further bifurcation, the story also introduces new characters: The Council of Champions including Captain Hammer, Wingspan, and Elementa. Wingspan and Elementa about whom we learn almost nothing in this story raise the readers’ expectations for the future stories. “The Evil League of Evil” also foregrounds its connections with other media, the series in particular, in order to facilitate transportation and diffusion in other media. It is the only story that starts with narration. Since the butler is the first character who appears in the story, he may be the voice we read, but cannot hear. The opening of the story also follows the horror film rules, and brings gothic fiction to mind. The panel shows a mansion on top of a hill on a stormy night although the lightening strike draws our eyes



Figure IV.3.1.2.2.2.P.3  
*Dr Horrible and Other Horrible Stories*  
Zac Whedon  
37

to the chimneys and factory structures behind the building and the dark green substance that exits them. The onomatopoeic words also create the vivid imagery of an empty building and the chilling echoes in hollow corridors. In brief, the story creates the potential to be transplanted into a new medium and be continued as a horror film, Gothic novel, TV series or animation in one page.

Although “The Evil League of Evil” is the least related to *Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog* among the stories of *Dr. Horrible and Other Horrible Stories*, it subtly emphasizes its connection to the series. The story precedes *Dr. Horrible* chronologically. However, the main plot line, poisoning the water main, is a direct quotation from the song “My Eyes” that opens Act two: “Any dolt with half a brain / Can see that humankind has gone insane / To the point where I don’t know / If I’d upset the status quo / If I threw poison in the water main.”<sup>302</sup> This line finds a great significance in “The Evil League of Evil” as Professor Normal attempts to poison the water main and it is Johnny Snow, the blog viewer mentioned in the first act, who stops the evil professor. Johnny Snow’s possession of a freeze ray, that actually freezes what it touches, draws a parallel between him and Billy Buddy. His attempts to defend the open city against the ELE result in disaster when the dim-witted James Flames ruins his plans. The analogy is confirmed when the media distort the story and the newsreaders praise James Flames, Johnny Snow’s nemesis, for his bravery. Johnny Snow, on the other hand, is portrayed as the villain. Another ambiguously defined hero/antihero duo is being created.

The similarities between Johnny Snow and Billy Buddy clarify some of the ambiguities of Act 1. However, this parallel between the two characters raises more questions. Johnny Snow has not joined the ELE, yet he claims to be Dr. Horrible’s nemesis, and challenges him to confrontation repeatedly. Is he supposed to be Billy’s foil and display the alternative choice? Why does Johnny keep emailing Dr. Horrible, claiming to be his nemesis (in Act 1), and challenging him to duels? Does Johnny identify with Billy or consider him a danger simply because he claims to be evil? Is

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<sup>302</sup> *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog, The Book*, 34.

Johnny's insistence that "I'm a good guy"<sup>303</sup> a sign of his black and white world view? Are Johnny and Billy going to engage in a battle any time soon? and more importantly, who is the real hero? "The Evil League of Evil" can easily turn into a core text and initiate its own web. The network is once again ready to grow in all its integrated media.

#### **IV.3.1.2.3 Back to origins, an unconventional introduction, an unexpected appreciation**

*Dr. Horrible's* transportation to other media has never been a mere adaptation. The medium-conscious series usually foregrounds the differences between the medium in which the core text appears and the destination medium and then finds similarities that facilitate the transition. The creators of this hypertextual network are fully aware of these unavoidable changes and adjustments, and turn them into parts of the network instead of concealing them. The songs, for instance, cannot be easily conveyed on paper. However, the singing cowboys appear in "The Evil League of Evil" and the musical notes around the bubble indicate the song. The readers who are familiar with the series can easily read the line carrying the tune. It is clear that the interaction with the cowboys and Johnny Snow in the form of songs is not as appealing as it was in the series and may even confuse the readers who have not watched the series. So Johnny interrupts the song shouting "I'm not evil. I'm a good guy." The astonished cowboys ask "You're saying don't sing the rest?" and the interaction continues in normal conversation. This playful spirit and the consciousness of the medium governs *Dr. Horrible's* universe.

The introduction to *Dr. Horrible and Other Horrible Stories* is another good example, as it is presented in form of emails—or text messages—exchanged among the writers of the series, Joss Whedon, Jed Whedon, Maurissa Tancharoen, and Natan Fillion who portrayed Captain Hammer. While this may not be a conventional choice for an introduction, the exchange, the banter and the

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<sup>303</sup> *Dr. Horrible and Other Horrible Stories*, 51

difficulties and the distinctiveness of this chosen medium maintain the multi-vocality that characterizes the core text in which each character literally vocalizes her/his thoughts. At the same time, participating in the release of the new bifurcated text, the creators of the series welcome the comic book into the canon and display the hypertextual standpoint toward the expanding networks.

The introduction demonstrates the self-consciousness and medium-consciousness of the network through different techniques. First, the conversation among the writers about writing an introduction turns the introduction into a self-conscious piece. This one-page combination of emails and text messages humorously emphasizes the presence of an authorial group whose different voices might get overlooked in traditional homogenous introductions and challenges our conception of introductions. The loss of voices in the written form is exemplified through the Joss-Jed repartee as Joss writes: “I think they’re gonna want the feminine perspective. Maurrisa, can you ask if Jed will do it?” and his brother answers “Ha ha ha. Very funny. *As I type it looks sarcastic, but I actually thought that was quite humorous.* Just the kind of sprightly wit needed for an intro.”<sup>304</sup> [My italics]. Moreover, the writers humorously disguise their real opinion to avoid offending their co-writer and shift the focus from the writer to the book. Choosing the proper form over the traditional one, although limited, permits all the writers to participate in introducing the bifurcated text and let the comic book acknowledge its connection, yet declare its independence from the series.

“Dr. Horrible takes over Emmys” is another good example of an independent, yet expanded text originated by the series. *Dr. Horrible’s Sing Along Blog* received an Emmy nomination in 2009, the year that Neil Patrick Harris, Dr. Horrible / Billy Buddy, produced and hosted the Emmy’s. Ironically, the mini-series, which was made as an artistic protest during the writer strike, was getting acknowledgement from the industry. This fact and Harris’ fondness for the character led him to produce a three-minute video in which Dr. Horrible hijacks the Emmys to announce that “the

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<sup>304</sup> *Dr. Horrible and Other Horrible Stories*, 6



television is dead.”<sup>305</sup> While it is the shared qualities between the television and the internet that makes the production of this piece possible, Dr. Horrible concentrates on the differences between the two media. His meta references turn the video into one of the best examples of how the medium-consciousness of this hypertextual network and the acceptance of new texts into the canon catalyze its expansion.

The piece starts with Neil Patrick Harris, the host and the actor who played Dr. Horrible announcing that for the first time in the history of Emmys the accountants from Ernst and Young will explain the process of counting the Emmy votes. This marks the beginning of a humorous comparison between the television and the internet as Dr. Horrible appears to declare the death of television and claim that “the future of home entertainment is the internet.”<sup>306</sup> The pre-recorded video, which features the main characters of the series Captain Hammer, Penny, Moist and Dr. Horrible, soon turns into a self-referential and highly medium-conscious piece. Although the actors do not break character, Dr. Horrible’s references to the nomination of his blog, the “athletic yet luminous” host, and the sudden presence of the actors who sing “it’s an honor to be nominated” create the ambiance of a behind-the-scene videos. The unanticipated collaboration of Dr. Horrible and Captain Hammer and the presence of Penny, who died in the series, Captain Hammer’s remark about the difference between Emmys and Tonys — also hosted by Neil Patrick Harris the same year— break the illusion of reality and draw attention to the series as an artistic construction.

Although the self-reflective features of the video are undoubtedly interesting, it is the remarkable medium-consciousness of the video that sets it apart from the other spin-off texts the *Dr. Horrible* network has produced. *Dr. Horrible*’s Emmy nod came as a surprise for a production whose low-budget and unconventional yet creative production and distribution challenged the industry, especially considering that Whedon never received the recognition he had deserved from

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<sup>305</sup> NewsOnABC. "Emmy Awards Go Dr Horrible Wrong." *YouTube*. YouTube, 20 Sept. 2009. Web. 17 July 2016. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaT31eOoB54>>

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid*

the industry for his critically acclaimed series, *Firefly*, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and *Angel*. The medium-consciousness of this bifurcated text enables it to graciously acknowledge its kinship with television while subtly distancing itself from it and declaring independence.

Sheila C. Murphy in “Is this convergence?” uses *Dr. Horrible* as a tutor text<sup>307</sup> to study cultural convergence and to declare that television is central to the formation of the new media due to the fact that “the very qualities often elided with the new —speed, liveness, interactivity, and connectivity — can all be associated with television first.”<sup>308</sup> “Dr. Horrible takes over Emmys” whimsically acknowledges the significance of television as a constitutive force and simultaneously foregrounds the distinctive qualities of each medium. Dr. Horrible’s ironic emphasis on the end of television and the dawn of the internet as the future of home entertainment inadvertently points out the shortcomings of the internet. He draws attention to the screen size and in consequence, the details and the image resolution the audience miss on the internet. He reproaches television for the nuisance that the endless commercial breaks create and he gets interrupted by buffering and his dramatic speech against the “corporate entertainment” is cut short as he runs out of battery.<sup>309</sup>



Figure III.3.1.2.3.P.1

00:01:28

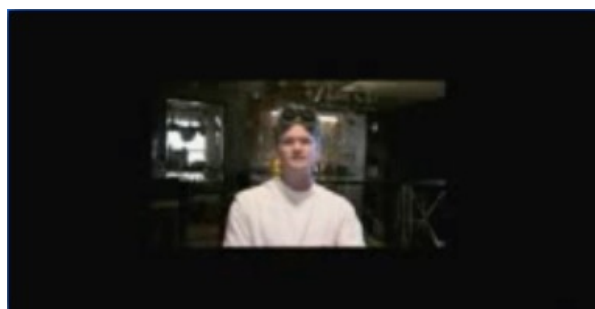


Figure III.3.1.2.3.P.2

00:01:11

“Emmy Awards Go Dr. Horrible Wrong”

<sup>307</sup> Katherine Hayles uses the term in *How We Became Posthuman* in reference to the literary texts that “do more than explore the cultural implications of scientific theories and technological artifacts. Embedding ideas and artifacts in the situated specificities of narrative, the literary texts give these ideas and artifacts a local habitation and a name through discursive formulations whose effects are specific to that textual body.” Murphy expands the definition to cover all types of texts to include episodes and webisodes in order to demonstrate how “cultural convergence” takes place across the media.

Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics*. Chicago and London, The University of Chicago Press: 1999. p. 24.

<sup>308</sup> Murphy, Sheila C. “Is this convergence?” *How Television Invented New Media?* Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey and London, 2011. p. 78.

<sup>309</sup> The video is available on YouTube: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OaT31eOoB54>>

Although it may seem that Dr. Horrible is undermining the achievements of the series unintentionally, the video delicately suggests the superiority of the internet as a platform of creative and experimental production and distribution in comparison to television by casting Captain Hammer as an advocate of “big glossy shiny gloss-covered entertainment.” Considering that the series portrays Captain Hammer as an egocentric ignoramus who cannot compete with Dr. Horrible intellectually and uses his muscles instead, his support for television indicates the popularity of this medium among the masses because of the simplicity of access. Captain Hammer even mentions that he likes *CSI Miami* because the other two are a little heavy for him and hints at the popular shows the majority of TV viewers watch. It is not a coincidence that Dr. Horrible takes over the moment the accountants start explaining the process of voting. The process and the production stories do not usually interest the average viewers unless the process is included in the program innovatively and this is exactly what *Dr. Horrible* accomplished.

The media representation finds great significance in *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog* as the discrepancy between Captain Hammer's image, which has been created by newsreaders and TV shows of *Dr. Horrible's* fictional world, and his real character displays the power of the mass media and their ability to distort truth. Ironically, the true face of the characters is revealed in Dr. Horrible's blog, the small independent medium that cannot reach the masses. Thus, not only does the video take advantage of this opportunity creatively to introduce the series to a wider audience, but it also accentuates the merits of each medium and lets the audience choose between the “glossy entertainment” and the “incomprehensible”<sup>310</sup> yet artistic productions.

As all the aforementioned bifurcated texts demonstrate, the fusion of genres and the medium-consciousness of the series have undoubtedly a pivotal role in the remarkable expansion of the *Dr. Horrible* network across the media. The genre fusion and the “media convergence” increase

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<sup>310</sup> Zeagus. "Dr. Horrible Acceptance Speech - Creative Arts Emmys." *YouTube*. YouTube, 18 Sept. 2009. Web. 17 July 2016. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=98HJzNC3I3s>>

the chance of expandability of the series. However, what makes *Dr. Horrible* worthy of being classified under inventions by the Time magazine<sup>311</sup> and receiving the award in “the most incomprehensible category” as Joss Whedon’s put it in his Emmy acceptance speech for the Outstanding Special Class – Short-format Live-Action Entertainment Programs, is how it employs the internet not as a mere platform or a medium of distribution, but a virtual meta-level for any text in any medium. Releasing the series on the internet intensifies the self-referential characteristics of the series that open the text to future productions. To study the internet as a digital meta-level, I shall demonstrate how the core text benefits from the distinctive features of its distribution platform in order to initiate the process of re-production.

#### **IV.3.1.2.4 The internet as the virtual diegetic level**

##### **IV.3.1.2.4.1 Expanding the definition of meta-narrative**

The resemblances between metafiction and hypertext have already been discussed. However, it is impossible to talk about the internet as a virtual diegetic level dedicated to self-reflexive material without briefly mentioning metafiction, the pioneer of self-reflexive narratives, that has triggered the consciousness of the medium, the expansion of the text and the emergence of wreaders. Fictional meta-narratives cover a variety of self-reflexive texts which constantly display their process of construction to “lay bare the device” for the reader. Undermining the realism of the narrative, meta-narratives invite readers to acknowledge the fictionality of the represented world and participate in the process of meaning-making actively. Such “narcissistic” texts, to use Hutcheon’s characterization of their constant self-reflexivity, present themselves as fiction in progress. They celebrate the narrative as a carrier which frames and offers a glimpse of the ephemeral Text, the underlying urtext. The story is usually presented in a non-linear manner and

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<sup>311</sup> “Best Inventions of 2008.” *Time*. Time Inc., 29 Oct. 2008. Web. 17 July 2016. <[http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1852747\\_1854195\\_1854133,00.html](http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1852747_1854195_1854133,00.html)>

metafiction readers who realize that they have been intentionally denied parts of the story, need to adopt a co-author role to revive the story and make sense of what they have been given. The process is not different from the expansion of a hypertextual network by readers. Therefore, metafiction, at least in theory, seems to be the ideal genre to be transferred among media because of its self-conscious status that demands reader-participation in the process of generating the meaning. However, the regeneration of the text in other media proves to be almost impossible in practice because the printed story, although fragmentary and non-linear, is treated as the urtext.

If the story is accepted as an incorporeal entity which can take any form and the printed version as a representation, the transmission among media will be easily applicable. However, the relocation of metafiction to the televisual and cinematic media or even graphic novels has always been complicated if not unattainable. John Krasinski's *Brief Interview with Hideous Man* unsuccessfully attempts to present a verbatim visualization of David Foster Wallace's book with no regard for the liberating spirit of metafiction. Michael Winterbottom's *A Cock and Bull Story* on the other hand, recognizes the elusiveness of the story and triumphantly re-creates *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, one of the most unfilmable books of all times, in a new medium. The secret to the success of the movie is simple. It takes the core text as a representation of the urtext instead of the urtext itself and dares to expand it by creating an independent bifurcated text which is not a word for word realization of the novel despite its unquestionable affiliations. A *Tristram Shandy* reader will immediately recognize Sterne's Shandean style in a movie about turning *Tristram Shandy* into a movie.

Accepting the printed metafiction as the urtext restricts the representations. While for the story to live on and reproduce autonomously as metafiction aspires, it should be able to change layers or oscillate between its narrative levels. If the fragments of the text cannot be moved, the reproduction will be limited to new interpretations. Bits of presumable facts and the fragments of fiction should function like lego blocks for the core text to be re-presented and the readers to

participate in the making process. While the text blocks do not change, they may be used in any order to make any structure. Metafiction incontrovertibly creates the potential for re-ordering the blocks of story using techniques such as metalepsis, mise en abime, anachronism and presenting the story in a non-linear manner. The fictional and the real intersect. Fictionalized authors interrupt the story to comment on the production of the narrative and offer multiple possibilities for the story to be continued. The diegetic levels merge and the characters wander among the diegetic levels. However, when finished, the story is imprisoned in printed sentences and designed layout. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* offers the readers three endings to choose from, but the readers cannot add their own version to the book. They are merely allowed to generate a range of interpretations based on the blocks they have — and mostly have not— received. Since in the written medium, it is difficult if not impossible to add, merge or omit any narrative levels after the text has been published, the dissemination that metafiction encourages the readers to initiate on paper only takes place in the imagination of the reader. The text has been finalized, but it is open to interpretations.

Although the incessant tension between fictionality and reality in the diegetic level of the prominent examples of metafiction such as *Tristram Shandy* or *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* creates the potential for the text to be reproduced and for the story to be continued in other media, the rigidity of the medium of print and the belief in the written word as the urtext confine the process. Just imagine how exciting it would be if the text of *If on a Winter's Night a Traveler* could be re-adjusted based on the readers' reactions whenever they were addressed directly by the text or if the readers of *Tristram Shandy* could re-construct the story and tie up the numerous loose ends such as Tristram's grown up life, or Uncle's Toby's affair with "concupiscible"<sup>312</sup> Widow Wadman. The capacity of the internet to accommodate the fictional and factual material on the same level coupled with its ability to expand make the addition of new or parallel narrative levels possible. If

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<sup>312</sup> "For never did thy eyes behold, or thy concupiscence covet anything in this world, more concupiscible than widow Wadman."

*The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*, 330

put into good use, the tension between fact and fiction on the internet can easily result in the multiplication of the core text by the readers or the creators. Once more, the proliferation of *Dr. Horrible's* bifurcated texts has proven the plausibility of this claim.

#### **IV.3.1.2.4.2 The internet as a virtual meta-level**

##### **IV.3.1.2.4.2.1 The paratextual material**

The main role of the internet as a virtual place to find and store information enables this medium to function as a platform for the paratextual material of the texts produced in other media. Genette defines paratext as a threshold, an “undefined zone” between the outside and the inside, a zone without any hard and fast boundary on either the inward side, (turned towards the text) or the outward side (turned towards the discourse about the text), an edge.”<sup>313</sup> Although rather obscure at the first glance, this undefined zone where writer, text, reader interact, finds an appropriate medium with the emergence of the internet where this “fringe of the written text which in reality controls one’s whole reading of the text” dissolves. The reality and fiction, the text and the paratext, and the authorial group and the readers/audience intermingle. The interviews, articles, discussions and critical and public reception may be easily accessed online or even co-exist with the text in the same medium. The now customary websites for movies, books, series, etc. directly connect the creators and their audience and provide them with paratextual material such as news updates, clips, interviews, and photos. Fan forums host and archive endless discussions about books such as Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*. YouTube makes the addition of audiovisual material for any text possible and audience reaction to any text is effortlessly attainable through inexhaustible digital forms such as blogs, video blogs, fan sites, twitter, instagram and other social media. The internet effortlessly realizes the fringe that is

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<sup>313</sup> Genette, Gerard. *Paratexts: The Thresholds of Interpretation*. Trans. Jane E. Levin. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 1997. p. 2.

always the conveyor of a commentary that is authorial or more or less legitimated by the author, constitutes a zone between text and off-text, a zone not only of transition but also of transaction: a privileged place of a pragmatics and a strategy, of an influence on the public, an influence that - whether well or poorly understood and achieved - is at the service of a better reception for the text and a more pertinent reading of it (more pertinent, of course, in the eyes of the author and his allies).<sup>314</sup>

Thus, the internet provides a virtual space for the threshold where the text and the paratext meet on the same diegetic level. The text and the material about the text and its process of creation are presented on the same level, and therefore the result cannot possibly be linear and homogeneous. The text and its derivatives may be reached on demand, and the interconnections make it difficult to determine where the core text ends and the paratextual and bifurcated material begin. In brief, the outcome bears similarities with the diegetic level of metafiction where fact and fiction intermingle.

The mentioned features of the internet facilitate its transformation into a virtual meta-level for any text. The digital connections make it difficult to define the borders of the text. The addition of the new diegetic levels becomes plausible. Fact and fiction intersect, and author and readers may change roles. The consciousness of the text and the medium lead to inevitable and acute self-referentiality. Fictional television characters may have blogs or twitter accounts. Some examples are Dr. Watson and Molly Hooper from BBC's *Sherlock* or Barney Stinson from *How I Met Your Mother* whose twitter is even more popular than the account of the actor who portrays him. Fictional characters can interact with the real audience through comments. Toadnews, the official newspaper of the Thursday Next series by Jasper Fford, gets regular updates on the official website of the book, and it has become customary to release book trailers online before the release of the published book, *Only Revolutions* for instance. In short, the internet provides the text with a virtual space where the borders between reality and fiction fade the same way it happens in metafiction.

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<sup>314</sup> Genette, Gerard. *Paratexts: The Thresholds of Interpretation*. Trans. Jane E. Levin. Cambridge University Press: 1997. p. 2.



While metafiction promises to permit the readers to take part in the process of writing and sometimes delivers, the internet effortlessly provides the readers with a virtual layer where expansion is possible and on top of that, any attempt at the reproduction of the text will be rewarded by linking it to the core text. This is where *Dr. Horrible* intervenes and becomes a game changer with a simple change: using the virtual meta-level as the diegetic level.

The emergence of the internet has facilitated adding new diegetic levels to the story, the very promise that metafiction makes by inviting the readers to collaborate in writing or completing the fiction. However, the fact that the meta-level in metafiction has been written into the text, puts a strain on any changes or additions. As a virtual diegetic level, the internet enables the writer and the readers to diversify the narrative on the same diegetic layer or add new narrative layers ad infinitum. This virtual meta-level enables the writer to expand the narrative web he has designed in his original story or directly communicate with the readers and demand their participation. If the internet can function as a virtual diegetic layer for a text created in another medium, can it not do the same for a text that uses the same medium as its distribution platform? *Dr. Horrible* is an emphatic positive response to this question.

*Dr. Horrible* consciously exhausts the possibility of mingling fact and fiction on the same level that the internet provides. Although the meta-dimension of the text is traditionally formed simultaneously, or subsequent to the emergence of the text, the internet enables *Dr. Horrible* to have a place for the information about the process of production prior to its release. Using the internet as a distribution platform, the series maintains its simulation of a blog while keeping its format as a web series. *Dr. Horrible*'s official web site and the fan site, that the Whedon fans launched months before the date of release, provided necessary information about the series and its distribution. A week before the launch, Whedon directly addressed his audience in a humorous "Letter from Joss Whedon" and explained the reasons why he had decided to make this "very ambitious, very exciting, very mid-life-crisis" production in such a whimsical way. Despite its parodic style and

jocularity, the letter addressed grave issues such as the writer's strike<sup>315</sup> and gave exact dates of *Dr. Horrible's* launch. It also answered some "frequently (soon to be) asked questions" about the series' afterlife offline in advance.<sup>316</sup> In a rare collaboration between the creators and the audience, the series was promoted by both parties to the point that the enthusiastic reaction— 200000 hits per hour— after the launch of the first installment was beyond the server's capabilities and crashed the site.<sup>317</sup> The series soon became available on iTunes and the income enabled Whedon to pay the actors. The extraordinary alliance between the creator and the audience of *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog* proves the significance of the medium that facilitates the communication between the creators and the potential audience prior to the existence of the text in that same medium. But more importantly, the same virtual level that hosted the paratextual material later welcomed the text.

The launch of the series on the same site, where the information about the series was displayed, literally put fact and fiction on the same virtual page. The body of the text was accessible on the same interface as the paratextual material. The blog form made it possible for the audience to be Billy Buddy's readers/viewers as well as Joss Whedon's. Furthermore, the interval between each two acts, an intermission to some extent, created the illusion that the events were happening in real time and the blog was being updated. At the same time, the information about the distribution and the production of the series and the creators who directly addressed their audience drew attention effectively to the text as a fabrication. It is interesting that nowadays, when the series is not available on the official website anymore, the site stores the paratextual material and returns to the very first function of the virtual meta-level. It houses a variety of paratextual material including

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<sup>315</sup> Whedon's answer to the question "why Joss? why now?" reads: "Once upon a time, all the writers in the forest got very mad with the Forest Kings and declared a work-stoppage. The forest creatures were all sad; the mushrooms did not dance, the elderberries gave no juice for the festival wines, and the Teamsters were kinda pissed. (They were very polite about it, though.) During this work-stoppage, many writers tried to form partnerships for outside funding to create new work that circumvented the Forest King system." Then he adds gravely that his frustration with "the lack of movement" inspired him to show there were better ways and that "how much could be done with very little."

<sup>316</sup> Whedon, Joss. "Letter from Joss Whedon." *Dr Horribles SingAlong Blog*. N.p., 8 July 2008. Web. 29 July 2016. <<http://drhorrible.com/plan/>>

<sup>317</sup> Wortham, Jenna. "Flood of Fans Crashes Dr. Horrible Website." *Wired.com*. Conde Nast Digital, 15 July 2008. Web. 30 July 2016. <<http://www.wired.com/2008/07/dr-horrible-fan/>>

links to the first press reactions, music sheets containing notes and lyrics, the commentary, the master plan (Whedon's announcement of the series), etc. Nevertheless, the brief period of time that the series was displayed on the site proves the prolificacy of a meta-level that is not confined to the text and has the potential for expansion. More importantly, *Dr. Horrible* benefited from a creative authorial group who welcome new additions and the audience who eagerly "sing along".

To conclude, the meta-dimension of the series guarantees the future reproductions, the connectivity and the aptitude for branching out. The facilities the medium provides coupled with the intertextual and intermedia qualities of the core text facilitate the multiplication of the narrative layers and the transference among the media. Additionally, the expandability of the hypertextual networks and the fact that hypertexts welcome the bifurcated texts into the canon make it possible for the texts inspired by the series to be referred to and connected on the website. The comic book and the printed version of this network that have already been discussed were created by the same authorial group. The website, however, provides blogs and forums designed for the fans to discuss the series and develop plots for the loose threads. The twitter page and the Facebook page of the series also make frequent references to fan creations and follow the career of the production team as well as news, updates and references to the series. This is apart from the numerous unofficial fan sites, forums and of course the production teams' websites, twitter accounts and Facebook pages that externally link the official website and contribute to the ever-growing hypertextual network. The network has overwhelmingly delivered Whedon's promise in his "master plan" letter that "we can turn Dr Horrible into a viable economic proposition as well as an awesome goof will only inspire more people to lay themselves out in the same way. It's time for the dissemination of the artistic process. Create more for less. You are the ones that can make that happen. Wow. I had no idea how important you guys were. I'm a little afraid of you."<sup>318</sup> Finally, *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along*

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<sup>318</sup> Whedon, Joss. "Letter from Joss Whedon." *Dr Horribles SingAlong Blog*. N.p., 8 July 2008. Web. 29 July 2016. <<http://drhorrible.com/plan/>>

*Blog* merits recognition as one of the inventions of 2008 due to its creative usage of the internet, the host medium for ever-expanding networks, as the virtual meta-level for the same text and the creation of a text that is open to translations into different forms across the media. What is more, this hypertextual network also raises the question whether such medium consciousness, intermediacy and the resulting reincarnation are plausible in the media other than the internet. Two of the bifurcated texts of this network, *The Musical Commentary* and *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog, The Book* have responded to this question practically.

#### **IV.3.1.2.4.2.2: Book as a virtual meta-level: “Gone with the Wonderful Life of Citizen Goonies”<sup>319</sup>**

The currently latest installment in Dr. Horrible's hypertextual network provides us with another valid example of intermediacy and medium-consciousness, but this time on paper. As the title, *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog, The Book* suggests the book follows Dr. Horrible's tradition of questioning the media and exploring new possibilities for expression and production. Sliding fictional material among movie scripts, music sheets and fan reaction, the book fuses the media in which Dr. Horrible has already appeared on paper and simulates the internet's function as the host for a hypertextual network and as a virtual meta-level. Furthermore, the book's emphasis on “behind-the-scene memories” and “exclusive contribution from the stars” foreground the similarities between the book and a DVD commentary. Therefore, Dr. Horrible's book clearly indicates the possibility of intermediacy, medium-consciousness and user participation on paper and paves the way for my later arguments about hyperfiction.

Having defined three characteristics for hypertexts, medium-consciousness, user-centrality and non-linearity, I would argue that Dr. Horrible's book has realized a hypertext on paper. The

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<sup>319</sup>Whedon, Joss and Maurrisa Tancheroen, Jed Whedon, Zack Whedon. *A Joss Whedon: Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog, The Book*, London: Titan Books: 2010. The blurb.

combination of scripts, production notes and photos, music sheets, notes by actors and characters, fan art, movie stills and a round table intensifies the non-linearity of the book and enable the readers to choose which section to read. The parts, while interrelated, are not sequential and therefore, do not impose any order. However, there are various interconnections that encourage the readers to go back and forth in the book and read around the subject, take a look at the production photos or even re-watch a scene.

Like all *Dr. Horrible's* bifurcations, the book is highly medium-conscious on many levels. The book does not deny that it is a book about producing an internet-series and benefits from the opportunities with which each medium grants it. The book recognizes the features and the limitations of paper and archives the textual or non-textual material both real and fabricated. On the one hand, the book contains the earlier drafts of the music or the script, conversations among the cast and crew and photos and permits the readers to follow the evolution of the songs and the story

into their current forms by giving pictures of the original annotated sheets of lyrics, costume designs or outlines of the episodes. On the other hand, the book also presents the readers with fictional material such as emails and blog posts referred to in the series and new fictional material written by the characters. Captain Hammer, for instance, has written the introduction and later contributes to the book by writing “A Horrible Haiku.” However, the book

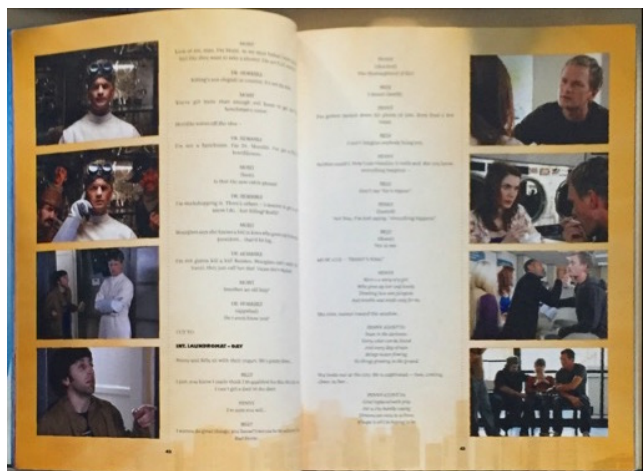


Figure IV.3.1.2.4.2.2.P.1

*A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible's Sing Along  
Blog, The Book,*

Joss Whedon

pp. 42-43

accentuates its kinship with another medium through constant visual references and recognition of the series. The terminology used in the script aside, the stills from the series that accompany the script — sometimes even in the shape of movie negatives — indicate an attempt to turn the pages

into a screen. Sometime an opening is devoted to a particular shot from the series. Furthermore, the book tries to be a DVD on paper and as mentioned on the cover, it contains extra features about the production process. Therefore, the behind-the-scene photos also find their way into the script and the illusion of fictionality crumbles when the readers see the movie stills on the left page and the photos of the make-up artist or the camera crew at work on the right page. Once more, *Dr. Horrible* places the text and the material about the text on the same level.

The complete title of the book, *A Joss Whedon Film: Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog, The Book*, the cover and the mention of features including “exclusive contributions from cast and crew” presents the book in the packaging of a DVD. Considering the fact that the book contains not only the process of production, but also the production team’s reflections and comments, I would like to argue that *Dr. Horrible’s* book is yet another uncommon commentary for the series. As another intermedia challenge, the book proves the possibility of the realization of a commentary soundtrack on paper. The non-linearity and the lack of specific order enable the readers to choose a reading path and use the script or the series for further references. There are no direct links between the comments and the accompanying photos and it is up to the reader to make connections between the pictures and the conversations or notes. In other words, the voice of the creators will not assign an understanding or an opinion to a sequence or shot as in DVDs, because the readers are free to apply a reference or explanation to any available picture or the script in the book or to the series itself.<sup>320</sup> The script has been adorned with stills and behind-the-scene photos and as the medium naturally allows, the readers may explore the script as they wish and at their own pace. More importantly, they can have their own interpretation of the script, the series and the accompanying photos instead of that of the director or the cast. This way, the readers may opt to use the fictional and the factual material and reach independent conclusions. The freedom for interpretation — or possibly further

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<sup>320</sup> This technique has been employed in *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry* which was the focus of the previous chapter.

production — is what audio commentaries that explain everything deny their audience. *Dr. Horrible*'s tendency to find new methods for approaching accepted forms and ideas turns the book into a commentary on usual commentaries as well as expanding the network.

*Dr. Horrible*'s book may be the first book that contains the reader reaction to its core text. A section titled "Horrible Fans" includes photos of amateur fan productions, fans who have dressed up as characters in Comic Con and even fan merchandise for charity fundraising that appeared long before the official merchandise. This is an homage to Whedon fandom who was as active as the production team during the online distribution and whose refrain from illegal downloading enabled Whedon to pay his cast and crew by distribution of the songs on iTunes and releasing the DVD. No web series ever celebrated the audience the way *Dr. Horrible* does. There is a simple question on the title page of the book after the information about the book and the copyright notice that reads: "Did you enjoy this book? We love to hear from our readers." This line summarizes the *Dr. Horrible* spirit and the respect the text shows its audience and readers.

In addition, the book is also an invitation to expand the *Dr. Horrible* universe. Not only does the book make the script available for the future co-authors of the series, but it also provides them with information about the production process and how to stage or film their own version of the story. Furthermore, the music sheets, the lyrics and even the lyrics to the musical commentary are open invitations for re-production and the expansion of the core text. Quick research shows numerous musical covers and plays on YouTube, several fan sites that contain fan art, competitions, upcoming news, fan merchandise and fan fiction — with a special category to change the ending that upset numerous fans — the twitter account and the Facebook page. The Facebook post for the *Dr. Horrible* reunion in 2015 reads "Write it. Shoot it. Publish it. Crochet it, sauté it, whatever. MAKE."<sup>321</sup> The audience has heard the message.

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<sup>321</sup> "Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog | Facebook." *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog | Facebook*. Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog, 11 Oct. 2015. Web. 15 Aug. 2016. <<https://www.facebook.com/drhsingalongblog/>>

*Dr. Horrible's* employment of the book to archive the script as a representation of its urtext alongside its related material is very similar to how the series used the internet as a distribution platform as well as a storage for paratextual material. As the primary medium for metafiction, books usually present a story about writing a story. Self-referential material interrupts the course of events to draw attention to the writing process in progress although the book at hand is the proof that the process of writing has already been terminated. Even though the references to the real world and the process of writing are of great significance, they are regarded as supplementary to the fiction. That is to say that even in the best metafiction, the interruptions and meta-references can be omitted with no harm to the story. Despite the voracious readers' tendency to read a book from cover to cover, the non-linearity of metafiction enables the readers who find the explanations of the communicative writer of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* disruptive may easily skip the parts. This selective reading strategy will not blemish the story. That is usually because the story and the self-referential material are not placed on the same diegetic level. As discussed before, the internet makes it possible for fact and fiction to co-exist on the same diegetic level. Starting as a web-series, *Dr. Horrible* experiments to create the same effect on paper.

*Dr. Horrible's* book presents itself as a collection of paratextual material with a side of fiction. The book turns tables on the internet and offers a book to store the paratextual material for a text that was originally presented online. As already discussed, the internet usually functions as a virtual level that stores the extra material or audience/readers reaction to texts of various media. *Dr. Horrible's* book does the same for the internet in a reversed process by presenting extra material, documents and production notes as a separate volume and proves that it is possible to achieve the same effect. Using another medium, a much more limited one in particular, as a virtual meta-level, *Dr. Horrible* proves the possibility of transferring material from medium to medium and expanding the network across the media. Finding a solution to use textual and paratextual material on the same level creates a meta-dimension that enables both the creators and the reader/audience to take the



narrative in different directions and in various media. Turning readers into wreaders, who respond to and expand the text, will be the subject of the following sections.

#### **IV.3.2 Semi-open hypertextual networks: BBC's *Sherlock***

The user's access to a hypertext is the crucial element in determining the degree of restriction the hypertext defines for its network. *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog* as an open hypertextual network provides the users with multiple platforms to discuss and interpret the text, as well as the script, the music sheets, and the production notes in order to re-produce the text. Moreover, the lack of closure, the hidden potential in the text, and the intentionally frustrated expectations are also significant in encouraging the audience to expand the network alongside the production group. As we move from an open hypertextual network towards closer ones, the process of wreading becomes more restricted. An open hypertextual network encourages its own expansion through extensions, re-writings, and interpretations and usually acknowledges the (re-)produced work as part of the canon. More restrictive networks, on the other hand, tend to limit the reader/user participation to interpretive activities rather than creative re-writing of the text, and distinguish between the core text and its extensions. Following the previous discussion on open hypertextual networks, this section will concentrate on semi-open hypertextual networks using BBC's *Sherlock* as the study case. There are two main reasons behind the choice of this award-winning series. First, *Sherlock* is a remarkable example of wreading as it offers a creative interpretation of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's classic text that has never been accomplished successfully, although the text has been frequently adapted for both cinema and television productions. Secondly, *Sherlock's* sites, blogs and online interactions — John Watson's blog, Molly Hooper's blog, Sherlock's website, *The Science of Deduction*, and the character interaction that takes place through comments and chats — offer clarifications and character development as well as opening a platform for the audience/readers to hypothesize, share interests and even create fan art. Unlike *Dr. Horrible*, the audience

participation is limited and controlled. The blogs aside, *Sherlock*'s other social media such as twitter dedicate the medium to *Sherlock* the TV series rather than Sherlock, the character. Similar to the blogs, the twitter page keeps it completely professional and fan art never finds its way to the official account the same way as in *Dr. Horrible*'s case. However, external links to any of the accounts technically turn it into a hypertextual network in spite of the unilateral connections. The following section aims to discuss BBC's *Sherlock* from two points of view: first, as an extraordinary example of wreading that has undoubtedly extended its core text, *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, and second, as an example of a semi-open hypertextual network, which despite encouraging fan discussions, stays aware of the audience response, defines the boundaries between the text and its bifurcations.

#### **IV.3.2.1 Wreading *Sherlock Holmes***

As the pioneering work of the detective genre, Sir Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* stories do not contain gaps or ambiguities. Ascertaining truth through astute observation combined with logical reasoning and intuitive insight is the main objective of detective fiction. Any holes in the plot or gaps in the story reflect a defective investigation and undermine the reliability of the detective. No wonder Edgar Allen Poe, the creator of C. Auguste Dupin, the first great detective of fiction, coined the term "tales of ratiocination" in reference to detective fiction. The plot of the best detective stories sets up a process of ratiocination for the detective — as well as the reader — who needs to use his powers of deduction and logic in order to solve the case. *Sherlock Holmes*, as one the best examples of the genre, does not leave loose threads behind. Holmes finds the murderers, solves the mysteries and sends the fugitives back to prison. There are no open endings, but a practical unraveling. Thus, it is not surprising that the majority of *Sherlock Holmes* adaptations stayed faithful to the core text. The attempts at altering and modifying the original, were considered acceptable at best in the case of *The Private Life of Sherlock Holmes* (1970) and *The Seven-Per-*

*Cent Solution* (1976) and the recent *Mr. Holmes* (2015), and yielded a mediocre result at worst in *Without A Clue* (1980), *Young Sherlock Holmes* (1985) and *Game of Shadows* (2011). I am excluding the movies and TV series such as *House MD* which were merely inspired by Holmes' character from this list. In short, neither the faithful adaptations, nor the texts that modified the core text will replace the stories in the mind of a *Sherlock Holmes* reader when discussing the legendary detective. The core text is so complete that any change or extension seems impossible. Yet BBC's *Sherlock* lives up to the challenge and presents its twenty-first-century audience with an updated version of the core text. This creative interpretation, wreading in other words, has been so successful that it has increased the book sale since its release. How *Sherlock* accomplished the almost impossible task of extending the core text is the subject of the following section.

Filling the gaps in order to shed light on the ambiguous parts of the core text is the most common approach for branching texts. This is the reason why prequels and sequels are the most popular forms of bifurcation. However, *Sherlock Holmes*' plot lines — detective fiction in general — do not leave anything unexplained. The most ambiguous element of Sir Conan Doyle's text is the mysterious detective himself. The observant self-proclaimed consultant detective with an extraordinary memory, a remarkable knowledge of forensic science and methods too modern for the nineteenth-century is the most intriguing aspect of the stories. His genius aside, the character has a dark side that intensifies his appeal. He willingly breaks the law, manipulates people, breaks into houses, and lies to the police if necessary. He takes refuge in cocaine and morphine, yet he is also an expert boxer and swordsman, and a skillful violinist. All these contradictory qualities captivate the readers and enhance the charms of this multidimensional character who “abhor[e] the dull routine of existence” and “crave[s] mental exaltation.”<sup>322</sup> Although whodunit aspects of detective fiction undoubtedly increase the allure of *Sherlock Holmes*, it is the detective's character that

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<sup>322</sup> Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur. *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*. Vol. 1. New York: Bantam Dell, 2003. p. 124.

fascinates the readers. Serious *Sherlock Holmes* fans are interested not merely in how the story unfolds, but in how “Sherlock Holmes” will solve the case. Conscious of the immense potential the character offers, BBC’s *Sherlock* has rightly decided to focus on the character whose eccentric personality and modern ideas facilitate his transition from the nineteenth-century England to our contemporary techno-maniac time. *Sherlock*’s exploration of the character’s modernity and his relationship with the people around him is the focus of the following section.

#### **IV.3.2.1.1 BBC’s *Sherlock*: science, technology and idiosyncrasies**

It may seem easy to write stories revolving around a character who is known to generations of readers and moviegoers. Since Sir Conan Doyle’s time, lots of writers including Doyle’s son,<sup>323</sup> have taken their chance at expanding the *Sherlock Holmes* universe. The long list of all the writers who have attempted to imitate or develop Doyle’s stories takes a whole page in Wikipedia.<sup>324</sup> Yet none of these efforts produced the impact that *Sherlock* had on *Sherlock Holmes*’ faithful readers and the general public. Some imitations lack Doyle’s perceptive eye for details and distinctive effusive style and the others stretch the story so far that any resemblance between the bifurcated text and the core text is lost. Guy Ritchie’s *Sherlock Holmes* (2009) and *Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows* (2011), for example, do not have much in common with the popular detective and nothing about the movies would change if the eponymous character bore any other name. As devoted readers, Mark Gatiss and Stephen Moffat, the creators of *Sherlock*, knew that no one would write *Sherlock Holmes* in the nineteenth-century London better than Sir Conan Doyle himself. Thus, instead of imitating the core text, they offered their own interpretation in the form of a TV series. Gatiss and Moffat agreed that Sherlock Holmes was too modern for his time and presumed that his

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<sup>323</sup> First published in 1954, *The Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* was the result of a joint collaboration between Adrian Conan Doyle, Sir Conan Doyle’s son and John Dickson Carr.

<sup>324</sup> “List of Authors of New Sherlock Holmes Stories.” *Wikipedia*. Wikimedia Foundation, 19 Nov. 2016. Web. 22 Dec. 2016. <[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List\\_of\\_authors\\_of\\_new\\_Sherlock\\_Holmes\\_stories](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_authors_of_new_Sherlock_Holmes_stories)>

modernity is the key to update the stories for the twenty-first century. This accurate presumption, which led to the transference of *Sherlock* to a new medium in the contemporary time, shifted the focus of the branching text from the murder mysteries to the character. As the readers of the core text, the writers of *Sherlock* knew that nothing offends the loyal readers of the core text more than inconsistency and shortcomings in their beloved detective. Therefore, the writers' decision to foreground the recognizable aspects of Sherlock visually in spite of the different time period and then develop the character's ambiguities, such as family background, has highly appealed the audience. The following part will discuss how these two simple methods have been used to create one of the most successful examples of wreading and successfully expanded a hypertextual network.

#### **IV.3.2.1.2 From *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) to *A Study in Pink* (2010): a visual translation**

Sir Conan Doyle's detailed descriptive style facilitates visual translation of the text. Drawing on his medical background, Watson describes Holmes and his methods meticulously in his narration. His graphic description and his tendency to explain in a comprehensive manner automatically creates a picture in the readers' minds and although the readers' have different mental pictures of their favorite characters, the core text provides them with a common ground. In *Sherlock*, Gatiss and Moffat benefit from the details and descriptions that all readers of the core text will undoubtedly recognize in order to imagine Sherlock in our time convincingly. *Sherlock's* pilot, *A Study in Pink*, has been inspired by *A Study in Scarlet*. This episode, which was aired on 25 July 2010, serves as an appropriate example of how the series benefits from the descriptions to transfer *Sherlock Holmes* to television and in a different time era too. The episode is loosely based on the story, but the writers borrow a great deal from other stories with the aim of introducing their title character to the audience while satisfying the *Sherlock Holmes* readers.

In spite of the similarities between the opening of the novel and the episode including Watson's background and his meeting with Stamford and Sherlock, the series acknowledges the change of the medium from the very beginning by converting the written paragraphs into images. The choice to forego Doctor Watson's first person narration that usually translates to voiceover, or in some cases to first person point of view in televisual media for the omniscient point of view the camera offers, facilitates the transformation from the written to the visual. John Watson's background story as a veteran, his job as an army surgeon, his having been wounded in the second Afghan war the repercussions of which he still suffers, have been condensed to shots of his nightmares, his bare room and his brief conversation with his therapist. His blog writing as a therapeutic exercise was mentioned, however, the writers made the right decision to keep the blog for its appropriate medium instead of the television. The blog alongside Sherlock's site, *The Science of Deduction* and the other blogs written by other characters, appeared on the related BBC sites later. Although the writers did not forget to refer to Watson's original encounter with Stamford in the Criterion Bar, whose logo appears on Watson's coffee cup, his conversation with Stamford has been reduced to a few sentences, so instead of hearing about Sherlock and his eccentricities, we can meet him in person.

Holmes' introduction in the pilot is the visual version of Stamford's description of him in *A Study in Scarlet*. Stamford describes Sherlock as "too scientific" sometimes "approach [ing] to cold-bloodedness" and whose "passion for definite and exact knowledge" sometimes pushes him to adopt excessive methods:

[...]“When it comes to beating the subjects in dissection-rooms with a stick, it is certainly taking rather bizarre shape.”

“Beating the subjects!”

“Yes, to verify how far the bruises may be produced after death. I saw him at it with my own eyes.”<sup>325</sup>

Later when they find Holmes in St. Bartholomew’s laboratory, he has just found “a reagent which is participated by haemoglobin.” He immediately asks Watson about Afghanistan, but his excitement over his discovery and its possible impact in capturing criminals make him ignore Watson’s astonished question about how he knew about Afghanistan.

*A Study in Pink* visualizes Stamford’s description instead. The audience’s first encounter with Sherlock is watching him beating a dead corpse. He ignores Molly Hooper, the pathologist, who tells him that the departed had worked in the same hospital and that he had been a nice man and starts hitting the corpse in order to verify a suspect’s alibi concerning his whereabouts after the formation of the bruises. His “too scientific” approach and “cold-bloodedness” that usually result in disregard of the feeling of others and rather rude behavior are emphasized many times in this episode. Storing eyeballs in his fridge, doing experiments in the kitchen, and total disregard for people’s feelings are among the examples. Yet it is the first captivating shot right out of the novel that fascinates the audience to invest in this character whose acquaintance is “the proper study of mankind.”<sup>326</sup>

Sherlock’s excitement over his discovery about hemoglobin does not find its way to the episode. Instead the writers choose to expand on his question about Watson’s return from Afghanistan to develop the character. Similar to the story, Sherlock leaves Watson baffled during the first few seconds into the meeting by revealing a lot of personal information about him and then he leaves the hospital morgue without explanation. Later in the episode upon John’s inquiry, Sherlock explains how he learned the information he revealed about Watson in the matter of seconds by observing his appearance and body language, and examining his mobile phone:

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<sup>325</sup> Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur. *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*. Vol. 1. New York: Bantam Dell, 2003. p. 6

<sup>326</sup> Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur. “A Study in Scarlet”, *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*. Vol. 1, p. 12

SHERLOCK: When I met you for the first time yesterday, I said, “Afghanistan or Iraq?”  
You looked surprised.

JOHN: Yes, how did you know?

SHERLOCK: I didn’t know, I saw. Your haircut, the way you hold yourself, says military.  
But your conversation as you entered the room ...

*(Flashback to the lab at Bart’s)*

JOHN *(looking around the lab)*: Bit different from my day.

SHERLOCK: ... said trained at Bart’s, so Army doctor – obvious. Your face is tanned but no tan above the wrists. You’ve been abroad, but not sunbathing. Your limp’s really bad when you walk but you don’t ask for a chair when you stand, like you’ve forgotten about it, so it’s at least partly psychosomatic. That says the original circumstances of the injury were traumatic. Wounded in action, then. Wounded in action, suntan – Afghanistan or Iraq.<sup>327</sup>

To a Sherlock Holmes reader, this familiar sequence is a visual representation of the opening of the novel where Watson talks about his medical degree, his army experience and getting wounded. The decision to discard Watson’s first-person narrative provides the writers with a great opportunity to show Holmes in action the first time the audience meets him. This loosely disguised part emphasizes Holmes’ observation skills. As the conversation progresses, Holmes explains his process of deduction based on his observations. Later when Holmes and Watson pick up the conversation they left off in the hospital morgue, Holmes explains how he could tell about Watson’s family status by examining his mobile phone:

SHERLOCK: [...]Then there’s your brother.

JOHN: Hmm?

SHERLOCK: *(holding his hand out)*: Your phone. It’s expensive, e-mail enabled, MP3 player, but you’re looking for a flatshare – you wouldn’t waste money on this. It’s a gift, then.

*(By now John has given him the phone and he turns it over and looks at it again as he talks.)*

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<sup>327</sup> DeVere, Arian. “Sherlock Transcript: ‘A Study in Pink’ (part 1).” *Ariane DeVere*. Livejournal, 28 Aug. 2012. Web. 5 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedeverelivejournal.com/43794.html>>



SHERLOCK: Scratches. Not one, many over time. It's been in the same pocket as keys and coins. The man sitting next to me wouldn't treat his one luxury item like this, so it's had a previous owner. Next bit's easy. You know it already.

JOHN: The engraving.

*(We see that engraved on the back of the phone are the words: Harry Watson From Clara xxx)*

SHERLOCK: Harry Watson: clearly a family member who's given you his old phone. Not your father, this is a young man's gadget. Could be a cousin, but you're a war hero who can't find a place to live. Unlikely you've got an extended family, certainly not one you're close to, so brother it is. Now, Clara. Who's Clara? Three kisses says it's a romantic attachment. The expense of the phone says wife, not girlfriend. She must have given it to him recently – this model's only six months old. Marriage in trouble then – six months on he's just given it away. If she'd left him, he would have kept it. People do – sentiment. But no, he wanted rid of it. He left her. He gave the phone to you: that says he wants you to stay in touch. You're looking for cheap accommodation, but you're not going to your brother for help: that says you've got problems with him. Maybe you liked his wife; maybe you don't like his drinking.

JOHN: How can you possibly know about the drinking?

SHERLOCK: *(smiling)*: Shot in the dark. Good one, though. Power connection: tiny little scuff marks around the edge of it. Every night he goes to plug it in to charge but his hands are shaking. You never see those marks on a sober man's phone; never see a drunk's without them. *(He hands the phone back.)* There you go, you see – you were right.

JOHN: I was right? Right about what?

SHERLOCK: The police don't consult amateurs.<sup>328</sup>

The series also points out that part of this process includes guessing as Sherlock could not have possibly known that Harry is the short form of Harriet. However, the thorough observation and the detailed description of an object which Sherlock had held for almost a minute inspires a sense of wonder in the audience who feel what John expresses: “It was extraordinary. It was quite extraordinary.”

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<sup>328</sup> DeVere, Arian. “Sherlock Transcript: ‘A Study in Pink’ (part 1).” *Ariane DeVere*. Livejournal, 28 Aug. 2012. Web. 5 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedever.livejournal.com/43794.html>>

In addition to illustrate Sherlock's observational skills for the average audience, this masterfully written scene brings much pleasure to loyal *Sherlock Holmes* readers who can easily pick up on two points. First, John's psychosomatic limp is a brilliant solution to the inconsistency that appears in the stories. For example, Watson mentions that he had been wounded in the shoulder in *A Study in Scarlet*, but he talks about his wounded leg in *The Sign of Four*. Second, the mentioned conversation is based on a similar dialogue in *The Sign of Four* where Watson refers to Holmes' claim that "it is difficult for a man to have any object in daily use without leaving the impress of his individuality upon it in such a way that a trained observer might read it." He dares Holmes to examine a recently cleaned pocket watch and give his opinion "upon the characters or habits of the late owner." To Watson's delight, Holmes says that he cannot get much data out of it regretfully, and yet explains minute details about the owner. The section through which Holmes identifies Watson's brother as the owner is as amazing as its televisual counterpart:

"[...] The W. suggests your own name. The date of the watch is nearly fifty years back, and the initials are as old as the watch: so it was made for the last generation. Jewellery usually descends to the eldest son, and he is most likely to have the same name as the father. Your father has, if I remember right, been dead many years. It has, therefore, been in the hands of your eldest brother."

"Right, so far," said I. "Anything else?"

"He was a man of untidy habits -- very untidy and careless. He was left with good prospects, but he threw away his chances, lived for some time in poverty with occasional short intervals of prosperity, and finally, taking to drink, he died. That is all I can gather."<sup>329</sup>

Watson's indignant reaction that Holmes has investigated his family history leads to a precise explanation of clues and conclusions. The parts that have inspired the examination of the watch appear in bold.

"[...] I began by stating that your brother was careless. When you observe the **lower part of that watch-case** you notice that it is not only dented in two places but it is cut and

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<sup>329</sup> "The Sign of Four", *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*. Vol 1, p. 129

marked all over from the habit of keeping other hard objects, such as **coins or keys**, in the same pocket. Surely it is no great feat to assume that a man who treats a **fifty-guinea watch** so cavalierly must be a careless man. Neither is it a very far-fetched inference that a man who inherits one article of such value is pretty well provided for in other respects."

[...] "It is very customary for pawnbrokers in England, when they take a watch, to scratch the numbers of the ticket with a pin-point upon the inside of the case. It is more handy than a label as there is no risk of the number being lost or transposed. There are no less than four such numbers visible to my lens on the inside of this case. Inference — that your brother was often at low water. Secondary inference — that he had occasional bursts of prosperity, or he could not have redeemed the pledge. Finally, I ask you to look at the inner plate, which contains the keyhole. Look at **the thousands of scratches all round the hole** -- marks where the key has slipped. What sober man's key could have scored those grooves? But you will never see a **drunkard's** watch without them. **He winds it at night, and he leaves these traces of his unsteady hand.** Where is the mystery in all this?"<sup>330</sup>

Although the series combines voiceover and flashbacks in order to visualize Holmes' description, the idea and the narrative technique are not different from the story. The decision to borrow a part from a different story in order to introduce Holmes in *A Study of Pink* is highly effective from several aspects.

First, the stories are told from Watson's point of view and he usually manages to inspire in the readers the same reaction he showed toward Holmes' extraordinary conclusions and outrageous methods. He admires Holmes' genius and it is his belief in Holmes' skills that makes the doctor follow the detective without question. Holmes cannot be wrong. He can be vague, conceited, arrogant, and sometimes even heartless, but never wrong. However, Watson is a doctor, a man of empirical evidence and he tries his best to be objective in spite of his respect for his friend's intellects. He never hides Holmes' flaws and tries to give an impartial account of the events. Watson's accounts of the cases makes the readers develop the same admiration for Holmes and yet, be aware of his shortcomings. In other words, the readers identify with the doctor more than the

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<sup>330</sup> "The Sign of Four", *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*. Vol, 1, p. 129-130

detective. The series compensates for the loss of Watson's narrative voice by including scenes such as the mobile examination, in which John's reaction mirrors the audience's at Holmes' stunning observation skills and scrupulous deductions. Moreover, using this part of *The Sign of Four* to develop Sherlock's character, the series points out the formation of a bond between the characters. John's obvious admiration and Sherlock's delight at John's appreciation of his skills lead to John's decision to rent a room at 221B, Baker Street and marks the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

Second, *Sherlock's* approach to updating the stories is non-linear. Each episode is a mosaic of updated pieces and old references and this quality is responsible for *Sherlock's* high level of satisfaction among the *Sherlock Holmes* readers. The series acknowledges its status as a bifurcated text, and attempts to expand on its already masterful core text. The stories are new, yet recognizable. The readers among the audience, who recognize parts of the core text in each episode, usually know how the story ends, but they get the chance to explore how Sherlock and John will reach that conclusion. The discovery of parts such as the watch examination that was adapted for the episode in question is very pleasing to the readers. The visual references and the quotations from the core text turn each episode into a treasure hunt for the *Sherlock Holmes* readers and guarantee the watchability of the series. The *Sherlock* forums and fan sites confirm that the mosaic structure of the series is responsible for both re-watchings and re-readings. The parts that are right out of the original stand out. The experience is not unlike chatting to another *Sherlock Holmes* fan about the parts you enjoy the most. Using parts of the core text to build upon and expand the network, *Sherlock* successfully appeals to both television audiences and book readers for whom watching the series is like a reader to reader interaction. Let's not forget that Gatiss and Moffat are both huge *Sherlock Holmes* readers.

One of the most creative aspects of *Sherlock* includes getting into Sherlock Holmes's head. The creators of *Sherlock* sometimes show the scenes of the crime from his point of view in order to illustrate how Sherlock observes and deduces. The stories, like all detective fiction, plant clues here

and there to build up for the final reveal. Although Watson recounts the events after the termination of each case, he creates suspense by holding back the information to himself till the end. An experienced *Sherlock Holmes* reader knows that most of the clues which Watson mentions through the story, are either red herrings or false interpretations of a clue, so that Holmes' sharp eye and quick wit will be accentuated.



Figure IV.3.2.1.2.P.1  
*A Study in Pink*  
00:25:27

*Sherlock*, on the other hand, shifts to Sherlock's point of view in observation scenes and permits the audience to experience Sherlock's audacity of mind, observation skills, speed and logical conclusions. In *A Study in Pink* for instance, the moment Sherlock takes a look at the victim, Jennifer Wilson, the audience witnesses how the wheels start to turn in his head. The process is shown by writing a word around each clue. The words dissolve when Sherlock decides his conclusion was wrong, or turn into more conclusive evidence quickly if he uses them in his deductive process. The audience share everything with Sherlock unless he faces the camera. From the opposite angle, the audience will see the words backwards as if it is the audience who is standing in front of Sherlock. Some of the conclusions Sherlock reaches are also accessible to the audience. For example, with a look at chipped nail polish on the woman's nail, he decides that she was left handed. While it may seem that the series is demystifying Sherlock's process, the audience cannot always follow his train of thought as easily as in the mentioned example.

The audience may be able to tell how Sherlock's inspection of the woman's jewelry and her dirty wedding ring leads to the conclusion that she has been an unhappily married woman for more than ten years. They may even be able to notice how the dirty outside versus the clean inside indicating frequent removing of the ring, signifies "serial adulterer." But they have no clue what he concluded from her dry umbrella while the back and the collar of her coat are wet. His conclusion

that the lady “travelled from Cardiff today, intending to stay in London for one night” is even more confusing. The audience, alongside John and Lestrade, expect an explanation:

LESTRADE: Cardiff?

SHERLOCK: It’s obvious, isn’t it?

JOHN: It’s not obvious to me.

SHERLOCK: *(pausing as he looks at the other two)*: Dear God, what is it like in your funny little brains? It must be so boring. *(He turns back to the body.)* Her coat: it’s slightly damp. She’s been in heavy rain in the last few hours. No rain anywhere in London in that time. Under her coat collar is damp, too. She’s turned it up against the wind. She’s got an umbrella in her left-hand pocket but it’s dry and unused: not just wind, strong wind – too strong to use her umbrella. We know from her suitcase that she was intending to stay overnight, so she must have come a decent distance but she can’t have travelled more than two or three hours because her coat still hasn’t dried. So, where has there been heavy rain and strong wind within the radius of that travel time?

*(He gets his phone from his pocket and shows to the other two the webpage he was looking at earlier, displaying today’s weather for the southern part of Britain.)*

SHERLOCK: Cardiff.

JOHN: That’s fantastic!<sup>331</sup>

The series manages to make the audience identify with John the same way the stories do by simply letting them know the facts at the same time as Sherlock. The fact that the audience is not able to draw the conclusion as quickly and accurately as Sherlock inspires admiration and amazement. At the end of each explanation, John utters what the audience thinks: “that’s fantastic!” However, if the purpose is for the audience to identify with John, should we not be kept in the dark? The series, similar to the stories, demands the audience to observe, not just see. Giving access to Sherlock’s process, the series teaches the audience how it is done and puts them in a position to compete with the detective who is observing the details and reaching conclusions. Sherlock’s outburst that “Dear God, what is it like in your funny little brains? It must be so boring,” although rather supercilious,

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<sup>331</sup> DeVere, Arian. “Sherlock Transcript: ‘A Study in Pink’ (part 1).” *Ariane DeVere*. Livejournal, 28 Aug. 2012. Web. 5 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedever.livejournal.com/43794.html>>

indicates a genuine wish for his companions — the readers and audience, in other words— to be more attentive. With each new case, the audience gets the chance to improve and evaluate their observation skills and it does not merely concern the new *Sherlock* audience. The *Sherlock Holmes* readers will not have an easier time keeping up. To illustrate the point, the episode includes a playful reference to *A Study in Scarlet* in which Holmes dismisses the suggestion that the victim attempted to write “Rachel,” and states that “Rache” is German for revenge. In *A Study in Pink*, Sherlock dismisses “Rache” for “Rachel.” Recognizing the reference, however pleasurable, will not help with deduction. In short, the series quite literally demands its audience to observe, not to see, and teaches them how to be more attentive; how to be Sherlock. This playful and pleasant approach encourages the audience to take part in Sherlock’s process of deduction, and confirms that “the game is afoot.”

In addition to the successful visual translation of *A Study in Scarlet* to *A Study in Pink*, *Sherlock* successfully maintains the spirit of the stories while transferring them to a new medium. Focusing on the most intriguing aspect of the stories, namely Sherlock Holmes himself, the creators of *Sherlock* benefit from their remarkable knowledge of the core text and the potential of the televisual medium in order to make *Sherlock Holmes* accessible for the twenty-first century audience. So far, this discussion has concentrated on the visualization of the stories in a new medium. That is to say, the mentioned examples, although fascinating, are completely reliant on the core text. The following section will focus on how the series expands the network by developing Sherlock’s character in relationship with his family and friends.

#### **IV.3.2.1.3 Family, friends and foes**

Holmes’ well-developed friendship with Watson is the center of the stories and usually outshines his relationship with the other characters. Mrs. Hudson usually stands “in the deepest awe

of him and never dare[s] to interfere with him, however outrageous his proceedings might seem.”<sup>332</sup> Mycroft Holmes, Sherlock’s brother, a man with the “tidiest and most orderly brain, with the greatest capacity for storing facts, of any man living,”<sup>333</sup> occasionally solves problems on behalf of his brother, but his intriguing character whose knowledge and abilities of deduction allegedly exceed his brother’s and most importantly, the relationship between the two geniuses remains obscure.<sup>334</sup> Professor James Moriarty, Sherlock Holmes’ extremely intelligent archenemy, who in spite of his “good birth and excellent education, endowed by nature with a phenomenal mathematical faculty” has become a criminal mastermind is another fascinating character who remains unexplored. He only appears in “The Final Problem” although Holmes refers to him reminiscently in five stories: “The Adventures of An Empty House,” “The Adventure of Norwood Builder,” “The Adventure of the Missing Three-Quarter,” “The Adventure of the Illustrious Client” and “His Last Bow.” It seems as if Moriarty, despite his allure, has only been created to lead Sherlock Holmes to the Reichenbach Falls. In order to develop Sherlock’s character, the series attempts to shed light on his circle of friends and enemies. The core text provides the bifurcation with an amazing potential to take off. In addition to the already existing characters, *Sherlock* aims to answer some of the questions the core text raises in the readers’ minds about Sherlock’s origin, formative years, and relationships by introducing new characters such as Sherlock’s parents and Molly Hooper. This section will briefly discuss how the development of the mentioned characters helped the series to expand this hypertextual network.

#### **IV.3.2.1.3.1 Developing existing characters: Mrs Hudson, the landlady**

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<sup>332</sup> “The Adventure of the Dying Detective,” *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*. Vol 2, p. 428

<sup>333</sup> “The Adventures of the Bruce-Partington’s Plans,” *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*. Vol 2 . p. 400.

<sup>334</sup> Mycroft Holmes appears in four stories: “The Greek Interpreter,” “The Final Problem,” “The Empty House,” and “The Bruce-Partington Plans.”



Mrs Hudson, the owner of the apartment Holmes and Watson share at 221B Baker Street, remains a minor character throughout the stories. Holmes' description of her cooking in "The Naval Treaty" leads the readers to believe she is Scottish,<sup>335</sup> and Watson explains that her affection towards Holmes is the reason why she tolerates Holmes' "incredible untidiness" and unruly behavior, not to mention the possible danger of Holmes' acquaintance.<sup>336</sup> She has no first name, although Martha in "His Last Bow" is identified with Mrs Hudson and once Holmes refers to his landlady as Mrs Turner in "A Scandal in Bohemia." There is no physical description of her in the stories; nor does she appear in Sydney Paget's illustrations for *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. That may be the reason why she is usually portrayed as an elderly lady whose motherly affection replaces Holmes' family in the movies.

The series builds on the mentioned information in the stories and the previous portrayal of the character on screen, to develop Mrs. Hudson's character. The audience learns about her background in the very first episode. She has given Holmes a good deal on the flat because he had ensured the conviction and execution of her husband for double murder in Florida. She takes a more active role in the second series when she hides Irene Adler's camera phone in *A Scandal in Belgravia* and stands the attack of a CIA operative. This incident points out Sherlock's utmost trust in Mrs Hudson as well as his fondness of her as he violently beats and throws the agent who assaulted Mrs Hudson out of an upper-level window. The violence that Sherlock displays shocks the audience, but also reaffirms his affection for Mrs Hudson whom he praises by saying "if Mrs Hudson left Baker street, England would fall." The statement also indicates that this is not the first time that Mrs Hudson has become involved in Sherlock's cases and makes the audience curious

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<sup>335</sup> "Her cuisine is a little limited, but she has as good an idea of breakfast as a Scotchwoman."  
"The Naval Treaty" *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*. Vol 1, P. 731.

<sup>336</sup> "The Adventure of the Dying Detective," *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*. Vol 2, p. 428.

about Mrs Hudson's story who is among the three "friends" Moriarty threatens to shoot if Sherlock does not jump in the season finale, "The Reichenbach Fall." The other two are John and Lestrade.

Although a minor character in the stories, the series' attempts to develop Mrs Hudson's character by including all references to her from the stories and adding trivia that raise questions for the future episodes. For example, Mrs Hudson's first name was announced to be Martha. She was supposedly an exotic dancer. Her husband was a criminal who ran a cartel and possibly brothels. Mrs Turner also finds her way to BBC blogs, as Sherlock and John discuss buying Mrs Hudson a computer, so she does not have to borrow Mrs Turner's laptop. All these bits of information create the potential for the character to grow and for Sherlock's trust and respect to be explained.

#### **IV.3.2.1.3.2 Developing existing characters: Mycroft Holmes, a human computer**

Mycroft Holmes is another intriguing character who has the potential to be developed in bifurcations of *Sherlock Holmes*. His intellectual powers exceed that of his brother's, as Sherlock confides in Watson in "The Greek Interpreter"<sup>337</sup> and yet, he prefers sedentary problem-solving to fieldwork. In the said story, his inertia almost costs the client's life. In a lengthy and precise description of his brother's abilities, Holmes gives Watson and consequently the readers an idea about Mycroft in "The Bruce-Partington Plans:"

He has the tidiest and **most orderly brain**, with **the greatest capacity for storing facts**, of any man living. The **same great powers which I have** turned to the detection of crime he has used for this particular business. The conclusions of every department are passed to him, and he is the central exchange, the clearinghouse, which makes out the balance. All other men are specialists, but **his specialism is omniscience**. We will suppose that a minister needs information as to a point which involves the Navy, India, Canada and the bimetallic question; he could get his separate advices from various departments upon each,

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<sup>337</sup> "The Greek Interpreter," *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*. Vol 1, p. 683.

but only Mycroft can focus them all, and say offhand how each factor would affect the other. They began by using him as a **short-cut**, a convenience; now he has made himself **an essential. In that great brain of his everything is pigeon-holed and can be handed out in an instant. Again and again his word has decided the national policy.** He lives in it.

[...].<sup>338</sup> (The emphases are mine)

As promising as that sounds, Mycroft appears in only four stories. The relationship between the two brothers is distant, yet respectful. And his influence on his little brother remains unexplored. *Sherlock* recognizes the potential for another fascinating character and uses the brothers' relationship to shed light on Sherlock's character. The series uses a key point from the stories to depict Mycroft: "He *is* the British government."<sup>339</sup>

The series invests in Mycroft's mysterious character from the first episode and attempts to define his relationship with his little brother and the consequential impact on both of them. In one of the subplots of *A Study in Pink*, Watson is led to meet Mycroft, who asks him for regular reports on Sherlock in exchange for money. The unnamed Mycroft's mysterious presence misleads the audience to believe he is Professor Moriarty of the stories. Not only does he try to buy John's fidelity, but he creates an air of mystery by almost kidnapping John and telling him that from Sherlock's point of view, he is the archenemy. Moreover, all characters, even Sherlock himself, frequently repeat that Sherlock has no friends, only enemies and the same episode introduces Moriarty as the person who employed the taxi driver, the murderer, to target Sherlock. Our suspicion is revealed to be unfounded at the end of the episode and our assumptions are used to create comic relief, as Mycroft tells Sherlock that his behavior usually upsets mummy. However, the development of his character through the series follows the example of the stories and keeps Mycroft and his role in the British government shrouded in mystery. He meets the protagonists in far-fetched places such as Buckingham Palace, commands a full team into action in the blink of an

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<sup>338</sup> "The Adventure of the Bruce-Partington's Plans," *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*. Vol 2 . p. 400.

<sup>339</sup> *Ibid.*

eye, and seems to be aware of all national and international affairs, to use Holmes' description, Mycroft is "omniscient".

Mycroft's extraordinary observational faculties are his most defining trait in his relationship with his equally intelligent brother. They bond — in their own way— over their difference with the ordinary people and their similar intellectual abilities. In "The Scandal in Belgravia," the first episode of the second series, Holmes asks Mycroft if he ever wondered if there was something wrong with them while they are in a morgue on Christmas Eve. The audience is adapted to Mycroft and Sherlock's minimalistic relationship little by little and learn that trust and true affection lie under all the jabs and retorts. After the "The Reichenbach Fall," for example, it is Mycroft who tracks Sherlock down in Siberia and brings him back, despite the fact that "fieldwork is not [his] natural milieu." This scene also depicts his talent for languages. When Sherlock states he did not know that Mycroft spoke Serbian, he answers: "I didn't, but the language has a Slavic root, frequent Turkish and German loan words. Took me a couple of hours." The audience will find out later that Mycroft was behind the plan for Sherlock's disappearance and that he was one of the few people in whom Sherlock trusted and asked for help.

The real challenge for the series is to demonstrate how these two geniuses communicate. Their dialogue while playing "Operation" in "The Empty Hearse," the first episode of the third series, develops their relationship based on the material the stories provide:

SHERLOCK: *(looking at which piece Mycroft had failed to remove successfully)*: Can't handle a broken heart – how very telling.

*(Looking smug, he sits back in his chair and crosses his legs.)*

MYCROFT: Don't be smart.

SHERLOCK: That takes me back. *(In a little boy's voice)* **"Don't be smart, Sherlock. I'm the smart one."**

MYCROFT *(glowering at him)*: **I am the smart one.**

*(Sherlock looks off to the side reflectively.)*

SHERLOCK: **I used to think I was an idiot.**

MYCROFT: **Both of us thought you were an idiot, Sherlock. We had nothing else to go on 'til we met other children.**

SHERLOCK: Oh, yes. That was a mistake.

MYCROFT: Ghastly. What were they thinking of?

SHERLOCK: Probably something about trying to make friends.

MYCROFT: Oh yes. **Friends. Of course, you go in for that sort of thing now.**

SHERLOCK (*looking at him closely*): And you don't? Ever?

MYCROFT: **If you seem slow to me, Sherlock, can you imagine what real people are like? I'm living in a world of goldfish.**<sup>340</sup>

The conversation, which revolves around Sherlock's friendship with John, reveals the source of their rivalry and reclusive lifestyles. While Sherlock points out the Mycroft has isolated himself, Mycroft reprimands him for consorting with the ordinary people. Since Mycroft is not willing to talk about his solitary life, Sherlock challenges him to a game of deduction to prove a point. Not only does the dialogue illustrate Mycroft's exceptional deduction skills, but it is also a great example of a layered conversation: a deduction game and sibling rivalry on the surface and a serious conversation about Mycroft's isolation underneath.

*(Sherlock walks over to the dining table and picks up a woollen bobble hat which has earflaps and a dangly woollen pom pom hanging from each flap.)*

SHERLOCK: Client left this while I was out. What d'you reckon?

*(He tosses it to his brother.)*

MYCROFT (*catching it*): I'm busy.

SHERLOCK: Oh, go on. It's been an age.

*(Mycroft lifts the hat to his nose and sniffs, then looks across to Sherlock.)*

MYCROFT: **I always win.**

SHERLOCK: **Which is why you can't resist.**

MYCROFT: (*quick fire*) I find nothing irresistible in the hat of a well-travelled anxious sentimental unfit creature of habit with appalling halitosis ... (*He stops when he notices Sherlock's widening smile.*) Damn. (*He throws the hat back to Sherlock.*)

SHERLOCK: **Isolated, too, don't you think?**

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<sup>340</sup> DeVere, Arian. "Sherlock Transcript: 'The Empty Hearse' (part 2)." *Ariane DeVere*. Livejournal, 28 January. 2014. Web. 5 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedevere.livejournal.com/64764.html>>

MYCROFT: Why would he be isolated?

SHERLOCK: “He”?

MYCROFT: Obviously.

SHERLOCK: Why? Size of the hat?

MYCROFT: Don’t be silly. Some women have large heads too. *(Sherlock flinches slightly, possibly at Mycroft’s insult to his intelligence.)* No – he’s recently had his hair cut. You can see the little hairs adhering to the perspiration stains on the inside.

SHERLOCK: Some women have short hair, too.

MYCROFT: Balance of probability.

SHERLOCK: **Not that you’ve ever spoken to a woman with short hair – or, you know, a woman.**

MYCROFT: Stains show he’s out of condition, and he’s **sentimental** because the hat has been repaired three, four ...

SHERLOCK: Five times. *(He throws the hat back to his brother.)* Very neatly. *(Quick fire)* The cost of the repairs exceeds the cost of the hat, so he’s mawkishly attached to it, but it’s more than that. One, perhaps two, patches would indicate sentimentality, but five? **Five’s excessive behaviour. Obsessive compulsive.**

MYCROFT: Hardly. Your client left it behind. What sort of an obsessive compulsive would do that? *(He throws the hat back to Sherlock, who grabs it with an exasperated grimace.)* The earlier patches are extensively sun-bleached, so he’s worn it abroad – in Peru.

SHERLOCK: Peru?

MYCROFT: This is a chullo – the classic headgear of the Andes. It’s made of alpaca.

SHERLOCK *(smirking)*: No.

MYCROFT: No?

SHERLOCK: Icelandic sheep wool. Similar, but very distinctive if you know what you’re looking for. I’ve written a blog on the varying tensile strengths of different natural fibres.

MRS HUDSON *(coming back into the room with a teapot)*: I’m sure there’s a crying need for that.

*(Sherlock pauses for a moment, then turns back to his brother.)*

SHERLOCK: You said he was **anxious**.

MYCROFT: The bobble on the left side has been badly chewed, which shows he’s a man of a nervous disposition but ...

SHERLOCK (*talking over him*): ... but also **a creature of habit** because he hasn't chewed the bobble on the right.

MYCROFT: Precisely.

(*Sherlock lifts the hat and sniffs it before lowering it again, grimacing.*)

SHERLOCK: Brief sniff of the offending bobble tells us everything we need to know about the state of his breath. (*sarcastically*): Brilliant!

MYCROFT: Elementary!

SHERLOCK: But you've missed his **isolation**.

MYCROFT: **I don't see it.**

SHERLOCK: **Plain as day.**

MYCROFT: **Where?**

SHERLOCK: **There for all to see.**

MYCROFT: Tell me.

SHERLOCK: Plain as the nose on your ...

MYCROFT: Tell me.

SHERLOCK (*turning back to him*): **Well, anybody who wears a hat as stupid as this isn't in the habit of hanging around other people, is he?**

MYCROFT: Not at all. **Maybe he just doesn't mind being different. He doesn't necessarily have to be isolated.**

SHERLOCK: Exactly. (*He looks down at the hat again.*)

MYCROFT: (*blinks several times, apparently confused.*) I'm sorry?

SHERLOCK (*looking at him*): **He's different – so what? Why would he mind? You're quite right.** (*He lifts the hat and perches it on the top of his head, then looks pointedly at his brother.*) **Why would anyone mind?**

MYCROFT: (*opens his mouth but seems to struggle to speak for a moment.*) ... **I'm not lonely, Sherlock.**

(*Sherlock tilts his head down and looks closely at him, then steps nearer with an intense expression on his face.*)

SHERLOCK: **How would you know?**<sup>341</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> DeVere, Arian. "Sherlock Transcript: 'The Empty Hearse' (part 2)." *Ariane DeVere*. Livejournal, 28 January. 2014. Web. 5 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedevere.livejournal.com/64764.html>>

As the dialogue demonstrates, Mycroft and Sherlock develop a private language through their “deduction game.” The scene has started by Mycroft and Sherlock stating how their mental abilities hindered their interaction with other people. Mycroft has mentioned Sherlock’s friendship with normal people in disdain and states that he finds the companionship of ordinary people intolerable. This is the first time that the two brothers meet after two years under normal circumstances and Sherlock wants to know if anything has changed, specifically if Mycroft has found himself a “goldfish.” Mycroft pointedly changes the topic and brings back the conversation to the case at hand which is of great national importance. Thus, Sherlock takes advantage of Mycroft’s weakness for deduction to discuss his loneliness. After tricking Mycroft into playing, he leads the conversation by saying “Isolated, too, don’t you think?” and in answer to Mycroft’s correct assumption that the hat belongs to a man, provokes him by saying: “Not that you’ve ever spoken to a woman with short hair – or, you know, a woman.” He picks the words and phrases he wants to talk about — such as anxious, creature of habit, and obsessive-compulsive — out of Mycroft’s sentences and baits him by stating that he missed the isolation of the owner. Mycroft insists that the owner is merely different and asks why anyone would mind. He practically proves Sherlock’s point for him. As the understanding dawns on Mycroft and he protests that he is not lonely, Sherlock asks the true question that was in his mind: “How would you know?” But his clever move is to catch the chullo and put it on, implying the conversation was about him too. Mycroft may distance himself from ordinary people and Sherlock may distance himself from masterminds like Mycroft and Moriarty. They are different and each one in his own way. Why would anyone mind?

The mentioned scene is not the only time that Sherlock and Mycroft show an understated affection for each other hidden beneath the sibling rivalry to prove who is right. In “Scandal in Belgravia,” Sherlock gets Mycroft out of his lonely house on Christmas Eve to verify the identity of Irene Adler’s corpse in the morgue. While it is partly for business, Sherlock had indeed asked about Mycroft’s plans discreetly and did not believe that he had been priorly engaged. Even though the



brothers get together in the morgue to identify a corpse, the audience cannot help but think Sherlock used Adler as an excuse to get Mycroft out of his secluded house on Christmas Eve. The corpse would have been there the day after. Moreover, Sherlock had already suspected that Ms. Adler, the woman, was alive. Mycroft's downplayed concern for Sherlock is also obvious in this scene. Knowing about Sherlock's feelings for Ms. Adler, Mycroft calls John and asks him to stay with Sherlock that night. In general, Sherlock always relies on his brother when he is in trouble, although he never confesses to it and Mycroft's pressure point according to Magnussen, the evil mastermind of the third season, is "his little junkie brother." The relationship and the introduction of their parents in the third series make Mycroft Holmes, his role in the government, and his relationship with his little brother, one of the potential characters to get a spin off.

*Sherlock* has developed Mycroft's character far beyond the core text. This branching text relies on the description of Mycroft's character in the core text, but gives concrete examples of his talent, his knowledge and his engagement in governmental affairs. The series has accomplished the feat of keeping Mycroft mysterious and condescending, but it is also interesting to watch the human computer in action. His repartee with his brother while working on different cases has shaped some of the best moments of the series and his character provides a counterpart to whom Sherlock can be compared. This comparison will lead to a better understanding of both characters. Developing Mycroft, the series sheds some light on Sherlock's formative years, family background, and personal eccentricities.

#### **IV.3.2.1.3.3 Developing existing characters: Professor James Moriarty, the Napoleon of crime**

Beside Mycroft Holmes, there is only one character in the *Sherlock Holmes* universe who is able to challenge Holmes intellectually: his archenemy, professor James Moriarty. Holmes himself describes him as "The greatest schemer of all time, the organizer of every devilry, the controlling

brain of the underworld, a brain which might have made or marred the destiny of nations,”<sup>342</sup> and admires his unique talent for mathematics and his admirable ability to stay clear of suspicion. However, this intriguing character whose introduction in “The Final Problem” promised the emergence of a rival worthy of Holmes’ intellects and abilities, died with Holmes at Reichenbach falls. Unfortunately, the character was nothing but a plot device to kill off the beloved detective in a glorious manner. His posthumous cameos in a handful of stories such as “The Adventures of the Empty House” after the great hiatus when Conan Doyle finally decided to bring Holmes back under public pressure and mentions of him in stories such as “The Valley of Fear,” which have been written after, yet set before, the Reichenbach fall, display a captivating character capable of competing with Holmes. While Conan Doyle’s extraordinary gift in creating idiosyncratic characters makes readers regret his choice to introduce and kill the character in a single story, the material he has given us in addition to the ambiguities of the Holmes-Moriarty relationship and the loopholes in “The Final Problem” leave the readers with an immense potential to expand the network. BBC’s *Sherlock*, a series literally written by readers, realizes this potential and portrays an ingenious Jim Moriarty.

BBC’s *Sherlock* accurately recognizes the potential in Professor Moriarty’s character possesses to play a master criminal to Holmes’ attentive detective. Mycroft, despite being devious and different from his brother, still conducts the fight for good and has the best interest of the nation at heart. Moriarty, on the other hand, can be Sherlock’s dark alter ego. Holmes himself admires Moriarty’s genius in mathematics and his ability to scheme intractable criminal acts. When talking about Moriarty in “The Valley of Fear,” he subtly implies that he considers Moriarty an equal:

“Have you ever heard me speak of Professor Moriarty?”

“The famous scientist criminal, as famous among crooks as ——.”

“My blushes, Watson!” Holmes murmured in a deprecating voice.

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<sup>342</sup> Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur, “The Valley of Fear,” *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*. Vol 2, p. 164-165.

“I was about to say, as he is unknown to the public.”<sup>343</sup>

Although Holmes’ “deprecating voice” indicates his disapproval of the comparison, he clearly expects Watson to finish his sentence with “you.” Hence, the sarcastic expression of displeasure: “my blushes.” However, there is no doubt that he values Moriarty as a worthy opponent whose book *The Dynamics of An Astroid* “ascends to such rarified heights of pure mathematics that it is said that there was no man in the scientific press capable of criticizing it.”<sup>344</sup> Holmes also predicts their final confrontation, and his possible death at the hand of the professor in the same dialogue: “If I am spared by lesser men, one day will surely come.”<sup>345</sup>

The writers of *Sherlock* recognized the immense potential in Professor Moriarty’s character as a counterpart for Sherlock. Although the presence of Jim Moriarty may shift the focus from Sherlock to the antagonist from time to time, his genius, his questionable morals, and his similarities with the protagonist not only excite the audience for the “final problem,” but also reinforce their faith in Sherlock and his abilities to defeat Moriarty at his own game. The series turns the Sherlock-Jim relationship into an analogy for the battle of good vs evil where each is defined through the existence of the other. “Every fairy tale needs a good old-fashioned villain” after all.<sup>346</sup>

Jim’s character is a response to a simple question: what will happen to a man of Sherlock’s intellects if he loses his moral compass? The series foregrounds the similarities between Sherlock and Jim by focusing on Sherlock’s self-created position as a “consultant detective.” Jim similarly considers himself a “consultant criminal.” While Sherlock helps the police solve crimes, Jim makes sure that criminals raise havoc. One leans towards good, but shows a weakness for exploring the dark side getting high on either crime-solving or heroin, the other allies with evil, yet he cannot

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<sup>343</sup> Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur, “The Valley of Fear,” *Sherlock Holmes: The Complete Novels and Stories*. Vol 2, p. 164-165.

<sup>344</sup> *Ibid*, 165

<sup>345</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>346</sup> *Sherlock*. Series 2, Episode 3. *The Reichenbach Falls*.

resist his attraction to good symbolized by his nemesis, Sherlock Holmes. They have a scientific approach to committing and solving crime and they do not mind using unconventional methods with no regard for the people involved as long as they get results. They are both great actors and masters of disguise. In Jim's first encounter with Sherlock, he poses as Molly Hooper's boyfriend to be able to see Sherlock at work. Sherlock, on the other hand, shows off his acting skills in "A Scandal in Belgravia" as a frightened clergyman as well as in "His Last Vow" in which he plays the role of the dotting boyfriend to Magnussen's secretary for months in order to find access to her boss' office. Their genius is the blessing and the curse that makes them different from ordinary people. Jim is usually referred to as a psychopath. Sherlock frequently rejects the title and adopts the title of a "high-functioning sociopath" instead. The world, except Sherlock's small circle of friends, labels them as "freaks" and does not really sympathize with the pain of being different and extremely bored in a world that functions much slower than their brains. Thus, they develop an obsessive approach to planning or solving crime. They regard scheming crimes and solving murder cases as a way to stimulate their minds and cure boredom. To them, what they do is a game and each finds the other an exemplary opponent. Therefore, they need each other to define themselves in the world of goldfish, to use Mycroft's words, and the rivalry, at least, for Jim, is one of the reasons to keep going. They follow each other's work and wait for the final confrontation. Their tense first encounter<sup>347</sup> as Sherlock and Jim in "The Great Game," the season finale of the first series, is not devoid of playful banter. Each one is threatening the other's life as if they both want the dialogue to last and demystify their good / evil side. The intense conversation, while John is wearing a jacket of explosives, demonstrates how they both enjoy playing the game and are ready to go to extremes in order to win:

**SHERLOCK: Consulting criminal. (softly) Brilliant.**

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<sup>347</sup> The series accurately assumes that even if Moriarty and Holmes never ran into each other when planning and solving crime for years, it is impossible for these two characters to avoid the temptation of meeting the other in disguise. Thus, Jim poses as Molly's boyfriend to meet Sherlock in person in "The Great Game."

JIM: *(smiling proudly)* Isn't it? No-one ever gets to me – and no-one ever will.

SHERLOCK: *(cocking the pistol)* I did.

JIM: **You've come the closest. Now you're in my way.**

SHERLOCK: **Thank you.**

JIM: **Didn't mean it as a compliment.**

SHERLOCK: **Yes, you did.**

JIM: *(shrugging)* **Yeah, okay, I did. But the flirting's over, Sherlock ...** *(His voice becomes high-pitched and sing-song.)* Daddy's had enough now! I've shown you what I can do. I cut loose all those people, all those little problems, even thirty million quid just to get you to come out and play. *(John is starting to feel the strain and closes his eyes briefly. Sherlock's eyes can't help but flicker across to him a couple of times as he tries to keep his focus on the man approaching them.)* **So take this as a friendly warning, my dear. Back off.** *(He smiles.)* **Although I have loved this – this little game of ours.** *(He puts on his London accent for a moment.)* **Playing Jim from I.T.** *(He switches back to his Irish accent.)* **Playing gay. Did you like the little touch with the underwear?**

SHERLOCK: **People have died.**

JIM: **That's what people DO!** *(He screams the last word furiously, his personality changing in an instant.)*

SHERLOCK: *(softly)* **I will stop you.**

JIM: *(calmer again)* **No you won't.**<sup>348</sup>

Although the episode ends with Jim changing his mind and trying to get Sherlock and John killed, the first episode of the following season picks up where they left off and Jim uses taking an urgent phone call as the excuse to let Sherlock and John free. They seem reluctant to eliminate each other because, as strange as it may sound, they need the game to go on to keep balanced and they both have trouble finding players who are able to keep up with them. That may be the reason why Sherlock welcomes Jim to his house after he has tried to discredit him. There were many other options to arrest or kill Jim when he was at 221B Baker Street and end the game. But neither Sherlock, nor Jim care about ending the game. It is playing that counts:

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<sup>348</sup> DeVere, Arian. "Sherlock Transcript: 'The Great Game' (part 2)." *Ariane DeVere*. Livejournal, 17 October. 2012. Web. 5 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedevere.livejournal.com/45923.html?thread=602467>>

JOHN: *(into phone)*: Not Guilty. They found him Not Guilty. No defence, and Moriarty's walked free. *(Sherlock lowers his phone.)* Sherlock. Are you listening? **He's out. You-you know he'll be coming after you.** Sher...

*(Sherlock switches off the phone and gets up off the sofa. In the kitchen he switches on the kettle and slams down a small tray beside it, putting a jug of milk, a sugar bowl, a teapot and two cups and saucers with teaspoons onto the tray. The kettle comes to the boil and switches off and Sherlock, now wearing a jacket in place of the dressing gown, makes the tea and takes the tray to the table beside John's chair, then walks over to his own chair and picks up his violin and bow. As he begins to play Bach's Sonata No. 1 in G minor, downstairs the front door is expertly lockpicked and pushed open. Jim's easily-recognizable shadow precedes him as he slowly walks along the hall and up the stairs. Partway up, one of the stairs creaks noisily and Jim pauses for a moment, as does Sherlock's playing. A couple of seconds later Sherlock resumes from a few notes before where he stopped and Jim starts to climb the stairs again. Sherlock, standing with his back to the living room door, keeps playing until Jim pushes open the door, then he stops but doesn't yet turn around.)*

SHERLOCK: **Most people knock.** *(He shrugs.)* **But then you're not most people, I suppose.** *(He gestures over his shoulder with his bow towards the table.)* Kettle's just boiled.

*(Jim walks further into the room and bends to pick up an apple from the bowl on the coffee table.)*

JIM: **Johann Sebastian would be appalled.** *(Tossing the apple and catching it, he looks around the living room as if searching for a seat.)*

JIM: May I?

SHERLOCK: *(turning to face him)* Please.

**(He gestures with the end of his bow towards John's chair. Jim immediately walks over to Sherlock's chair and sits in that one instead. Sherlock looks slightly unnerved. Jim takes out a small penknife and starts to cut into the apple while Sherlock puts down the violin and begins to pour tea into the cups.)**

JIM: **You know when he was on his death bed, Bach, he heard his son at the piano playing one of his pieces. The boy stopped before he got to the end ...**

SHERLOCK: **... and the dying man jumped out of his bed, ran straight to the piano and finished it.**

**JIM: Couldn't cope with an unfinished melody.**

**SHERLOCK: Neither can you. That's why you've come.**

**JIM: But be honest: you're just a tiny bit pleased.**

SHERLOCK: What, with the verdict? *(He picks up one of the teacups, adds a splash of milk and turns and offers the cup to Jim, who sits up straighter and takes it.)*

**JIM: With me ... *(softly)* ... back on the streets.** *(He gazes up into Sherlock's eyes, smiling.)* **Every fairytale needs a good old-fashioned villain.** *(He grins. Sherlock turns away and adds milk to his own cup.)*

**JIM: You need me, or you're nothing. Because we're just alike, you and I – except you're boring.** *(He shakes his head in disappointment.)* **You're on the side of the angels.**<sup>349</sup>

Communicating by reference to another genius, both Sherlock and Jim confirm that they hate unfinished business, and that they will both play the game. The friendly conversation implies their mutual respect, and points out that each recognizes himself in the other. Moreover, this masterfully written and acted sequence once more emphasizes that both the protagonist and the antagonist need the other to define themselves: “you need me, or you're nothing.” As the sequence continues, Sherlock and Jim demonstrate they know what the other one is thinking about and calculate the other's next move. They even enjoy playing. Had they met under different circumstances, they may have even become friends. Sherlock's explanation of the evidence and the deduction has never flown the same way that Sherlock and Jim's do. That may be the reason why the writers make Jim gloat and insist on getting an explanation for the sake of the audience:

JIM: Speaking of clever, have you told your little friends yet?

SHERLOCK: Told them what?

JIM: Why I broke into all those places and never took anything.

SHERLOCK: No.

JIM: But **you** understand.

SHERLOCK: **Obviously.**

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<sup>349</sup> DeVere, Arian. “Sherlock Transcript: ‘The Reichenbach Fall’ (part 2).” *Ariane DeVere*. Livejournal, 19 January. 2012. Web. 5 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedevere.livejournal.com/30955.html>>

JIM: **Off you go, then.** (*He has carved a piece off his apple and puts it into his mouth with the flat of his penknife.*)

SHERLOCK: **You want me to tell you what you already know?**

JIM: **No, I want you to prove that you know it.**

SHERLOCK: **You didn't take anything because you don't need to.**

JIM: (*softly*) **Good.**

SHERLOCK: **You'll never need to take anything ever again.**

JIM: **Very good. Because ...?**

SHERLOCK: Because nothing ... nothing in the Bank of England, the Tower of London or Pentonville Prison could possibly match the value of the key that could get you into all three.

JIM: I can open any door anywhere with a few tiny lines of computer code. No such thing as a private bank account now – they're all mine. No such thing as secrecy – I own secrecy. Nuclear codes – I could blow up NATO in alphabetical order. **In a world with locked rooms, the man with the key is king; and honey, you should see me in a crown.** (*He smiles in delight at Sherlock.*)<sup>350</sup>

This is probably the confrontation of which the readers of *Sherlock Holmes* have dreamt for years. Wreading *Sherlock Holmes*, the creators of *Sherlock* have realized every reader's longtime wish to witness the genius detective and the criminal mastermind speak about their strange connection before the fall. This accentuated similarity between Sherlock and Jim also justifies the final confrontation. Being of the same intellectual mindset and zest for playing, they both endeavor to win the game and prove their superiority over the other. That leads to an inevitable consequence; one shall fall:

SHERLOCK: **Why are you doing all of this?**

JIM: (*still thinking about having a live-in ordinary person*) It'd be so funny.

SHERLOCK: **You don't want money or power – not really.** (*Jim digs the point of his penknife into the apple.*) **What is it all for?**

JIM: (*sitting forward and speaking softly*) **I want to solve the problem – our problem; the final problem.** (*He lowers his head.*) **It's gonna start very soon, Sherlock: the fall.** (*In a*

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<sup>350</sup> DeVere, Arian. "Sherlock Transcript: 'The Reichenbach Fall' (part 2)." *Ariane DeVere*. Livejournal, 19 January. 2012. Web. 5 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedeverere.livejournal.com/30955.html>>



*cut-away moment, he raises his head and whistles a slowly descending note while simultaneously lowering his gaze towards the floor.)* **But don't be scared. Falling's just like flying, except there's a more permanent destination.** (In the cut-away, his gaze reaches the floor and he makes the sound of something thudding to the ground. Raising his head slowly, he glowers across at Sherlock, who bares his teeth slightly and then stands and buttons his jacket.)

**SHERLOCK: Never liked riddles.**

*(Jim stands as well and straightens his jacket, locking his gaze onto Sherlock's eyes.)*

**JIM: Learn to. Because I owe you a fall, Sherlock. I ... owe ... you.**<sup>351</sup>

Pointing out the similarities between the characters, the series raises the question why Sherlock and Jim do not follow the same path. Sherlock certainly shows a tendency for violence (shooting objects surrounding him when bored), self-destruction (drug abuse), and morbidity (his best friend before John was a skull and he keeps it on the still mantelpiece). The last confrontation which ends in Jim's suicide and Sherlock's fall answers that question to some extent. The long conversation between Sherlock and Jim on the roof of the hospital once more emphasizes the ongoing game between the duo and subtly display Jim's death wish:

**JIM: Ah. Here we are at last – you and me, Sherlock, and our problem – the final problem.** *(He holds the phone up higher.)* **Stayin' alive! It's so boring, isn't it?** *(Angrily he switches off the phone.)* **It's just ...** *(he holds his hand out flat with the palm down and skims it slowly through the air level to the roof) ... staying.* *(He pulls his hand back and briefly sinks his head into it while Sherlock paces around the roof in front of him.)* All my life I've been searching for distractions. **You were the best distraction and now I don't even have you. Because I've beaten you.** *(Sherlock's head turns sharply towards him as he continues to pace.)* **And you know what? In the end it was easy.** *(Sherlock stops and folds his hands behind his back. Jim continues quietly, disappointed).* It was easy. **Now I've got to go back to playing with the ordinary people.** And it turns out you're ordinary just like all of them. *(He lowers his head again and rubs his face before looking up at Sherlock.)* Ah well. *(He stands up and walks closer, then starts to pace slowly around the detective.)* Did you almost start to wonder if I was real? **Did I nearly get you?**

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<sup>351</sup> DeVere, Arian. "Sherlock Transcript: 'The Reichenbach Fall' (part 2)." *Ariane DeVere*. Livejournal, 19 January. 2012. Web. 5 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedevere.livejournal.com/30955.html>>

SHERLOCK: **Richard Brook.**

JIM: **Nobody seems to get the joke, but you do.**

SHERLOCK: Of course.

JIM: Attaboy.

SHERLOCK: **Rich Brook in German is Reichen Bach – the case that made my name.**

JIM: *(in a fake American accent)* Just tryin' to have some fun.<sup>352</sup>

In the dialogue above, Jim shows his contempt for the real world and ordinary people. Like Mycroft, he leads a secluded life because people bore him and confesses that Sherlock's rivalry has been a good distraction, and possibly his only meaningful relationship with another human being. Beating Sherlock may satisfy his ego, but if he cuts his only connection to the real world, this isolation will result in the destruction of the world around him and finally, himself. Moreover, considering that he recognizes much of himself in Sherlock, beating Sherlock is like beating himself figuratively and as we know, neither Sherlock, nor Jim can handle defeat. In brief, eliminating Sherlock will omit the only criteria based on which Jim defines himself and justifies his actions. It does not come as a surprise that his second identity is a word play on the title of Sherlock's first case. He unconsciously knows that he is planning his own suicide by forcing Sherlock to commit suicide. So his suicide with the aim of putting Sherlock in the position to jump off the roof does not come as a shock. Sherlock, on the other hand, has stronger ties to the real world. He has bonded with ordinary people. Mrs. Hudson, Lestrade, John and Molly have accepted him with all his flaws and, I dare say, love him unconditionally. Both Mycroft and Jim consider Sherlock's association with the ordinary people as a tragic flaw which will lead to his downfall. Jim even uses his friends' safety as his pressure point to use Magnussen's words, to make him commit suicide and consequently, lose the game:

*Bart's rooftop. The two men have turned towards each other at the edge of the roof.*

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<sup>352</sup> DeVere, Arian. "Sherlock Transcript: 'The Reichenbach Fall' (part 2)." *Ariane DeVere*. Livejournal, 19 January. 2012. Web. 5 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedeverere.livejournal.com/30955.html>>.

SHERLOCK: I can still prove that you created an entirely false identity.

JIM: *(wearily exasperated)* **Oh, just kill yourself. It's a lot less effort.** *(Sherlock turns away, pacing distractedly.)* **Go on. For me. Pleeeeeease?**

*(In a sudden movement, Sherlock grabs him by the collar of his coat with both hands and spins him around so that Jim's back is to the drop. He stares into his face and then shoves him back one step nearer the edge. Jim looks at him with interest as Sherlock's breathing becomes shorter.)*

SHERLOCK: **You're insane.**

JIM: *(blinks)* **You're just getting that now?**

*(Sherlock shoves him further back, now holding him over the edge. Jim whoops almost triumphantly and gazes back at him with no fear in his eyes, holding his hands out wide and committing himself to Sherlock's grasp.)*

JIM: **Okay, let me give you a little extra incentive. Your friends will die if you don't.**

*(Fear begins to creep into Sherlock's eyes.)*

SHERLOCK: **John.**

JIM: **Not just John.** *(In a whisper)* **Everyone.**

SHERLOCK: **Mrs Hudson.**

JIM: *(in a whisper, with a delighted smile)* **Everyone.**

SHERLOCK: **Lestrade.**

JIM: **Three bullets; three gunmen; three victims. There's no stopping them now.**

*(Furiously, Sherlock pulls Jim back upwards to safety. Jim stares into his face.)* **Unless my people see you jump.** *(Sherlock gazes past him, breathing heavily and appearing lost in horror. Jim shakes himself free of his grasp and smiles triumphantly.)* You can have me arrested; you can torture me; you can do anything you like with me; but nothing's gonna prevent them from pulling the trigger. **Your only three friends in the world will die ... unless ...**

SHERLOCK: ... **unless I kill myself – complete your story.**

*(Jim nods and smiles ecstatically.)*<sup>353</sup>

Jim takes advantage of Sherlock's affection for his friends in order to carry out his plan. He proves to know Sherlock quite well as even the audience was not aware that Sherlock considers Lestrade a

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<sup>353</sup> DeVere, Arian. "Sherlock Transcript: 'The Reichenbach Fall' (part 4)." *Ariane DeVere*. Livejournal, 19 January. 2012. Web. 5 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedevere.livejournal.com/31651.html?thread=331683>>

friend. He uses Sherlock's incomprehensible association with the ordinary people as his weakness. The irony is that Sherlock survives for the same reason. The bond on which both Jim and Mycroft look down gives him a goal higher than winning the game — although that is a big part of it — and Molly, one of the non-genius, but extremely trustworthy friends in Sherlock's small circle of friends helps him plan his escape. Molly's influence and how Sherlock's friendship with real people shape his moral code and keep him grounded in contrast to his counterpart will be discussed later.

BBC's *Sherlock* achieves two goals by expanding Professor Moriarty's character beyond the stories. First, an equal rival for Sherlock makes the audience believe in Sherlock's high intellectual powers in a way that is not possible to achieve in his confrontation with criminals of lower calibre. The more devious the plan, the more perspicacious the detective who debunks them. Second, Jim's undeniable similarity to Sherlock gives the audience some insight into Sherlock's character and his inner universe. Jim or Professor Moriarty, in this wreading of *Sherlock Holmes*, portrays the boredom and the detachment that comes with superior intellect. Both Sherlock and Moriarty attempt to challenge themselves since they do not experience everyday life and social conventions the same way as others do. Jim impeccably demonstrates the burden of having been born with superior intellectual capacity and its miserable consequences if one cannot develop a sense of compassion and a degree of humanity. He has no regard for human life, even his own life. His only connection is to Sherlock, whose work he claims to have followed through the years, but whom he has never met until the moment he decides to kill him. Jim recognizes himself in Sherlock, yet competes with him and intends to destroy him to win the game and solve their "final problem." The irony is he is playing against himself and he loses by either losing to Sherlock, or defeating him, because first, Sherlock's failure either through making him commit suicide, or giving up his friends, means Jim himself is fallible, and consequently will be defeated by another mastermind, Mycroft who remains suspiciously silent in this episode, for instance. Second, Sherlock is Jim's alter ego and deciding that Sherlock is "ordinary" (as depicted in the following

extract), leads to the conclusion that Jim himself is ordinary and nothing is less bearable for either Sherlock or Jim than being mundane. Thus, the destructive streak we witness in Jim's character would have led to his annihilation even if he had defeated Sherlock and proved him "ordinary." Third, there is a reason that the confrontation between alter egos, evil twins, double spirits, and doppelgängers usually results in the destruction of one or both in myths and legends. If Jim represents the dark side of Sherlock, Sherlock represents a promising side in Jim. As the following extract demonstrates, Jim accuses Sherlock of being "on the side of the angels" and Sherlock protests that he may be on the angels' side, but he is not one of them. However, accepting that Sherlock represents a questionable good side and Jim a sympathetic evil side, we may predict that their confrontation will no doubt end with the annihilation of one. Good and evil may co-exist, but one will conquer when they eventually confront:

SHERLOCK: Would you give me ... one moment, please; one moment of privacy? (*He glances down at Jim.*) Please?

(*Jim looks disappointed that Sherlock should be so 'ordinary.'*)

JIM: Of course.

(*He moves away across the roof. Sherlock takes several shallow anxious breaths, then he stops breathing for a moment as his brain kicks into gear again. He lifts his gaze and his expression becomes more like the Sherlock we know while his eyes become thoughtful. Slowly a smile spreads across his face and he starts to chuckle. **Behind him, Jim is slowly walking away across the roof but he stops, his expression livid, when Sherlock laughs with delight. Jim spins around furiously.***)

JIM: What? (*Sherlock continues to laugh.*) (*Jim asks angrily:*) What is it? (*Sherlock half turns on the ledge, smiling towards him as he glares back.*) (*Jim angrily says*) **What did I miss?** (*Sherlock hops down off the ledge and walks closer to him.*)

SHERLOCK: "You're not going to do it." So the killers can be called off, then – there's a recall code or a word or a number. (*Now he's the one circling his prey.*) I don't have to die ... (*his voice becomes sing-song*) ... if I've got you.

JIM: Oh! (*He laughs in relieved delight.*) You think you can make me stop the order? You think you can make me do that?

SHERLOCK: *(still circling him)* Yes. So do you.

JIM: Sherlock, your big brother and all the King's horses couldn't make me do a thing I didn't want to.

SHERLOCK: *(stopping and getting into Jim's face)* **Yes, but I'm not my brother, remember? I am you – prepared to do anything; prepared to burn; prepared to do what ordinary people won't do. You want me to shake hands with you in hell? I shall not disappoint you.** *(Jim shakes his head slowly.)*

JIM: **Naah. You talk big. Naah. You're ordinary. You're ordinary – you're on the side of the angels.**

SHERLOCK: *(his voice becoming more ominous)* **Oh, I may be on the side of the angels, but don't think for one second that I am one of them.**

*(The enemies lock eyes for a long moment while Jim tries to deduce how far Sherlock will go.)*

JIM: **No, you're not.** *(He blinks, then closes his eyes briefly. Sherlock does likewise in an unintentional mirror movement. Jim smiles and opens his eyes again, says softly)* **I see. You're not ordinary. No. You're me.** *(He hisses out a delighted laugh and his voice becomes more high-pitched.)* **You're me! Thank you!** *(He lifts his right hand as if to embrace Sherlock, but then lowers it and offers it to him to shake instead.)* Sherlock Holmes. *(They both look down at the offered hand, then Sherlock slowly raises his own right hand and takes it. Jim nodding almost frenetically, though his voice stays soft):* **Thank you. Bless you.** *(He blinks and lowers his gaze as if blinking back tears.)* **As long as I'm alive, you can save your friends; you've got a way out.** *(He continues to blink with his gaze lowered.)* **Well, good luck with that.**

*(In rapid succession, he raises his eyes to Sherlock's, grins manically, opens his mouth wide and pulls Sherlock closer while he reaches into his waistband with his other hand and pulls out a pistol and raises it towards his own mouth. As Sherlock instinctively pulls back, crying out in alarm, Jim sticks the muzzle into his own mouth and pulls the trigger, dropping to the roof instantly. Sherlock stares in horror as blood begins to trickle across the roof underneath Jim's head. Jim's eyes are fixed and open and there is a smile of victory on his face. Sherlock spins away from him, his breathing noisy and frantic as he raises his hands to his head in horror.)*<sup>354</sup>

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<sup>354</sup> DeVere, Arian. "Sherlock Transcript: 'The Reichenbach Fall' (part 4)." *Ariane DeVere*. Livejournal, 19 January. 2012. Web. 5 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedevere.livejournal.com/31651.html?thread=331683>>

Although the series follows the example of the stories in killing Moriarty and telling the story from Sherlock's point of view, its portrayal of Jim as a dark Sherlock is the results of a unique wreading of the *Sherlock Holmes* stories. The series has basically intensified all Sherlock's traits to develop Jim's character and thus created a charismatic antihero. If Sherlock shoots a happy face on the wall when he gets bored, Jim terrorizes real people in the real world for amusement. Sherlock enjoys solving problems and scientific research to stimulate his brains and Jim plans meticulous crimes and plays mind games. Sherlock has unconventional methods and sometimes steps into morally ambiguous areas, whereas Jim seems to possess no moral values. Sherlock depends on his homeless network and small-time crooks to solve cases and Jim leads criminal cartels and causes havoc in the world. They share an exquisite taste in music, an extraordinary knowledge of integrated sciences, and highly perceptive and intensely sharp minds. The reaction of the audience to the magnetism of Jim Moriarty, who was developed based on an appearance and some sporadic remarks in the core text, had an ironic impact. If fans had demanded Sir Arthur Conan Doyle to bring *Sherlock Holmes* back, the viewers of *Sherlock* requested the resurrection of Jim.

The appeal of a dark Sherlock and the resultant unsettling feeling he brought to the series raise two important questions. First, the portrayal of Jim makes the audience curious about his formative years, his adventures and the construction of the character we meet in *Sherlock*. Second, Sherlock foregrounds the similarities between the protagonist and the antagonist to the point that their last confessions to the other before possible death are "I am you, prepared to do anything." and "You are not ordinary. You are me." This raises the question of what makes Sherlock different, and to use Jim's words, puts him "on the side of the angels." Sherlock undoubtedly has more in common with Jim and Mycroft rather than John, Lestrade and Mrs. Hudson. To answer this question, the series develops Sherlock's connection with John, similar to the core text, as well as creating a network of human connections by introducing new characters such as Molly Hooper and Mr. and Mrs. Holmes, Sherlock and Mycroft's parents. These characters that do not exist in the

stories justify Sherlock's moral integrity and humanity in comparison to Jim. He values human life, because he does not exclude himself from human contact although he may not completely understand it. His humanity comes from the lovable, yet flawed people who surround him. How *Sherlock* extends its core text and sheds light on Sherlock Holmes' complicated character by introducing new characters will be the focus of the following section.

#### **IV.3.2.1.4 Introducing new characters: Molly Hooper**

Although Molly enters the series as a minor character, and possibly to alleviate the alleged misogyny of the *Sherlock Holmes* universe, her significance as one of Sherlock's allies has increased over the years and her relationship with Sherlock has become a criterion against which the improvement of Sherlock's social behaviour can be assessed. Molly Hooper, a specialist register in St. Bartholomew Hospital, was first created as a plot device to introduce Sherlock in the very first episode. Her interest in Sherlock, her timid personality, her access to different parts of the hospital and her undoubtable mastery over her domain make her very useful to Sherlock, who unapologetically takes advantage of Molly's good nature and her infatuation to get information and assistance in solving cases. In the second episode, "The Blind Banker," for instance, he compliments Molly's hair in order to get access to the corpses in the morgue. Molly's fondness for him amuses him, but he does not care enough to refrain from hurting her feelings. In the season finale of the first series, "The Great Game," he shows off his observation skills by analysing Molly's boyfriend, who is Jim Moriarty in disguise<sup>355</sup> and concludes that he is homosexual, bitterly hurting Molly in the process. However, it is Sherlock's brutal analysis of Molly's appearance on Christmas eve in "A Scandal in Belgravia," the first episode of the second series, that becomes a turning point in their relationship. Sherlock attempts to justify his assumption that the present Molly

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<sup>355</sup> In an attempt to keep Sherlock under scrutiny, Jim follows his online activities and his friends. This leads to endless chatting with Molly and consequently, their friendship. His relationship with Molly is one of the subplots that takes place off-screen. It has been documented in *Sherlock's* weblogs and sites including John's blog, Molly's blog, and Sherlock's site, *The Science of Deduction*.



is holding belongs to her boyfriend whom she dearly loves, and that she has matched the color of the wrapping paper with her lipstick “to compensate for the size of her mouth and breasts.” Sherlock’s analysis utterly embarrasses Molly, but has an even greater impact on Sherlock when he reads the card and finds it addressed to himself. Deeply ashamed, he apologizes — possibly for the first time in his life. This marks the beginning of Sherlock’s change of attitude as is visible in the fact that he controls his bashing remarks when talking to Molly.

Molly finds even greater significance in the rest of the season when she shows her ability to read Sherlock by telling him that he looks sad when no one is looking and that this happens to people who are waiting for death. Sherlock is experiencing a downward spiral at this point and he knows that his confrontation with Jim, his imminent public disgrace and possible death are fast approaching. Molly’s simple “I don’t count” in response to Sherlock’s protest that she can see him, shocks him, and her eagerness to help despite his rude behavior at the beginning of this conversation — “Molly, please don’t feel the need to make conversation. It’s really not your area.” — deeply moves him. For the first time in the series, he tries to placate Molly, but she leaves the room when he starts to apologize. This small exchange with an extraordinarily compassionate “ordinary” person, who Mycroft would label goldfish, gives Sherlock an idea about how to defeat Jim. Sherlock uses Jim’s dismissal of Molly —he did not even include her in Sherlock’s list of friends — against him. For the first time, he trusts in Molly’s devotion rather than his own intellect and amazingly, he gets results:

*St. Bartholomew Hospital. Molly comes out of a small side room in a lab, switches off the lights and walks across the darkened lab, sighing tiredly. As she reaches the door to the corridor, Sherlock is standing in the darkness behind her with his face turned away from her. She doesn’t see him and reaches for the door handle.*

**SHERLOCK: You’re wrong, you know.** *(She gasps and jumps, spinning around towards him.)* **You do count. You’ve always counted and I’ve always trusted you.** But you were right. I’m not okay.

**MOLLY: Tell me what's wrong.**

**SHERLOCK:** *(slowly walking towards her)* **Molly, I think I'm going to die.**

**MOLLY: What do you need?**

**SHERLOCK:** *(still slowly approaching her)* **If I wasn't everything that you think I am – everything that I think I am – would you still want to help me?**

**MOLLY: What do you need?**<sup>356</sup>

The profoundness of Molly's loyalty to a man who has never treated her well, humbles Sherlock. She believes in him to the degree that she does not even care about the current news that Sherlock is a fraud. When Sherlock comes back in "The Empty Hearse," he does not forget to give Molly credit for her part in his plan to defeat Jim. However, Molly's role in defeating Jim was much bigger than finding a corpse who resembles Sherlock. It is simply her complete belief in his abilities harboring no expectation that he would return her feelings that gives him strength. Sherlock's treatment of Molly changes from this point onward. He lets her follow him as his assistant for a whole day, so she can see that she cannot keep up with him rather than bashing her hopes in a sentence in order to avoid wasting time. Later, when Sherlock meets Molly's new boyfriend and prefers to refrain from comments, leaving the room instead of pointing out the striking resemblance between the man and himself, the audience witnesses the change in Sherlock's character. This character development is the result of Sherlock's consorting and connecting with ordinary folks, and would not have been achieved if he had been surrounded by people like himself. To reinforce this understanding, the series introduces Mr. and Mrs Holmes in "His Last Vow." The presence of Sherlock and Mycroft's parents gives us some insight into their formative years and internalized value system.

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<sup>356</sup> DeVere, Arian. "Sherlock Transcript: 'His Last Vow' (part 4)." *Ariane DeVere*. Livejournal, 18 January. 2014. Web. 5 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedeverelivejournal.com/68754.html>>

#### IV.3.2.1.4.1 Introducing new characters: the Holmes Family

In an attempt to humanize Sherlock, the series gives us a glance into his family life in “His Last Vow.”<sup>357</sup> Sherlock and Mycroft’s references to their mother since the beginning of the series, lay the ground for the introduction of the Holmes family who finally appear in “The Empty Hearse.” This was a bold move on the part of the series because, although Sherlock Holmes’ family background creates a great potential for any branching text to expand the core text, Holmes’ parents have never been part of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Thus creating two original characters from scratch in order to give the audience insight into the Holmes brothers’ family background, while a respectable attempt at wreading the core text, may have alienated the readers among the audience. However, the result came as a pleasant surprise as the emergence of Mr. and Mrs Holmes could easily justify the difference between Sherlock and Jim, his moral compass and his ability to interact with people who are intellectually inferior.

Sherlock’s parents first appear in “The Empty Hearse,” sitting on Sherlock’s client sofa. The familiar scene that plays out in front of the audience’s eyes leaves no doubt that the elderly couple intend to ask Sherlock for help. The more observant audience may notice that Sherlock has not dismissed the couple whose mundane problem of a lost lottery ticket does not interest him and he is trying to tolerate the conversation. John’s take on the scene is not different from the audience as he enters and decides that Sherlock is busy. While Sherlock tries to force the couple out of the door, the woman reminds Sherlock that they are staying in town and asks him to give them a ring. Sherlock attempts to close the door, but the woman uses her foot to stop him and confirms the audience’s suspicion by saying “I can’t tell you how glad we are, Sherlock. All that time people thinking the worst of you. We’re just pleased that it’s all over.” The old man completes the parental gesture by asking Sherlock to call them more often and simply adding “she worries.” The scene simply

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<sup>357</sup> “His Last Vow” *Sherlock: Complete Series Three*. Writ. Steven Moffat. Dir. Nick Hurran. BBC, 2014. DVD.

displays the usual parents' visit their child's apartment plot line. To Sherlock's horrified indignation, his mother even makes him promise to call and tries to stroke his cheek. Even the mighty Sherlock Holmes is not immune to patronizing parental affections. While the familiar interaction between the couple and Sherlock leaves no doubt for the audience that they are watching Sherlock's parents, John remains unaware of what is going on behind the door. His amused, yet surprised reaction to hearing he just met Sherlock's parents, sums up the audience's mixed feelings perfectly:

SHERLOCK: *(shoves the door closed and lets out a deep sigh before turning to John.)*  
Sorry about that.

JOHN: No, it's fine. **Clients?**

SHERLOCK *(hesitating briefly)*: ... Just my parents.

JOHN: **Your parents?**

SHERLOCK: In town for a few days.

JOHN: **Your parents?**

SHERLOCK: Mycroft promised to take them to a matinee of "Les Mis." Tried to talk me into doing it.

JOHN: **Those were your parents?** *(He goes to the window to look out.)*

SHERLOCK: Yes.

JOHN: Well ... *(He chuckles briefly.)* That is not what I ... *(He turns to look at Sherlock, then looks out of the window again.)*

SHERLOCK: What?

JOHN: **I-I mean they're just ... so ...** *(He looks at Sherlock who directs a hard gaze at him, narrowing his eyes.)* ... **ordinary.**

SHERLOCK: **It's a cross I have to bear.**

*(John chuckles, then slowly takes a few steps across the room before turning back.)*

JOHN: Did they know, too?

SHERLOCK: *(Sherlock won't meet his eyes.)* Hmm?

JOHN: That you spent the last two years playing hide and seek.

SHERLOCK: *(picks an imaginary piece of fluff off the keyboard of his laptop which is open on the dining table.)* Maybe.

JOHN: Ah! **So that's why they weren't at the funeral.**<sup>358</sup>

As discussed before, the word “ordinary” in reference to people with average intellectual gifts has a distinctive function in *Sherlock*. Both Mycroft and Jim consider themselves above “ordinary” people and seclude themselves from consorting with the “ordinary.” Sherlock, on the other hand, has a friendly, however patronizing, relationship with his landlady, his roommate, and his self-chosen colleagues. These connections that keep him grounded and become the distinguishing factor in Sherlock’s tendency to use his powers constructively. The sequence mentioned above underlines the significance of the word “ordinary” in understanding Sherlock and his different attitude in comparison to Jim. John’s surprise over Sherlock’s parents being “ordinary,” demonstrated by his incredulous repetition of his question, reflects the audience’s astonishment over the fact that Sherlock is the product of an ordinary household. It provides the best justification for Sherlock’s tendency to understand normal people and use his intellectual superiority to help them. However, John’s realization that Sherlock’s parents know about his staged suicide plan explains their absence in the funeral, as well as indicating that the Holmes’ cannot be as ordinary as they look after all. Sherlock would not put his parents in danger by confiding the information to them that may have resulted in their death if he were not absolutely certain that they could take care of themselves. Therefore, this scene houses curiosity about Sherlock’s “ordinary” parents and raises the question of how two normal people have produced two geniuses. The audience has to wait for two more episodes to get a glimpse into the Holmes’ household in “His Last Vow” and get an answer.

The second time that the Holmes family appears in the series, Sherlock has taken Mary, John’s pregnant wife, to his parents’ house following the revelation that Mary is a former spy and a contract killer. This information led to Mary and John’s separation. Mrs Holmes’ brief but significant presence can be summed up in two scenes: the first focuses on Mrs Holmes’ relationship with her sons, and the second, reveals the source of Sherlock and Mycroft’s intellectual abilities.

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<sup>358</sup> DeVere, Ariane. “Sherlock, Season 3, Episode 1 Transcript: The Empty Hearse, Part 2.” *Livejournal.com*. Live Journal, 4 Jan. 2014. Web. 15 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedeverelivejournal.com/64764.html>>

Mrs Holmes' role in keeping the family together, her motherly authority and affection — her “ordinary” side — are displayed in the scene set in the kitchen:

MRS HOLMES: *(Standing at the end of the table, she points down to a silver-grey laptop on the table, half-obscured by a chopping board on top of it which has several whole peeled potatoes and the peelings on it.)* **Mikey, is this your laptop?**

MYCROFT: **On which depends the security of the free world, yes ...** *(he smiles rather sarcastically up at her)* ... **and you've got potatoes on it.**

MRS HOLMES: Well, you shouldn't leave it lying around if it's so important. *(She reaches to pick up the basket of crackers but puts it down again when Mycroft speaks while gesturing around the kitchen.)*

MYCROFT: **Why are we doing this? We never do this.** *(Looking a little exasperated, his mother leans on the table.)*

MRS HOLMES: **We are here because Sherlock is home from hospital and we are all very happy.** *(Mycroft looks up at her with an extremely insincere smile.)*

MYCROFT: **Am I happy too? I haven't checked.**

MRS HOLMES *(picking up the basket):* **Behave, Mike.**

MYCROFT: ‘Mycroft’ is the name you gave me, if you could possibly struggle all the way to the end. <sup>359</sup>

The mother's presence reduces Mycroft and Sherlock to two naughty kids and shows the audience a very different aspect of their characters in a comic way. This interpretation is later confirmed when Mrs Holmes catches Mycroft and Sherlock smoking and each son accuses the other. The normalcy that Mrs Holmes brings to Sherlock's life aside, this episode suggests Sherlock's literal return to his childhood home when facing a crisis in dealing with people. Although Mrs Holmes mentions in the quoted dialogue that Sherlock's recovery is the reason for this family reunion, the audience's surprise is echoed in Mycroft's comment that “we never do this.” Both Holmes brothers could have avoided the family gathering if they had not really wanted to be there. The audience has seen them on their own for years. Therefore, this gathering needs to have another reason, at least on the part of

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<sup>359</sup> DeVere, Ariane. “Sherlock, Season 3, Episode 1 Transcript: The Empty Hearse, Part 3.” Livejournal.com. Live Journal, 4 Jan. 2014. Web. 15 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedever.livejournal.com/68242.html>>

the boys. Taking Mary's presence and her separation from John into consideration, it becomes clear that Sherlock has turned to his mother for help.

Sherlock has shown on multiple occasions that while he is brilliant in making deductions based on facts, he is unable to reach conclusions when complicated human emotions are involved. Some of the best instances of his difficulty when emotions are concerned appear in the second episode of the same season, "The Sign of Three," during John and Mary's wedding when he cannot find the logic behind the guests crying after he finishes his toast, or when his weaknesses in understanding why men create false identities to date different women, impair his deduction. Sherlock Holmes' emotional intelligence, or lack thereof, has been previously addressed in the stories as well as the series and has hindered the audience or readers' understanding of the character. In the series, Sherlock usually gets help from John, Mrs Hudson, Molly or Lestrade when facing such complexities. All the mentioned characters help him carry out his best man duties for instance. "His Last Vow," Mrs Holmes' scenes in particular, concentrate on this issue and help the audience understand how Sherlock has dealt with this problem his whole life.

Mrs Holmes' kitchen scene has been placed after Sherlock reveals Mary's true identity to John and inadvertently causes their separation. The jump cut implies a six-month break between the two events, and the audience can easily guess Sherlock has tried to mend the chasm he caused based on the fact that he is in touch with Mary. In addition, the audience has already witnessed Sherlock's genuine affections toward Mary as well as Mary's compassion towards her husband's eccentric friend. For instance, Sherlock went out of his way to make the wedding memorable and even going so far as writing a waltz for their first dance. Being familiar with Sherlock's logical response, the audience easily accepts that Mary's secret identity and the fact that she tried to save Sherlock by shooting him, has inspired respect and admiration in Sherlock instead of hostility and hatred. His reaction, however unusual, implies a certain level of emotional response. Nevertheless, Sherlock is not able to assess the situation from his friend's point of view, because he does not feel hurt and

betrayed the same way John does. Recognizing his incapability to solve emotional issues, Sherlock turns to his mother. The following scene, which reveals a lot about Sherlock's parents through a little interaction between them and Mary, confirms this interpretation.

While the series surprises the audience by portraying a typical family for Sherlock and emphasizing the role of the family as a source of emotional support, it raises a relevant question about Sherlock and Mycroft's extraordinary mental abilities. How did two people as normal as displayed have two genius children? "His Last Vow" briefly answers this question in the scene that follows the kitchen sequence:

MRS HOLMES: There you are. *(She hands the mug to Mary, who smiles as she takes it and drinks from it.)* Cup of tea. Now, if Father starts making little humming noises, just give him a little poke. That usually does it.

*(Mary giggles and Mrs Holmes chuckles. Mr Holmes has straightened up from the fire, dusting off his hands, and has turned to face them while putting his hands in his pockets. He has a pair of glasses on a chain around his neck. [...] He smiles at Mary as Mrs Holmes turns to look at him. Mary holds up the book to show the front cover. **The book is called "The Dynamics of Combustion" and its author is M. L. Holmes.**)*

MARY: *(to Mrs Holmes)* **Did you write this?**

MRS HOLMES: **Oh, that silly old thing. You mustn't read that. Mathematics must seem terribly fatuous now!** *(She turns to her husband, who is now gazing into space and humming quietly to himself, and walks towards him.)* Now, no humming, you! *(She pats his back affectionately. Mary, taking another drink of her tea, smiles fondly at her as she leaves the room and closes the door. Mr Holmes smiles at Mary.)*

MR HOLMES: **Complete flake, my wife, but happens to be a genius.**

MARY: **She was a mathematician?**

MR HOLMES: **Gave it all up for children.**

*(Mary smiles and sips from her mug again.)*

MR HOLMES: **I could never bear to argue with her. I'm something of a moron myself.** But she's ... *(he glances away briefly, then looks back to Mary and leans closer to her, smiling)* ... unbelievably hot!

MARY: *(giggling)* **Oh my God. You're the sane one, aren't you?!**



MR HOLMES: (*raising his eyebrows at her*) Aren't you?<sup>360</sup>

This brief exchange suddenly unveils a new aspect of Mrs Holmes' character for the audience and answers the question of Sherlock's origins. She is not as ordinary as she seems. She is the genius one and Sherlock and Mycroft have both inherited her mental abilities. Rewatching the first episode in which she appears, the audience may notice some similarities between her and her sons in character and speech. Her usually one-sided conversations with her husband, although a much milder version, remind the audience of Sherlock's verbal dominance when talking to people around him for instance. Mrs Holmes' story about winning the lottery in "The Empty Hearse" also finds other interpretations now that audience know that Mrs Holmes is a mathematician. However, the mentioned scene does not solely belong to Mrs Holmes. It also concentrates on Mr. Holmes as "the sane one" in the family and draws attention once more to the role of the "ordinary" one in the life of these geniuses. Although Mr. Holmes refers to himself as a moron and states that he cannot keep up with his wife intellectually, Mary and the audience suddenly realize that his normalcy and worldly wisdom are the elements that keep this highly intellectual family together. Looking back at "The Empty Hearse" and the first introduction of Mr. and Mrs Holmes, the audience realizes that it is the father who plays the role of the interpreter. He is the one who asks Sherlock directly to call his mother more often and sums up Mrs Holmes' seemingly irrelevant chatter in one short sentence, "She worries," for his son who is characteristically unable of understanding emotional reactions. Although Mr. Holmes appears briefly, his soothing presence and his tender affection for his family underline his role as an "ordinary" husband and father in Sherlock and Mycroft's character development. This effect that Mary simply summarizes as sanity along with Mrs Holmes' genius hints at Sherlock's development in an almost normal household and explains his affection — in his own way— for ordinary people such as John and Mrs Hudson. Even though he refuses to confess, he is aware of the significance of normalcy in order to create equilibrium in the challenging life of a

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<sup>360</sup> DeVere, Ariane. "Sherlock, Season 3, Episode 1 Transcript: The Empty Hearse, Part 3." *Livejournal.com*. Live Journal, 4 Jan. 2014. Web. 15 Feb. 2017. <<http://arianedevere.livejournal.com/68242.html>>

genius. The introduction of Sherlock Holmes' parents and the emphasis on the significance of ordinary people — the majority of the audience — diminish the distance between Sherlock and the audience and help them understand the character, who is shrouded in mystery in the stories. Developing Sherlock's character, background and origins based on his relationships with the friends, family and foes who have surrounded him, the creators of *Sherlock* have successfully portrayed one of the most relatable Holmeses of the motion picture. In brief, the series was able to go beyond the core text by humanizing the character while remaining faithful to it by relaying the hidden potential of the original.

To end this argument, I would like to draw attention to *Sherlock*'s similarity with the form that has casually labeled fan fiction, an umbrella term for the fictional productions written by the fandom of a TV series, movie, or book.<sup>361</sup> These stories are usually posted on official or individual fan sites, or fan pages on social networks such as LiveJournal, FanFiction.net or even FaceBook. The premise of fan fiction is to imagine the pre-made character in a hypothetical situation, create alternative storylines, and fill the gaps left by the core text. In short, these texts are written based on a simple “what if?” question that triggers infinite possibilities. The publication of these stories on online communities gives fans a chance to discuss the fan-written story in comparison to the original. These sites provide the safe place where the fans, either audience or readers, dare modify the story, explore possibilities, and multiply the core text. In short, these online communities contain some of the best examples of wreading, the very same quality that makes Sherlock a unique experience.

Mark Gatiss and Stephen Moffat, the creators of *Sherlock*, were able to comment on, interpret and openly discuss their favorite text. Using the fan fiction approach, they re-wrote the text — a common method among fan fiction writers— in order to respond to the questions raised by or

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<sup>361</sup> The Oxford Dictionary. “Fan Fiction.” <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com>. Oxford University Press, n.d. Web. 20 Feb. 2017. <[https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fan\\_fiction](https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/fan_fiction)>

about the text throughout the years as well as sharing the joy of discussing the text with a larger group of fans. The book sale statistics indicate that the show even recruited new Sherlockians.<sup>362</sup> Gatiss and Moffat's brilliant usage of the medium in depicting Sherlock's train of thoughts and the visual translation of the significant descriptive passages from the stories have increased the appeal of the character and demonstrated his uniqueness. The audience who is able to see how Sherlock's mind works will find the character's restlessness and curt behavior justifiable and cannot help admiring him. Moreover, the "what if" method made it possible to imagine Sherlock in different situations (such as the best man in a wedding or in an uncomfortable social situation) and develop the character based on his reactions made predictable by the core text. The awkward social situations Sherlock is put through help the audience sympathize with the character while Sherlock's reactions raise new questions for the twenty-first century audience who are familiar with developmental disorders such as Asperger syndrome or autism. The show also benefits from fan fiction methods to focus on the characters who surround Sherlock. Developing the existing characters and defining their role in the protagonist's life as well as introducing original characters such as Molly Hooper and Sherlock's parents, a common fan fiction technique, *Sherlock* comments on the eponymous character of the core text while showing awareness and reacting to the misogynistic readings of the text. All the qualities mentioned above make *Sherlock* a delightful exchange among the fans: the professional screen play writers on one side and the *Sherlock Holmes* readers on the other. The Easter eggs that each episode leaves here and there for the audience, who are familiar with the stories, have turned watching Sherlock into a joyful game and at the same time encouraged the audience who meet Sherlock Holmes for the first time to read the text. Branching out while constantly referring to and interpreting the core text makes *Sherlock* one of the most successful examples of wreading.

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<sup>362</sup> "Benedict Cumberbatch's Sherlock Boosts Conan Doyle Book Sales." *RadioTimes*. Immediate Media Company Limited, 17 Jan. 2012. Web. 21 Feb. 2017. <<http://www.radiotimes.com/news/2012-01-17/benedict-cumberbatchs-sherlock-boosts-conan-doyle-book-sales>>

### IV.3.2.2 *Sherlock*: a semi-open hypertextual network

The fact that *Sherlock* is an extension of a core text and that it displays similarities with fanfiction may create the assumption that *Sherlock* is an open hypertextual network itself. However, the series is much more limited in comparison with an open hypertextual network like *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog*, for example. It can be argued that the medium in which each text appears determines its tolerance for expansion. *Dr. Horrible's* emergence on the internet, for instance, provided the text with infinite opportunities to welcome different readings by the production group and the fans. Its multi-genres structure has also catalyzed its transference among various media. *Sherlock's* medium, on the other hand, imposes some limitations on the series. While there is a possibility for spin-offs produced by the same production group or other professionals, the continuation of *Sherlock* by ordinary fans seems improbable. This is a completely valid point that the medium affects the possibility of branching and I will concentrate on this point in detail when focusing on semi-closed hypertextual networks in the following section on Christopher Nolan's *Memento*. However, I would like to argue that the mutual communication between the original creator(s) and the audience, either professionals or individuals, is as important to the expansion of a hypertextual network as the dormant potential of the text. Since the internet provides such an opportunity, the part of the network that appears online has the best chance to become a core text for reader productions provided the creator(s) allow(s) it. I shall focus on the *Sherlock's* blogs on the BBC-related sites and social media in order to discuss the semi-open hypertextual systems.

The very first episode of *Sherlock* promoted John Watson from a journal keeper to a blogger when his psychologist suggested that writing may have therapeutic effects on his post-war trauma. The blog provided an unmissable excuse for the series to use the internet as a new narrative platform and communicate with the audience directly. The audience soon realized that John and Molly's blogs, and Sherlock's site, *The Science of Deduction*, are part of Sherlock's fictional world and closed to fan contribution of any sort. John's blog was usually updated once per episode and the

updates stopped after “The Sign of Three” and John’s marriage. The last post was written by Sherlock himself when John was on his honeymoon.<sup>363</sup> The comments that follow each post are made by the characters and are used for character analysis or plot development. Molly and Jim’s chatting in the comment section of the posts on Molly’s blog, for example, explain her relationship with Jim that remained unexplored in the series.<sup>364</sup> The importance of the comments over the posts was underlined as the usual drop-down format was disabled to make the readers follow the conversation in the comment section. To sum up, the posts are part of the series and as the BBC site repeatedly mentions, fictional. The fact that the writer of each blog or site declares that it will not be updated after they serve their purpose in the series confirms this understanding. While the decision of the production team to control the web content is understandable, it restricts the interaction between the text and the audience to a one-sided relationship.

Among all digital spin-offs of the series on the internet, Sherlock’s site could have provided a great chance for *Sherlock* to interact with its audience through puzzles and theories.<sup>365</sup> This site has also been carefully designed based on the scientific details Sherlock mentions in the series. The “forum” includes the messages from the clients who have appeared in the series, whether or not Sherlock took the case, or the characters’ online interaction. For example, Mike Stamford who introduced Sherlock and John is a recurring character. It is he who tells Sherlock that John blogs about him in one of the forum threads. John makes regular appearances too, but his conversations with Sherlock revolve around everyday subjects like cleaning the flat or buying milk. The most important storyline followed in the forum and Sherlock’s site is presented through the comments of a user called “anonymous” who the audience will easily identify as Jim. Although there maybe

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<sup>363</sup> Watson, John Hamish. “The Sign of Three.” *The Personal Blog of Dr. John. H. Watson*. BBC, 18 Nov. 2013. Web. 22 Feb. 2017. <<http://www.johnwatsonblog.co.uk/blog/11august>>

<sup>364</sup> Hooper, Molly. “02 April.” *Molly Hooper*. BBC, 21 Dec. 2011. Web. 23 Feb. 2017. <<http://www.mollyhooper.co.uk/blog/02april>>

<sup>365</sup> Holmes, Sherlock Scott. *The Science of Deduction*. BBC, 18 Nov. 2013. Web. 22 Feb. 2017. <<http://www.thescienceofdeduction.co.uk>>

more than one user who registers as “anonymous,” the three cryptic puzzles in “Hidden messages” seem to be sent by the same person. The solutions to these puzzles reveal disturbing statements such as “Sherlock I am watching you” or “Sherlock I am coming to get you.” Sherlock leaves the third message without solution and asks his readers to decode it. Since no new messages have been posted after season two, we can easily identify Jim as “anonymous.” The last part of the site, “Case Files,” lists the titles of the cases and gives links to cases mentioned on John’s blog and one case description and hidden messages. It is noteworthy that the links are not active anymore and lead to a BBC error page. Thus, *Sherlock*’s blogs and sites control the online interaction between the text and the audience. The fan productions co-exist on the internet at the same time and most of the fan sites give links to the official sites and blogs of the series, but the fact that the audience are expected to be mere consumers when reading the online branching texts such as blogs and sites indicates that the fan production will not be considered as part of the canon.

The social media of the series follow the same agenda. *Sherlock*’s official Twitter and Facebook page are both used to inform the fans of the upcoming episodes, upload videos of cast and crew interviews and present the audience with back-stage material. These pages are not fictional like the blogs and provide the readers / audience with an opportunity to discuss the post and comment. However, the quick glance at the comment section shows that while the fans discuss the series vehemently, the direct conversation between the series — or whoever presents the series on each page— does not take place. Unlike *Dr. Horrible*’s twitter page that gives links to fan art or retweets fans, *Sherlock* remains highly in control of the digital material. The hypertext, although accessible to all at some junctions, draws a bold line between the core text and the branching texts by the authorial group and the audience. In brief, the series tends toward a closer network in comparison with *Dr. Horrible*.

### **IV.3.3 Semi-closed hypertextual networks: Christopher Nolan's *Memento***

#### **IV.3.3.1 The hypertext readers or wreaders**

To deliver the promise they have made and actively engage the readers, hypertexts need to encourage active reading using their non-linear structure and medium-consciousness. Successful hypertexts use the medium in which they appear to predict and map different reading strategies and provide the readers with as many paths as possible to approach the text. While some hypertexts, especially the solely informative ones, link the chunks visually and in a particular order to lead the readers towards a certain direction, others, the fictional ones in particular, may leave the readers to find the links themselves and reach a conclusion. The latter category value the experience the readers undergo and their strive for coherence. This type of hypertexts employs the medium and embraces their non-linearity to create an extraordinary experience for their audience at the risk of losing coherence. However, if each hypertext uses its medium to meet the demands of the story, each hypertext will theoretically become a unique structure that needs its own instructions to be decoded. Ideally, the readers will develop their own strategies to approach the texts, but most of the time, hypertexts attempt to train the readers to become wreaders. How a hypertext trains its readers is the focus of this section. *Memento* (2000) by Christopher Nolan will serve as an example. As already established, studying hypertexts means dealing with multimedia texts and therefore, I would like to clarify that since the core text that I am going to use as the study case is a movie, I shall use “wreaders” as an umbrella term that incorporates readers, users, viewers and in general, any group of audience that hypertexts address.

#### **IV.3.3.2 *Memento*, a movie in reverse**

You have to begin to lose your memory, if only in bits and pieces, to realize that memory is what makes our lives. Life without memory is no life at all ... our memory is our coherence, our reason, our feeling, even our action. Without it, we are nothing. Memory can be omnipotent and indispensable, but it's also terribly fragile. The menace is everywhere, not only from its traditional enemy, forgetfulness, but from false memories ... our

imagination, and our dreams, are forever invading our memories; we end up transforming our lies into truths.<sup>366</sup>

Luis Buñuel

The movie starts with a polaroid photo reverting into its undeveloped state, blood going backwards, a bullet returning into the barrel and we witness the very moment before a man gets shot. This shocking opening marks the beginning of one of the most controversial movies about an insurance investigator, Leonard Shelby, who is looking for his wife's murderers who have also caused his anterograde amnesia during the attack. Being unable to recall the recent past —not more than the last ten to fifteen minutes — or to create new memories, Leonard has designed his own investigating system relying on the notes on the back of polaroid photos and the tattoos on his body. To find, John G, the man who raped and killed Leonard's wife, he needs to find reasonable connections between facts tattooed on his body and the photos using his long term memory and the last fifteen minutes that he remembers. Even though the subject is fascinating and the shocking ending intensifies the impact on the audience, it is the innovative employment of the medium that confirms the hypertextual features of the movie and turns *Memento* (2000) into an unforgettable experience for the audience.

*Memento* by Christopher Nolan is a bifurcated text in a hypertextual network originated from a short story, "Memento Mori," by Jonathan Nolan as its core text. The story was successfully transferred from paper to screen by expanding on its non-linear structure and aptitude for visual storytelling. The story benefits from a shift in point of view, first to third, indicated by different fonts and uppercases, and letters to self to tell the story of Earl from his days in a mental hospital to taking revenge on the murderer of his wife, and his probable return to the mental hospital. The story mostly focuses on the unsettling feeling of not being "the man you used to be. Not even half. You're a fraction; you're the ten-minute man."<sup>367</sup> The story benefits from Earl's limited point of view and

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<sup>366</sup> Buñuel, Luis, *My Last Sigh*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 2003.

<sup>367</sup> Nolan, Nathan. "Memento Mori." *Esquire*. Hearst Communications, Inc., 29 Jan. 2007. Web. 18 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.esquire.com/entertainment/books/a1564/memento-mori-0301/>>



his confusion when finding bits of information about his current life through notes. However, to create the bewilderment of seeing your older tanned image in the mirror one morning, abrupt transitions with no explanation are unavoidable. The movie elaborates on the obscure parts of the story such as tracking down the murderer and executing the revenge plan while attempting to achieve the same effect by filling the gaps such as Earl/Leonard's past using cinematic techniques.

Maintaining the first person point of view in a movie is impractical since it requires using the camera as the character and limiting the story to exactly what the character witnesses. This means keeping the audience from witnessing the character in action, and missing on the feelings and reactions that can be conveyed through facial expressions and body language. Movies usually solve the problem by showing the character and using voice-over to communicate what the character perceives instead. *Memento*, however, intends for the audience to experience the same moments of confusion and clarity as Leonard, and at the same time as he does. Therefore, *Memento* induces the intended perplexity and self-doubt by playing with the audience's memory through backward narrative, temporal confusion and contradictory visual material.

*Memento* is a movie in reverse. It starts in the present time and then moves toward the past. After the confusing opening, the audience will soon realize that the narrative is moving backwards the exact amount of time that Leonard is able to remember. To provide the audience with some insight into the story and to make this head-spinning thriller even more confusing, there is another movement from the past toward the present time following each sequence through the flashbacks that are interspersed among the shots that reveal the present time. The flash backs or past-to-present sequences are in black and white while the present-to-past movement were shot in color. At the end of the movie, the past and the present intersect and complete the circle. That is to say that the movie ends where it begins, and while Leonard may not remember what has happened in the next fifteen minutes, the audience who went through this stimulative simulation will never forget the experience. Although each hypertext invites its readers/ audience to develop strategies specified for

that hypertext, there are certain features that all readers share. The subsequent section will focus on how the movie benefits from the medium and fallibility of memory in order to simulate Leonard's condition for the audience and initiate the process of interpretation.

#### **IV.3.3.2.1 Be Sherlock Holmes: "Never trust to general impressions"<sup>368</sup>**

*Memento* has been labeled a "neo-noir" or "psychological" thriller, but the movie is a detective movie at heart. The recurrent references to Leonard as Sherlock by the other characters and the fact that he is investigating the murder of his wife confirm this presumption. However, the former insurance agent, who suffers from short term memory loss that makes it difficult if not impossible for him to catch the killer, does not have much in common with the perceptive detective with legendary memory and an outstanding eye for details. This is where the movie separates its path from other detective movies or stories.

The detective genre usually presents two major characters: a detective who observes and a sidekick who merely sees. Sherlock Holmes has Dr. Watson. Captain Hastings plays the oblivious sidekick to Hercule Poirot's quick-witted detective and Miss Marple is usually given a female companion or an unobservant police officer. While the attentive readers/viewers may identify with the detective and attempt to solve the case using the clues with which the story provides them, the majority, the ones who simply take pleasure in witnessing the story unfold, are led to identify with the sidekick and marvel at the extraordinary skills of the detective. The disparities between the two characters serve to keep the readers / audience in suspense and prepare them for the big finale where the detective explains how he had solved the case. The contrastive duo appeal to both category of readers: the observants and the onlookers, but this method does not necessarily require readers / viewers who strive to solve the case. *Memento*, on the other hand, gives its audience the

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<sup>368</sup> "Never trust to general impressions, my boy, but concentrate yourself upon details."

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. "A Case of Identity." *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Project Gutenberg.

Www.Gutenberg.org, 18 April 2011. Web. 17 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1661/1661-h/1661-h.htm#3>>

sidekick with a fallible memory and challenges them to be the perspicacious detective. The movie is not going to simplify the mystery in anyway. Leonard is not the reliable detective who is going to deduce correctly from his clues. Thus, the audience has to play this part. The movie benefits from the medium to challenge the audience who usually watch, to observe this time.

Not only does *Memento* demand its viewers to play the role of a detective, but it expects them to do it in Leonard Shelby's predicament. Leonard does not remember further than the past quarter and soon will forget even that. He will be left with a handful of photos and facts tattooed on his body while making deductions. That is to say that he has his body of evidence, but no context for his alleged facts. The audience on the other hand, do not suffer from short term memory loss, and will remember more of the past happenings as the movie progresses. So, to put the audience in the same situation, the movie needs to convince them that "memory is treachery"<sup>369</sup> and you need to develop a system to reach a plausible conclusion.

The double temporal motion from the past to the present and from the present to past serves two different goals. First, the movie puts the audience in the shoes of Leonard, who cannot remember more than a short period of time and therefore, he cannot be certain about anything or trust anybody. Regressing toward the past, the movie prevents the audience from forming any prior opinion about the people Leonard meets or the events he had been involved in. This way, the audience has no idea who the motel manager is when they first meet him. Later, they find out that Leonard has been staying in this motel for quite some time and the manager is taking advantage of his condition. The passing of time feels different to Leonard and the confusion caused by this backward movement gives the audience an idea about how it feels to be stuck in the present time: "Time is three things for most people, but for you, for us, just one. A singularity. One moment. This moment. Like you're the center of the clock, the axis on which the hands turn. Time moves about

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<sup>369</sup> "Memory is treachery" was tattooed on Leonard's right arm under "Consider the facts."

you but never moves you. It has lost its ability to affect you.”<sup>370</sup> Leonard experiences a blank moment when his memory reaches its limits and he finds himself doing something he has no idea about. This creates comic moments as he asks the person to whom he has been talking on the phone for a while who he is, or forgets if he is chasing or being chased during the chase. Such moments that follow the flashbacks indicate a return to the present time.

The second function of such temporal disturbance is to draw attention to the system underneath. *Memento* shifts between the past and the present in order to limit the information the audience gets concerning what Leonard knows at that certain moment. The movie is, however, aware that the audience does not forget the same way Leonard does. The audience will soon find out that there is method in this madness. As stated by the opening shot, the sequences in color indicate flashbacks and a backward motion. Leonard gets about fifteen minutes each time to orient himself, review the case, evaluate a fact, trust a person, reach a deduction, and make a decision about his next step before his mind goes blank and he will have to start over. The colored sequences are interrupted by black and white sequences that indicate the end of Leonard’s borrowed time and the return to the present. Contrary to the common usage, the colorful past shows Leonard’s connection to the past memories that he vividly remembers in contrast to the monochromic image of his present where “Time is an absurdity.”<sup>371</sup>

To help the audience find continuity in the events to some extent, the last shots of the previous colored sequence are used after the black and white interval as the first shot of the following colored sequence. While recognizing the system underneath is the first step in following the story, it will not make it any easier if the audience do not get actively involved. The audience will receive a large amount of verbal and visual information in a very short period before the backward motion of the narrative provides a possible context. The audience will be forced to make

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<sup>370</sup>Nolan, Nathan. “Memento Mori.” *Esquire*. Hearst Communications, Inc., 29 Jan. 2007. Web. 18 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.esquire.com/entertainment/books/a1564/memento-mori-0301/>>

<sup>371</sup> *Ibid*

deductions before they receive all the facts which are given out of context too. The audience's interpretation of the facts will be disproven, altered or in rare cases confirmed, when the following sequence explains how each one was acquired. Nathalie's manipulation of Leonard's condition may serve as a clear example of how the audience's perception of the character is built in a sequence and radically altered in the next. The audience witness a beaten and bloodied Nathalie getting out of her car. She enters the house and tells Leonard that Dodd, the drug dealer to whom Nathalie's boyfriend owed money, has beaten her. The audience has not been given any reason to distrust Nathalie so far. So she succeeds in winning the audience's and Leonard's sympathy and Leonard suggests taking revenge on Dodd. The following sequence takes the audience back to witness how Nathalie entered earlier, hid the pens, so Leonard could not keep any record of what happened, and insulted his wife, so he would beat her. Then she left and waited in the car for Leonard to forget what happened, so she could tell him her made-up story. The audience are shocked to see Nathalie telling Leonard that she is going to manipulate him into killing Dodd and she is going to enjoy it too, because she knows that Leonard will not remember anything. Thus, at any given point of the movie, the audience needs to remember what has happened so far, connect them to the sequence they are watching, modify the false assumptions, and create new hypotheses for what is to come. In addition, the audience needs to stay aware of what is going on in the black and white sequences and archive the information for later without any knowledge about when and if the information will ever be needed. In brief, the audience are bombarded with an abundance of information in the form of images and dialogue and need to observe, remember, categorize, deduce, modify, and form another hypothesis in a very short period of time. The memory game that *Memento* has designed for its audience is as intriguing as it is frustrating.

#### IV.3.3.2.2 We do not remember in narrative form: “There is nothing so important as trifles.”<sup>372</sup>

You can just feel the details. Bits and pieces you never bother to put into words. And you can feel these extreme moments, even if you don't want to. You put these together and you get the feel of a person.

##### *Memento*

*Memento* effectively uses its visual medium to replace “telling” with “showing,” and emphasizes that the human mind does not remember in the form of a coherent narrative, but random sounds, smells and images. When verbalizing a memory, the mind generates a coherent and meaningful interpretation of a certain memory by finding connections among the bits and pieces. The process of recalling a memory and how a sight, a sound, a smell, etc may trigger a chain of memories is perfectly imitated in fiction through stream of consciousness. *Memento* benefits from the visual version of the same technique to a) demonstrate the fallibility of memory, and b) play with the audience's memory and instigate different interpretations. Two of the most important characters of the movie Catherine, Leonard's wife, and Sammy Jankis are not accessible, but through Leonard's memories. Therefore, the audience's perception of these characters depends on Leonard's visual memories and narration.

Leonard's condition underlines the discontinuity of the remembering process and therefore, emphasizes the unreliability of our memory. However, the viewers tend to accept what they see as authentic, especially if they are granted access to the characters thoughts and feelings. Thus, the few random shots of Catherine, Leonard's wife, which seem awfully genuine at first glance, are used to create a shocking effect. The audience already knows that Leonard has lost the ability of forming new memories after he was attacked by one of his wife's murderers. However, his long term

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<sup>372</sup> “It is, of course, a trifle, but there is nothing so important as trifles.” Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. “The Man with the Twisted Lip”. *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Project Gutenberg. www.Gutenberg.org, 18 April 2011. Web. 21 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1661/1661-h/1661-h.htm#6>>

memory is intact and the audience considers the random images of his wife that pop into his mind to be real.

The movie emphasizes the discrepancy between how we remember and how we verbalize the images when in answer to Nathalie's question about Catherine, Leonard says that she was beautiful and that to him, she was perfect. Nathalie interrupts to ask him not to merely recite the words, but to close his eyes and really remember Catherine. This marks the first time the audience sees Catherine the way Leonard remembers her. Random images of Catherine doing ordinary things such as washing her hands, touching her hair or staring out of the window are accompanied by Leonard's melancholic voice saying: "You can just feel the details. The bits and pieces you never bothered to put into words. And you can feel these extreme moments. Even if you don't want to. You put these together and you get the feel of a person. Enough to know how much you miss them. And how much you hate the person who took them away." The intimate experience the audience shares with the character raises sympathy. The footage is natural and heartbreaking, and leaves no doubt for the audience that Leonard's mental images of his wife are genuine.

The second time that images of his life with Catherine pop into Leonard's mind is when he burns her belongings and remembers the memories attached to each object; the way she brushed her hair, the conversation about Leonard's frustration with Catherine re-reading her favorite book because why would you re-read a book when you already know how it ends? One more time, the audience feels that they are re-living a domestic and intimate memory with Leonard. Furthermore, this time Leonard is not describing his wife to another character and it seems that the audience has direct access to his inner thoughts and emotions. In addition, Leonard's solitude and sorrow confirm his genuine affection for his wife and the feeling of loss for the life he had.

Sammy's story is a little different in terms of presentation, but it finally ties in with Catherine's story and the reliability of Leonard's long term memory. Leonard tells the story of Sammy Jankis, another anterograde amnesia patient, on the phone during the black and white

sequences. The story is not related to the murder, and it seems that Leonard attempts to explain his condition using Sammy's story. However, the tattoo on his hand that reads "remember Sammy Jankis" is strange. Leonard only tattoos the facts about the murder and the instructions on how to find the murderer on his body and Sammy's story has happened before the attack. Through Leonard's narration, the audience learns that

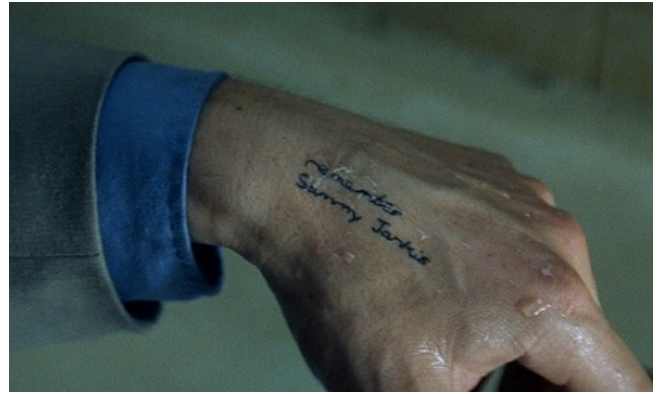


Figure IV.3.3.2.2.P.1

*Memento*

Christopher Nolan

1:30:02

Sammy's case was Leonard's first important case as an insurance investigator. After Sammy was unable to learn through conditioning, Leonard concluded that his condition was physiological and Sammy's request was denied as he was not covered for mental illness. When Mrs. Jankis asked Leonard for his professional and honest opinion, Leonard responded that Sammy might be able to create new memories in an attempt to placate the desperate woman. To test Sammy, Mrs. Jankis, who was diabetic, repeatedly asked Sammy to help her with her insulin injection. The insulin overdose cost Mrs. Jankis her life and Sammy Jankis was admitted to a mental institution.

Sammy Jankis' story does not possess the same intimate and honest quality as Leonard's memories of his wife and may seem inapposite at first glance. Therefore, Sammy's story as the parallel narrative in the black and white sequences contrasts with the colorful sequences that follow Leonard's quest to find John G. and raises legitimate questions in the audience's mind. The viewers are encouraged to find and/or form justifications for the second story especially because it is "remember Sammy Jankis" tattooed on Leonard's hand that initiates Leonard's discovery of other facts tattooed on his body everyday. In a way, this tattoo brings him back to the present time. While the introduction of Sammy into the story and the tattoo may seem odd at first, as the film



progresses, the audiences form a hypothesis to justify the significance of Sammy's fate to Leonard's story.

Sammy's confrontation with Leonard happened prior to Leonard's accident and therefore, his memory deficiency should not have affected the tale in any way. However, the audience's reaction to Sammy's story depends on whether or not they consider Leonard a reliable narrator. Although the audience gets to witness Sammy's fate through flashbacks, the fact that Leonard was personally involved in the story, and that he is responsible for Sammy's tragic end to some extent, make the audience rightfully doubt Leonard's tale and take into consideration that he may try to redeem himself. From this point of view, Leonard unconsciously blames himself for Mrs. Jankis' death and Sammy's institutionalization, and regards the similarity between his and Sammy's condition as poetic justice. His urge to repeat Sammy's story and the tattoo on his hand, although irrelevant to the murder, suggest that Leonard regards telling Sammy's story as therapy as if "at an uncertain hour / That agony returns / And till my ghastly tale is told / This heart within me burns."<sup>373</sup> He has tattooed Sammy's name on his hand — and probably in his own handwriting— and ironically, he sees it whenever he washes his hands. It is also the tattoo that draws his attention to the other tattoos on his body as if his flaw in judgement about Sammy's case initiated the events that led to his current Sisyphean lifestyle. Whether or not the audience believes the entirety of Sammy's story, the movie gives them no reason to doubt the story until Teddy's bombshell about Sammy and Leonard's wife connects the stories and undermines the audience's interpretation.

Even though Leonard's constant references to his "condition" and seeing him forgetting recent happenings or the people he meets strengthen our belief in Leonard's anterograde amnesia, the audience, who follows Leonard's search for the murderer, consider what they see on the screen to be real. Seeing is believing after all. The audience witnesses how Leonard remembers his wife

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<sup>373</sup> Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (text of 1834) by Samuel Taylor Coleridge - Poetry Foundation. *Poetry Foundation*. Poetry Foundation, n.d. Web. 21 Aug. 2016. <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/43997>>

and believes the story of Sammy Jankis, as it is narrated not only through voice-over, but also flashbacks. Therefore, Teddy's version of Leonard's story comes as a tremendous shock. Teddy tells Leonard that Sammy was a con man who Leonard has rightfully brought to justice. In response to Leonard's protest that Sammy's wife died because of his error of judgement, Teddy informs him that Sammy did not have a wife and it was Leonard's wife who was diabetic. Before the audience gets the time to review the story in the light of the new information that indicates Catherine survived the rape and then, was killed by her husband, Teddy reveals that Leonard has already killed John G. and forgot it. While Teddy is talking about Catherine's diabetes, Leonard protests that he knows his own wife and Catherine was not diabetic. However, he is visibly shaken when the memory of pinching Catherine that we have already seen flashes in his mind, but this time he is injecting her with insulin. While the movie avoids accusing either of the characters, it merely underlines the fact that "memory is treachery" and that the human mind blocks, replaces or modifies disturbing memories. The interpretation made based on memory is highly questionable since our memory easily distorts reality. If we paid attention at the very beginning, we would remember Leonard clearly stating that "Memory can change the shape of a room; it can change the color of a car. And memories can be distorted. They're just an interpretation, they're not a record, and they're irrelevant if you have the facts."

The turn of events at the moment that the audience expects the movie to be concluded initiates different reactions in the audience whose "first-hand evidence"<sup>374</sup> led them to wrong interpretations. The audience may decide to accept Teddy's version of the events or take sides with Leonard since Teddy, a corrupt policeman who takes advantage of Leonard's condition and is involved in drug-dealing, is not a reliable narrator either. However, there is a third option that the movie favors over the other two: re-watching the movie from a new perspective in order to find

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<sup>374</sup> "There is nothing like first-hand evidence."

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. "A Study in Scarlet" *Project Gutenberg*. Wwww.Gutenberg.org, 12 July 2008. Web. 21 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/244/244-h/244-h.htm>>

evidence that supports either of the stories. The audience has formed a hypothesis without considering all the facts after all. To quote Sherlock once more: "It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly, one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts."<sup>375</sup> The audience who accepts the challenge will be rewarded with a paradoxically frustrating and yet, satisfying experience as they understand how much they have ignored or forgotten. Re-watching *Memento* uncovers the delicate web of details the movie has hidden in each shot for the audience to "observe" and discover. However, the retrograde narrative, the parallel narratives, the double temporal motion, the fast rhythm of the movie and the presumptions created at the first watching of the movie highly affect the audience's interpretation. The second watching of *Memento* is to question "certainties. It's the kind of memory that you take for granted."

#### IV.3.3.2.3 Did you notice?

"Is there any point to which you would wish to draw my attention?"

"To the curious incident of the dog in the night-time."

"The dog did nothing in the night-time."

"That was the curious incident," remarked Sherlock Holmes.<sup>376</sup>

*Silver Blaze*

The backward narrative and the temporal confusion are not the only means *Memento* employs to challenge the memory of its audience. Keeping in mind that the viewers build hypotheses based on what they see, or more specifically, what they believe they have seen, Christopher Nolan fills the shots with details. He knows the first-time audience approaches the movie with no background knowledge of the story and the movie benefits from the fact that they do not even know what to look for. Will the verses of the Bible Leonard finds in the drawer affect the story later in any way? Should the audience pay more attention to Leonard's tattoos or the photos he

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<sup>375</sup> Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. "A Scandal in Bohemia". *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Project Gutenberg. www.Gutenberg.org, 18 April 2011. Web. 21 Aug. 2016. <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1661/1661-h/1661-h.htm>>

<sup>376</sup> Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. "Silver Blaze." *Memoirs of Sherlock Holmes*. Project Gutenberg. www.Gutenberg.org, 17 December 2012. Web. 21 Aug. 2016. <[http://www.gutenberg.org/files/834/834-h/834-h.htm#link2H\\_4\\_0001](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/834/834-h/834-h.htm#link2H_4_0001)>

takes? The experience of watching *Memento* for the first time is like the demo of a memory game the movie has designed. Watch and remember whatever may look useful. You may need them later.

Nolan uses the medium to his advantage to design this game. The dense shots of the movie are filled with details and subtle hints to prove the conclusion the movie advocates while opening the movie to further speculations at the same time. The fact that an image needs to remain at least 30 seconds in front of the eyes to be registered and recorded in the short term memory guarantees the loss of data. The fast rhythm of the movie, the retrograde narrative, the insertion of supposedly neutral images into the torrent of the story and the fact that the audience is unable to rewind the movie in the cinema make the audience doubt what they have witnessed. Leonard's response to Teddy's account of the happenings reflects the audience's reaction. He vacillates between what he remembers, pinching Catherine, and what he is told, injecting her with insulin. Despite his protest that Teddy is wrong, his body language and facial expression convey his uncertainty about what Teddy claims. Unlike Leonard who needs to decide what to remember by taking notes, the audience can watch the movie again and look for clues. "The game is afoot"<sup>377</sup>.

#### **IV.3.3.2.4 Sammy Jankis or Leonard Shelby?**

"Watson, you can see everything. You fail, however, to reason from what you see."<sup>378</sup>  
*The Adventures of the Blue Carbuncle*

Teddy's explanation about Sammy Jankis adds to the complexity of *Memento*. On the one hand, if Leonard has really caused his wife's death, it seems logical that he has created an alter-ego in the form of an old client, who suffered from the same condition, in order to escape the painful memory. On the other hand, how can the audience be sure that Teddy's version of the story is not

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<sup>377</sup> Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. "The Adventures of Abbey Grange". *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*. Project Gutenberg. www.Gutenberg.org, 8 July 2007. Web. 21 Aug. 2016. <[http://www.gutenberg.org/files/108/108-h/108-h.htm#linkH2H\\_4\\_0012](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/108/108-h/108-h.htm#linkH2H_4_0012)>

<sup>378</sup> Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. "The Adventures of the Blue Carbuncle". *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. Project Gutenberg. www.Gutenberg.org, 18 April 2011. Web. 21 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1661/1661-h/1661-h.htm#7>>

another ploy to manipulate Leonard, specially when he is aware of Leonard's intention to kill him? While re-watching the movie, the audience may look for evidence for the theory they find more acceptable and notice an abundance of details that they have missed the first time. It is remarkable that while re-watchings may draw the audience attention to new evidence, they also undermine the certainties the audience took for granted and paradoxically increase ambiguity. The audience who has been shocked by the revelation that Sammy was an



Figure IV.3.3.2.4.P.1

*Memento*

Christopher Nolan

1:43:35

imposter may focus on the black and white sequences to study Sammy's behavior. This category of viewers will not be disappointed as there is a short shot in the asylum that backs up the theory that Leonard has projected his anguish on Sammy. When Leonard finishes Sammy's story and concludes that Sammy was sent to an asylum afterwards, there is an image of Sammy in the wheelchair. The silhouette of a passerby covers the picture and for a fraction of a second, Leonard is seen in Sammy's wheelchair. The shot is so short that the audience may doubt their eyes.<sup>379</sup> Since the audience has no access to Sammy's story, but through the black and white sequences that are narrated by Leonard, this discovery raises numerous questions. Can we assume that these two images are an unconscious slip and trust Teddy's story? Has Leonard intentionally made up Sammy Jankis, especially considering that the character does not exist in "Memento Mori" and is an invention of the movie? Speaking of "Memento Mori," the short story begins in an asylum. Is this a hint at Leonard's unreliability? And more importantly, did Leonard kill his wife? The movie is not supposed to answer these questions. If it did, it would impede the expansion of its hypertextual

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<sup>379</sup> The slow-motion scene that clearly shows Leonard replaces Sammy may be watched here: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2MUnDhxAif0>>

network. However, it intentionally inspires uncertainty and encourages the audience to look for new evidence. How can you trust your eyes or your memory when you have missed such an obvious clue?



Figure IV.3.3.2.4.P.2

*Memento*

Christopher Nolan

1:43:36

The skepticism around Sammy's story makes the audience doubt what they have seen of Catherine when Leonard was reminiscing about her. Teddy's final revelation that Catherine survived the assault, brings images of Catherine blinking under the plastic bag to Leonard's mind. When Teddy says that Leonard's wife did not believe his condition, we see Catherine's tormented look at Leonard the same way Sammy's wife looked at Sammy. And the final blow that Sammy did not have a wife and it was Leonard's wife who was diabetic inspires the memory of the insulin injection despite Leonard's protest that his wife was not diabetic (1:43:40). The uncertainty that these images raise makes us doubt all Leonard's intimate memories of Catherine.

Closer observation of the attack scene shows that Leonard faces Catherine after falling down. If Catherine died at that moment, Leonard should remember her facing him when he gains consciousness. However, when he remembers Catherine blinking under the plastic bag at the end of the movie, the scene was shot from a higher angle instead of the face-level. The audience may search their memory for eye-level shots of Catherine and remember Leonard's memory of Catherine going to sleep. Only this time the scene has a ghastly effect as the audience suspects this not a shot of Catherine going to sleep, but going into hypoglycemic shock.

Knowing that Leonard may have killed Catherine, the audience does not look at Catherine's everyday life the same way. Putting bits and pieces together to get the feel of a person results in a gloomy picture this time. Her loneliness, her distant staring out of the window and her wandering around the house can be taken as the signs of an unhappy marriage, especially now that the



Figure IV.3.3.2.4.P.3  
*Memento*



Figure IV.3.3.2.4.P.4  
*Memento*

audience is not sure if the images belong to before or after the accident or whether they are completely replaced or distorted. Her retort “don’t be a prick!” to Leonard’s question as to why she reads the same book over and over again suddenly sounds harsher and the book she reads, *Claudius the God: And His Wife Messalina*, finds great significance. The book tells the story of “Tiberius Claudius Drusus Nero Germanicus, the cripple, the stammerer, the fool of the family”<sup>380</sup> and his turbulent marriage to Messalina who manipulated him, betrayed him, and finally conspired with her lover, Gaius Silius, to dethrone Claudius and usurp the monarchy. The unsuccessful attempt led to her execution and a damnatio memoriae ordered by the Roman senate for her name to be removed from all public and private records. In short, she was sentenced to be forgotten. The book is an interesting choice not only because of the questions that the similarities between the two stories raise, but also because the first account of her history appears years after the real events and in an



Figure IV.3.3.2.4.P.5  
*Memento*



Figure IV.3.3.2.4.P.6  
*Memento*

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<sup>380</sup> Graves, Robert. *Claudius the God, And His Wife Messalina*. Vintage International:1989. p. 3

atmosphere of hostility and political bias and therefore, there is no way to separate the real historical figure from her exaggerated promiscuous persona that appears in political satire, art and literature.

This point of view will also affect our perception of Leonard's attempt to re-create his last night with his wife. First-time watchers may find employing a prostitute to play the role of his wife pretty strange, but they may justify it as an attempt to exercise his memory. When Leonard burns Catherine's belongings, the mentioned book included, in the following scene, the first time viewers find it convincing that he seeks closure because as Earl writes to himself in "Memento Mori": "how can you forgive if you can't remember to forget?" Suspecting Leonard, however, raises doubts about the mentioned actions. Is Leonard trying to forget about his own involvement in Catherine's death? Why does he burn Catherine's belongings considering he desperately tries to remember details about Catherine? Is keeping souvenirs not a reliable method to keep memories? After unveiling a few hidden clues, the viewers of *Memento* will obsessively question everything, re-examine all the facts and create, or rule out multiple conclusions. The controversy surrounding the plate number is the other possible clue that excited the fandom and persuaded them to start speculating about Teddy's accusations.

The plate number that changes according to Leonard's tattoo may be a clear visual clue to how Leonard forms his own reality. Revising the film in chronological order, the audience would notice that when Teddy parks his car at the derelict building at the very end of the movie, his license plate reads: SG13 7IU. When Leonard finally decides to deceive himself and notes down Teddy's license plate number as the murderer's, he unintentionally or on purpose mistakes I for 1 and tattoos the wrong number as fact 6 on his thigh. Later, when Leonard and Teddy drive Dodd out of town, earlier in movie time, the audience can get a glimpse of the license plate which has changed according to Leonard's tattoo. While it may be considered a movie mistake, the change of the plate number appears in Nolan's handwritten draft in the DVD features and the printed screenplay which



contain photos of the earlier drafts. Even if the evidence were not accessible in the features, the audiences who notice the change might come up with a new hypothesis.

Teddy's story about Leonard's revenge raises many questions including the photo Teddy took after Leonard supposedly killed John G. The polaroid shows a happy and bloody Leonard looking into the camera and pointing to the empty spot on his chest that he had claimed he left for when he took his revenge. While Leonard writes notes on each photo before he forgets the related information, the margins of this photo are blank. The audience cannot be sure whether Teddy has manipulated Leonard into killing one of his associates as he has done with Jimmy or if Leonard, as Teddy claims, has created another puzzle he cannot solve. Teddy claims that Leonard has taken out the twelve lost pages of the case to make it impossible to find John G. and ensure the continuation of his quest. While it seems logical that Leonard needs to believe his life is still meaningful and the ongoing quest to avenge his wife is exactly what he needs, the audience cannot trust Teddy who was proven duplicitous on multiple occasions. What if this is another way of exploiting Leonard's disability? Another rapid shot of Leonard and his wife that the first time viewers may easily miss shall be used in both arguments.

After Leonard has killed Teddy and he is driving away in the tradition of film noirs, he closes his eyes for a moment and images of him lying in bed with his wife flash in his mind (1:49:48). The sequence that lasts about 7 seconds contains at least 14 cuts. That means each image stays on the screen for about half a second. It is not surprising if the first-time watchers who are overwhelmed by Teddy's story and his murder a few minutes ago miss the details of the shot. Upon further examination, we find out that the image cannot be a memory as Leonard's body has been tattooed with the facts of murder. But what attracts our attention is not the realization that the scene displays Leonard's aspiration, but the tattoo on the left side of Leonard's chest that clearly reads "I've done it." On the one hand, the image can be Leonard's wish to take revenge. This means that Leonard has not believed Teddy, or decided to "let himself forget" what Teddy told him and



Figure IV.3.3.2.4.P.7

*Memento*

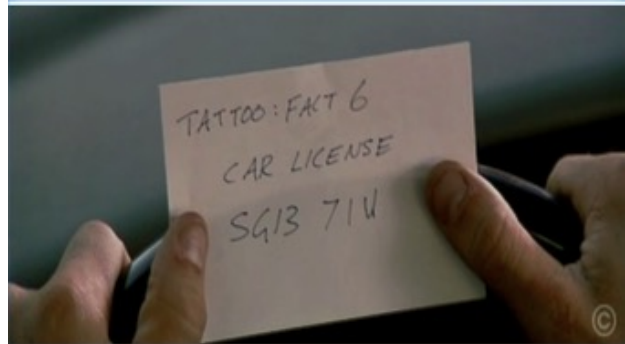


Figure IV.3.3.2.4.P.8

*Memento*

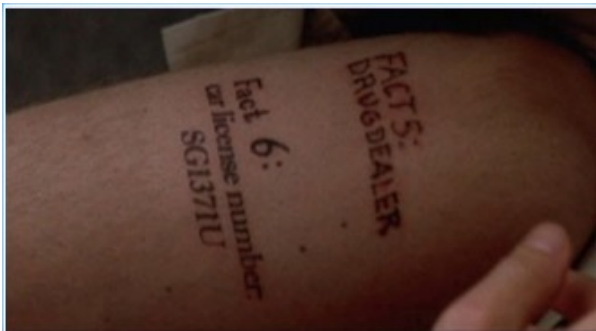


Figure IV.3.3.2.4.P.9

*Memento*



Figure IV.3.3.2.4.P.10

*Memento*

followed his plan. On the other hand, it can be an unconscious sign that deep down he knows that he has already found and killed John G. , and Teddy is, at least in this case, innocent. Either way, the shot displays how unreliable memory can be due to our great capacity for self-deception and consequently displacing or modifying our mental image. Furthermore, Catherine’s head on Leonard’s chest covers the “John G.” and the combination of “raped” underlined by “I’ve done it” creates a strange visual and emotional effect. “Memento Mori” creates a similar effect on the reader who reads “I RAPED AND KILLED YOUR WIFE,” and makes the readers wonder why Earl has chosen to use the first person instead of the unidentified pronoun “he.” The end of the movie emphasizes the unreliability of Leonard once more, not only because of his memory deficiency or distortion of memories that everybody is more or less prone to, but because of his conscious decision to burn the photo of Jimmy’s murder and the photo of himself that Teddy claimed to have

taken after he had killed the real John G. It is not the first time that Leonard is burning something in the movie. Can it be another reference to him causing Catherine's overdose?



Figure IV.3.3.2.4.P.11

*Memento*

The last bit of information that, if detected, brings another layer of meaning and new possible directions to the story is Teddy's driving license. Starting over, the audience knows that the plate number tattooed on Leonard's thigh as Fact 6 is Teddy's plate number. Tracing the narrative backward, we remember that Leonard gave Nathalie the plate number because she claimed to have a friend



Figure IV.3.3.2.4.P.12

*Memento*

who could run the plate number in the database, and find to whom it belonged. Knowing that Nathalie is aware that Teddy manipulated Leonard into killing Jimmy Grantz, Nathalie's boyfriend, the audience suspects Nathalie has been planning to take revenge all along. Despite her considerate behavior toward Leonard when she learns of his memory deficiency, Nathalie has given the audience plenty of reasons not to trust her. We have watched her taking advantage of Leonard's disability and shamelessly manipulating Leonard into killing Dodd. Although she later — earlier in the backward chronology of the movie — mentions that Jimmy had an appointment with Teddy from which he did not return, she feigns ignorance when she gives Leonard a copy of Teddy's driving license mentioning that she may have seen him in the bar. While the license may not attract the attention of the first-time watchers, a *Memento* viewer knows that they should take everything in the world of the movie with a pinch of salt and observe all the detailed shots the movie offers them. They will not be disappointed either.

A more precise look at Teddy’s driving license shows that the expiry date reads 02-29-01. Since 2001 was not a leap year and the intercalary day does not exist, can we assume the document is fake? If so, then who is responsible for it? Teddy or Nathalie? On the one hand, Nathalie is involved in Jimmy’s drug deals. Teddy mentions that she uses the bar as a meeting place and transfers the orders to Jimmy on the back of the coasters. So, it is not surprising that she uses a fake document to persuade Leonard that Teddy is John G. On the other hand, Teddy tells Leonard that he is using the name Teddy instead of John Gammell because he is undercover and then admits in another scene that he is not a policeman, but a “snitch.” So there is a strong possibility that Teddy is not who he says he is and the fake document may be one of his identities. It is for the audience to decide who to believe.

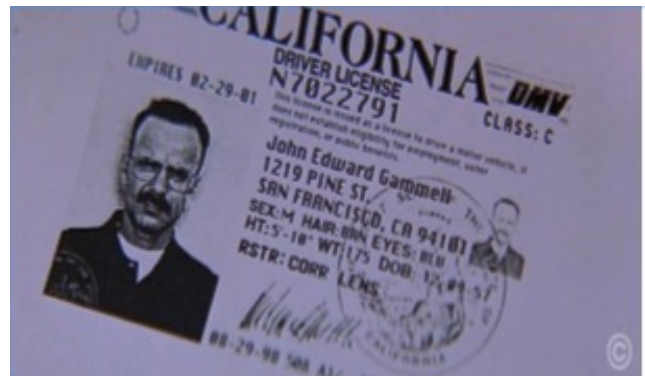


Figure IV.3.3.2.5.P.13  
*Memento*

**IV.3.3.2.5 Trained to wread: “You know my methods. Apply them.”<sup>381</sup>**

“There should be no combination of events for which the wit of man cannot conceive an explanation.”<sup>382</sup>

*The Valley of Fear*

*Memento* proves that wreading is not as difficult as it seems. The non-linear structure and the extraordinary usage of the medium help the audience to get involved and experience the movie actively. The w in wreading is still mute. The audience cannot change a frame of the movie and

<sup>381</sup> Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. “The Sign of Four.” *Project Gutenberg*. www.Gutenberg.org, 19 November 2008. Web. 21 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2097/2097-h/2097-h.htm>>

<sup>382</sup> Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. “The Valley of Fear.” *Project Gutenberg*. www.Gutenberg.org, 28 February 2009. Web. 21 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3289/3289.txt>>

yet ,they can expand the core text through their power of observation and deduction.<sup>383</sup> The movie lays the perfect groundwork for its audience to play detective, and explore and expand the hypertext. *Memento* traces the murder backwards<sup>384</sup> and since “there is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact<sup>385</sup> and an abundance of trifles,<sup>386</sup> it urges the audience to select, concentrate on, eliminate, theorize, deduce from and reach a conclusion. In *Memento*, nothing is off-limits. However, the movie recognizes and convinces its audience that there is no unified truth when dealing with memory: “Memory's truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end, it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else's version more than his own.<sup>387</sup>” Memory is never perfect in recounting the events and that is what makes it perfect for creating a rich profusion of bifurcated texts; a true library of Babel. *Memento* does not intend to convince its audience of the veracity of the story that they have just watched, but of the possibility of many verifiable versions. Wreading, in a nutshell, is simply observing the details, finding connections, proposing explanations, and “balance[ing] probabilities and choos[ing] the most likely. It is the scientific use of the imagination.”<sup>388</sup>

The texts such as *Memento* that constructively use their non-linear nature and their medium in order to engage the users and guide them in their journey through the text are the most likely to

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<sup>383</sup> “He possesses two out of the three qualities necessary for the ideal detective. He has the power of observation and that of deduction. He is only wanting in knowledge.”

Doyle, Sir Arthur Conan. “The Sign of Four.” *Project Gutenberg*. www.Gutenberg.org, 19 November 2008. Web. 21 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2097/2097-h/2097-h.htm>>

<sup>384</sup> “In solving a problem of this sort, the grand thing is to be able to reason backward.”

Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur. *A Study in Scarlet*. *Project Gutenberg*. www.Gutenberg.org, 12 July 2008. Web. 21 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/244/244-h/244-h.htm>>

<sup>385</sup> “There is nothing more deceptive than an obvious fact.”

Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur. “A Case of Identity.” *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*. *Project Gutenberg*. www.Gutenberg.org, 18 April 2011. Web. 21 Aug. 2016. <<https://www.gutenberg.org/files/1661/1661-h/1661-h.htm#3>>

<sup>386</sup> “It has long been an axiom of mine that the little things are infinitely the most important.”

*Ibid*

<sup>387</sup> Rushdie, Salman. *Midnight Children*. London: Jonathan Cape. 1993. p. 242

<sup>388</sup> Conan Doyle, Sir Arthur. *The Hound of the Baskerville*. *Project Gutenberg*. www.Gutenberg.org, 8 December 2008. Web. 21 Aug. 2016. <<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/2852/2852-h/2852-h.htm>>

be re-read, reproduced and revived. In brief, such texts design a pleasant game for the readers to promote wreading over reading. The single shots in *Memento* play the same role as the polaroid photos for the audience in order to help them identify with Leonard, and encourage them to get actively involved with the story. The result is so pleasurable that the audience voluntarily returns to the text. The fan forums that are still active eighteen years after the release of the movie prove this claim. Catherine's short response to Leonard's snide remark about her reading the same book for the thousandth time and that the pleasure of the book was in wanting to know what happens next sums it up for all wreaders: "I enjoy it." It is that simple.

#### **IV.3.4 Closed hypertextual networks: Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl***

Closed hypertextual networks, the last category in my classification of hypertextual networks, will point out the kinship between hyperfiction and mainstream novels. As mentioned before, the distinction among hypertextual networks in this study indicates the degree to which hypertexts incite reader-participation in expanding the network and whether the reader production is considered as canon. Joss Whedon's *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog*, the study case for open hypertextual networks, encourages its readers to reproduce and simulate the series in various media to the point that the borders between the core text and branching texts across the media nearly fade. BBC's *Sherlock*, the study case for semi-open hypertextual networks, is an extension of a literary core text and permits the expansion of the network by the production team or other professionals. This network welcomes the addition of blogs to its core text, but hinders reader-interaction such as comments in order to keep control over the fictional material. However, the creators express approval of certain fan art without including them in the canon. The cameo of Steven Moffat, the writer and creator, and Louis Moffat, who plays young Sherlock, in a Hillywood parody of the series serves as an example.<sup>389</sup> Christopher Nolan's *Memento*, the study case for the semi-closed

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<sup>389</sup> The video is available on YouTube: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ArdWL2uKf7k>>

networks, meticulously leads its readers' / viewers' interpretive process by predicting their reaction and planting clues in order to catalyze probable conclusions. The DVD features of *Memento's* special edition which withhold running the DVD unless the viewers pass some psychological tests illustrate how the core text subtly promotes controlled reader-participation.<sup>390</sup> However, the delimitations of the medium, the fact that the movie was released in 2000 at the dawn of the internet and the diffusion of reader-generated material cannot be ignored. Closed networks such as hyperfiction define reader-participation and the expansion of the core text differently in comparison with their open, semi-open and semi-closed counterparts. This section will study closed networks using Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*.

While the term "closed network" sounds self-contradictory, hypertexts have the potential to carefully delineate their core text and encourage reader-participation at the same time. Reader-contribution and the consequential expansion of a core text at the hand of readers depend on the utilisation of the constituent media and the efficaciousness of its exposed non-linearity. Defining a single or a dominant medium for the core text, for instance, can restrain the extension of the text and lead it in the desired directions. The fusion of the media in open networks such as *Dr. Horrible* coupled with its online distribution catalyses the proliferation of the core text. A semi-closed network such as *Memento*, on the other hand, benefits from various media in the process of the creation, but regards the visual media as the dominant one. Unless the movie and / or its branching texts become accessible to all users online, the expansion of the *Memento* universe by anyone but the authorial group and professional filmmakers seems unlikely. This is not to say that the more closed a network becomes, the less it is interested in reader-participation. In fact, *Memento* demands an extraordinary amount of reader-participation to be deciphered. However, moving from open networks toward closer ones, the focus of hypertexts shift from the creation of expandable and re-

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<sup>390</sup> *Memento: Limited Edition*, Directed by Christopher Nolan, Performances by Guy Pearce and Carrie-Anne Moss, Sonny Pictures Home Entertainment: 2002. DVD.

constructible texts to meticulously designed texts with the potential to initiate various and sometimes even contradictory interpretations. In other words, closed networks are less obsessed with the growth of the network across the media and more concerned about the amplification of the text in readers' minds. This very feature accentuates the similarities between mainstream novels and hyperfiction. To sum up, closed hypertextual networks favor the reproduction of the same text over the growth of the network through the addition of branching texts based on the core text. This quality which is rather similar to the library of Babel effect is usually achieved by defining a dominant medium for the core text which to some extent controls the expansion of the text across the media, but has the potential to promote reader participation and the dissemination of meaning by creative usage of the medium and non-linearity. Hyperfiction is one of the best examples of closed networks.

#### **IV.3.4.1 Hyperfiction, a closed network vs hypermedia, a semi-closed network:**

##### ***Patchwork Girl* vs. *Pieces of Herself* by Juliet Davis**

Hypertextual fiction can be easily classified as a closed network. Although the core text is usually a multimedia composite, written language is the dominant medium of presentation and audio, visual, or kinetic material serve supplementary functions. In *my body — a Wunderkammer* by Shelley Jackson, for instance, the readers may rarely refer to the illustrations when reading the text. The story unfolds in language and the accompanying or background pictures, as haunting as they are, do not find the same significance as the eloquently expressed themes of self-exploration and alienation. The superiority of language as the medium of presentation distinguishes hyperfiction from hypermedia such as *Pieces of Herself* which can be classified as a semi-closed network. *Pieces of Herself* does not privilege any of its constituent media over the others even though the opening sentences to some extent determine the direction the story will take: “Her friends said she needed to “find” herself. And sure enough when she started looking, she found pieces of herself everywhere



...”<sup>391</sup> Unlike *my body* — a *Wunderkammer* or *Patchwork Girl*, Juliet Davis’ *Pieces of Herself* avoids designating superiority to a single medium and leaves the readers free to create their own stories by using the opening sentences, the manual, and the multimedia material.

After clicking on the word “begin,” the readers/users will have to choose one of the following locations as the setting: shower, bedroom, outside, kitchen, living-room, office and Main Street. As we see in **figure IV.3.4.1.P.1**, the sentences that can be considered a continuation of the

opening lines are banished to the top right side of the page and can be easily ignored, even though they have an important role in setting the tone of the story. Thus the emergence and the development of the story are dependent on the readers from the very beginning. The trained book readers may follow these seemingly jumbled fragments



Figure IV.3.4.1.P.1  
Pieces of Herself  
Juliet Davis

of the story and use the illustrations and voice-overs to fill in the gaps. The visually literate readers, on the other hand, may decide to follow the story presented by the visual material. For instance, the movement of the cursor gives a panoramic view of the shower and the colorful images, which emerge and fade, plant the seeds of different stories in readers’ minds. The colorful visual clues stand out in the monochromic background. Blue and purple dividing cells emerge in a bathroom stall. An arrow-pierced heart with the inscription of “Tracy and John, True love 4-ever” materializes in black on one of the doors. A prying eye which changes colors constantly comes into sight on the window. Red fingerprints appear on the trash can. Huge blue water drops cover a sink. The back of a towel-clad woman disappears in one of the showers, and finally the last shower curtain closes

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<sup>391</sup> Davis, Juliet. *Pieces of Herself*. Juliet Davis - Pieces of Herself. Electronic Literature Collection Volume Two, Web. 12 June 2017. <[http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/davis\\_pieces/index.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/davis_pieces/index.html)>

when touched by the cursor and reveals blood stains. Each or a combination of the visual clues can prompt a story which may or may not include the written material on top which reads “In the SHOWER ROOM, where women slip behind curtains, in perfect synchronicity, to remain invisible to each other.”<sup>392</sup> Each location includes a number of clues that can be easily linked to one of the colorful images introduced as the section titled “shower.” Various combinations of these visual clues may lead to permutations of possible storylines. However, we should keep in mind that contrary to hyperfiction such as *my body — a Wunderkammer* or *Patchwork Girl*, an underlying story does not exist. The pictures, the visual clues, the audio bits and the accompanying written text shall develop into budding stories in readers’ minds, but it is impossible to claim that the act of reading will result in uncovering or re-constructing the story. In order to demonstrate how readers use the clues to create plausible scenarios, I shall follow some of the visual clues given in the first card titled “shower” in connection with “outside” in order to develop a few story lines.

Clicking on “outside,” readers face an external shot of a building. The readers already know that the movement of the cursor provides them with a panorama shot and reveals the hidden clues. The movement reveals a suburban street that joins the building to its neighbor’s house and garage which are in turn next to the playground of a daycare. Although the top part of the first building has been cropped, the cross on the wall implies this location is a church and the first visual clue, a red floating fetus appears on the cross. Moving to the right, the following clue shows the evolution of a green monkey to a man and vice versa. If we keep on moving the cursor to the right side of the picture, we witness the following changes. A red apple emerges on the tree next to the monkey / human. The sign “Road Closed to Thru Traffic” is replaced by a red circle that seems to refer to a roundabout. The music is added when the cursor touches the car in front of the garage. In front of the house, the American flag undulates in the wind. The national anthem is played and a drop of blood drips from the house over the flag. The blood seems to be soaked up by the shrubs. In the

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<sup>392</sup> *Pieces of Herself* <[http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/davis\\_pieces/index.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/davis_pieces/index.html)>

playground, a child appears at the bottom of the slide next to a green and red DNA strand, and the readers can hear the children's laughter.

Studying these two cards alone shall evoke the interest of attentive readers. Keeping in mind that there is a woman in search of her identity and her place in society at the heart of this story, the readers should raise the right questions to cohere the given fragments into convincing sequences. The fact that the dummy on the left side of the card will tell us nothing about the woman, her age, her appearance or social standing permits the readers to project anything they want on this clear slate. The love story of Tracy and John that was suggested by the graffiti on the door of the shower can provide an intriguing thread. Can the readers interpret the dividing cells in the bathroom stall as the implication of the

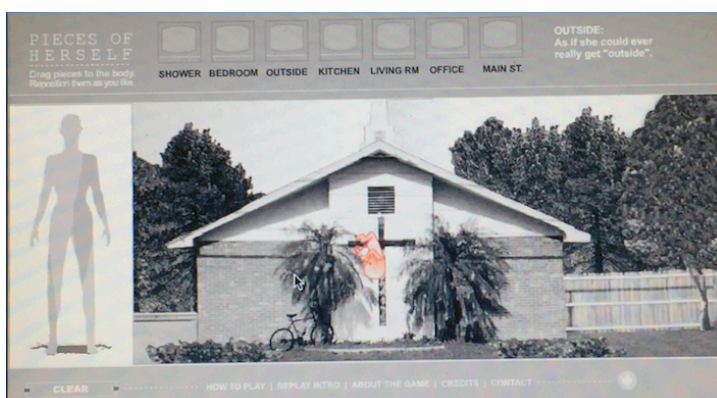


Figure IV.3.4.1.P.2  
*Pieces of Herself*  
Juliet Davis  
"Outside"

development of an embryo, or can it be the binary fission of bacteria? Does the eye behind the window symbolize a forbidden love story under the inquisitive eye of the society? Is that the reason why the fetus appears on the cross on the wall of the local church in "outside"? Does the red apple allude to the garden of Eden and the original sin? Why the American national anthem? John may be a veteran. What about the blood that trickles on the flag? Can John be a fallen soldier? He may have left for war unaware of the existence of the baby. Were Tracy and John married? Do the observant eye behind the window in "shower" and the church in "outside" represent the burden single mothers tolerate? The answer to any of the mentioned questions or many others that are raised as the readers click on other locations can determine the direction this story may take. But is it the underlying story? I argue that it is not. The randomness of the visual clues and the lack of solid information about anything can easily sway the readers willing to participate in the game in

other directions. For example, taking the bloody fingerprints as the main clue, the readers can effortlessly develop a murder mystery.

The red fingerprints on the trash can and the bloodstain pattern on the curtain in “shower” are too suspicious to be ignored. Should the readers take the protagonist’s search for pieces of herself literally and look for a murderer? The eye behind the window can allude to an eyewitness. Who is the woman who enters the other shower? The witness? The murderer? Or a woman who is simply in the wrong place at the wrong time? The murder may be the reason why the roof of the suburban house in “outside” drips with blood. The fetus on the wall of the church, the apple, and the constant transformation of a monkey into a human and a human into a monkey can refer to the evolution of man, loss of innocence and the inherent bestiality. But what about the baby? The baby can be considered as “the piece of herself” that the protagonist has lost. Can the story be about an abortion or a miscarriage? Is that why the child on the slide appears and disappears among other children? The readers’ choices may confirm or cancel the existence of the baby and determine a new direction for the story.

Studying only two cards of *Pieces of Herself* demonstrates the infinite possibilities with which this hypermedia provides the users. Although the readers are not permitted to expand the network in different media, each location, each visual clue, and each sound bite may inspire a turn in the story, or trigger a new one in the mind of the readers. Adding the readers, their personal background, and their literary knowledge to this equation increases the permutations of possible stories exponentially. Since the hypertext hides any traces of an underlying story, if one exists, the readers will have to project their own thoughts. Interestingly, this is exactly what the story demands on the top left part of each card: “drag pieces to the body. Reposition them as you like.” In short, there are no fragments of the story to be rearranged and inspire new readings as in *Lies*. There is simply no story. This very fact is paradoxically responsible for the immense potential of creation and multiplication in *Pieces of Herself*. The structure engages the enthusiastic readers indubitably/

Relying on the readers' imagination, *Pieces of Herself* creates a unique opportunity for the readers who are willing to experience the process of writing. This semi-closed network takes full advantage of its multimedia nature to present the readers with characters, events, and places in order to teach the readers how plots are made. It is a pity that the network does not support a space for reader contribution, nor does it provide the possibility of saving and sharing previous readings. It would have been an exciting experience to study the stories written based on *Pieces of Herself* or any reactions or responses to this hypertext's clever game.

While *Pieces of Herself* as an example of a semi-closed network presents the readers with bits of information with the aim of persuading them to flesh out a story, hyperfictions such as *Patchwork Girl* present the readers with an actual story in fragments and employ the medium in the development of the story. Similar to the readers of mainstream novels, the readers of *Patchwork Girl* are expected to read between the lines and fill in the gaps even though the gaps in question visually break the story into parts. In order to trace the kinship between *Patchwork Girl* and mainstream novel, I shall first argue that this hyperfiction is indeed a closed network and applies constrictions by choosing a dominant medium and controlling internal and external connections. The subsequent part will focus on how skillfully the story uses the potential of the medium and even its shortcomings not only to develop the themes of self-identity and issue a hypertext manifesto, but also to engage and activate the readers.

One main quality distinguishes hyperfiction from hypermedia and other kinds of hypertexts. The main objective of hyperfiction is to tell the story effectively. Exhausting the possibilities of its medium to develop and enlivening the story and engaging the readers are part of the skillful storytelling process. Despite its multimedia nature, hyperfiction chooses to communicate its content mostly in written form. The dominance of the written word as the primary medium of representation foregrounds the similarities between hyperfiction and mainstream novel and enables the authorial group to predict the readers' reactions and design an intricate map to navigate the reading process.

While the story may be presented in a non-linear manner, the authorial group is aware of the direction in which the story is heading. Therefore, the emergence of each fragment and how it is linked to the precedent or the subsequent fragments have been foreseen. The authorial group has predicted different reading methods and the consequential deductive processes in order to lead the readers to the desired conclusion(s). The usage of language jostles the illustrations or any material in other media to the second place and the links determine the order of the fragments in the process of reading. This is a much more controlled and complicated process in comparison to *Pieces of Herself* in which the control over the meaning disappears the moment the reader starts theorizing about the clues. Although the readers of hyperfiction will most certainly add or omit parts while processing the given fragments like the readers of any other hypertext, if the hyperfiction were intended to be a murder mystery, it would be unlikely that the readers find clues which lead them to a love story.

While hypertexts in general attempt to give their readers the utmost freedom to direct the process of reading and receive the information by demand, hyperfiction tries to supervise the reading process while the readers still get to choose where to go. All bits are interconnected in hyperfiction and the authorial group has already decided on how the fragments should be attached. The card titled “armpits, shown in **figure IV.3.4.1.P.3**, is connected to four other cards through the links: “legs,” “leg hair,” “vagina” and “fingernails.” Indeed, the readers are free to choose the direction of the story, but the choice is limited to the four mentioned directions. Moreover, the readers will assign significance to the connections designed by authors and try to find the underlying logic. This simple trick can guide the readers to the destination the author has had in mind.

Hyperfictions, either when published on floppy disks, or now that they appear on DVDs, USB drives, and the world wide web, present solitary systems. That is to say that expanding the network through direct connections is nearly impossible in hyperfiction. The connection in this case

equals a link to another fictional world based on or originated from the hyperfiction by readers or authors and it should not be mistaken for the links to the non-fiction hypertexts, i.e. E-literature archives. Thus, while it is possible for the readers to give links to the hyperfiction in their personal websites, blogs or social media, the reader contribution is never acknowledged, or if ever recognized, it will never be considered as part of the canon. Nowadays, it is feasible to design embedded links to online societies in DVDs or USB drives, but I have never come across hyperfictions that give links to reader contribution of any kind. Online hyperfictions follow the same pattern. This one-sided relationship is one of the main differences between a closed network and an open network such as *Dr. Horrible* which owns all branching texts by linking them in its various platforms.

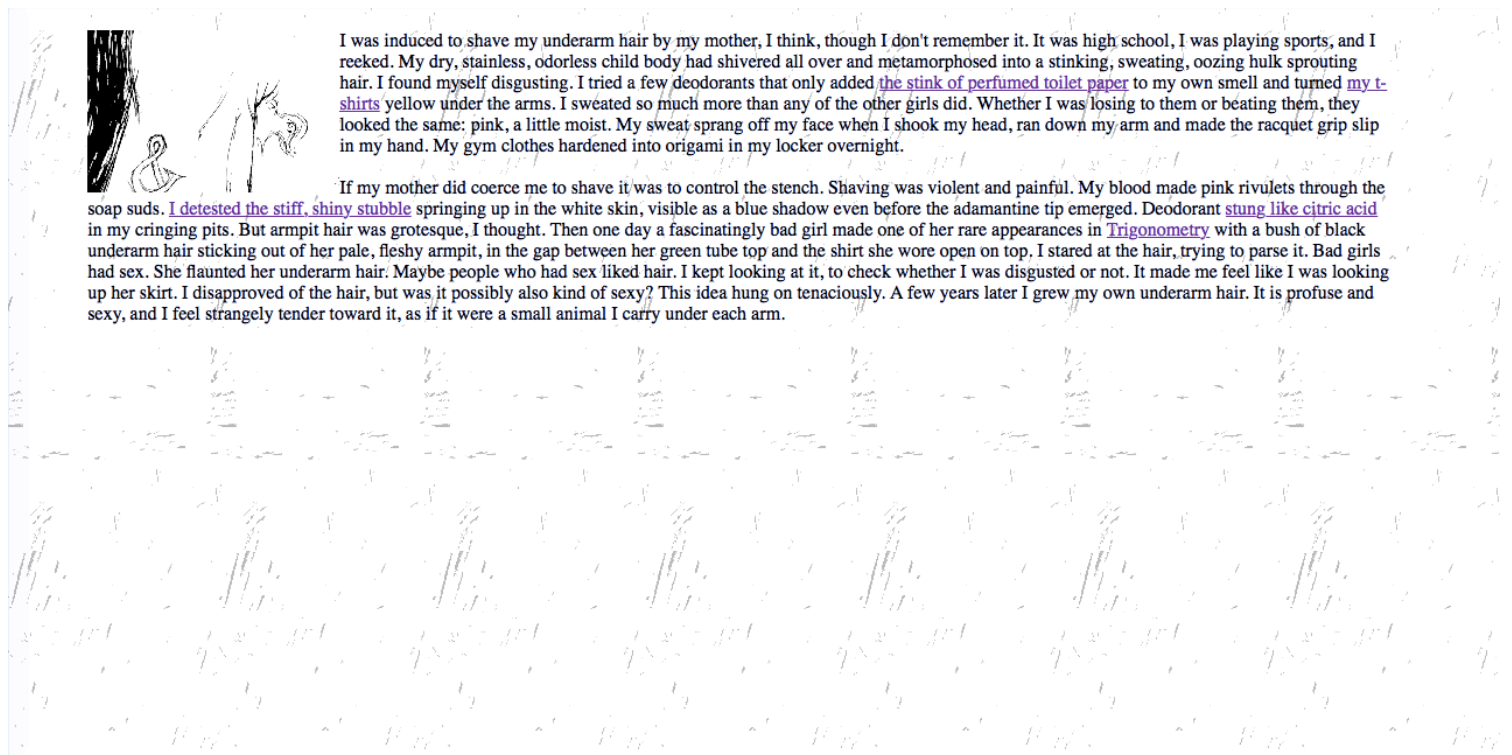


Figure IV.3.4.1.P.3  
*my body — a Wunderkammer*  
Shelley Jackson  
“Armpits”

A closed hypertextual network may sound restrictive at first, but upon a closer look, we can see how this quality enables hypertexts to transpose hypertext fiction from printed fiction. First, fiction is an act of imagination communicated through a well-designed and complicated web of words and references. For the vision of the author(s) to be conveyed to the recipients, the borders of this web need to be delineated clearly. Any change or expansion of the text will severely hinder or complicate the readers' conception of the author's message. Thus, while the recipients may have different interpretations of the content, the text remains unchanged, even the fragmentary hypertextual fiction is a true believer in urtext even if it avoids acknowledging it.

The unchangeable underlying text of the closed networks shows the resemblance between hyperfiction and mainstream novels; however it raises the question of authenticity. How can we call hyperfiction a hypertext if the text does not really multiply and connect to other texts? The response

to this question about hypertexts ironically reveals more similarities between hyperfiction and printed fiction. The text has already been finished. Although the links among the fragments present the readers with different options, all choices have been mapped out in the underlying text that the authors have created. As a matter of fact, *Patchwork Girl* even includes the map. From this point of view, the author of hyperfiction seems to be similar

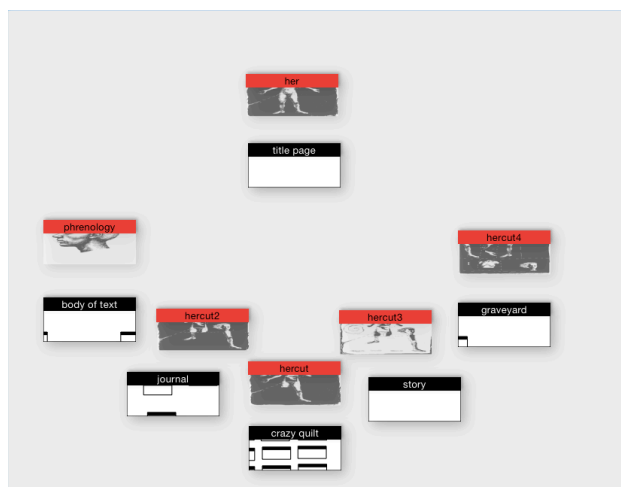


Figure IV.3.4.1.P.4  
*Patchwork Girl*  
 Shelley Jackson  
 "Map"

to the author-God of metafiction. Although the author(s) can determine the reading routes, they do not have full control over the text. Let us not forget that the destination of the text and the meaning are the result of direct interaction between the text and the readers' mind. While certain media



enable the readers to literally connect the text to the interpretations, the links are invisible when it comes to literature.

As already illustrated in *Pieces of Herself*, it is the readers' mind that arranges the sporadic clues and suggestions in a comprehensible manner in order to create the meaning. In comparison to a semi-open network such as *Pieces of Herself*, reading hyperfiction which follows one or multiple plot lines is more limited, but undoubtedly easier. In addition, the readers' literary background and personal history bring about various interpretations of plot lines, characters, events and even words and phrases. The readers of *Patchwork Girl* who have read both Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and L. Frank Baum's *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* will have a very different conception of Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* compared to the readers who cannot make the connection. Although the readers of *Patchwork Girl* can check if the text refers to other texts and verify the sources, they will have a much different understanding of the passage shown in **figure IV.3.4.1.P.5** without putting the quotations in the context.

The *Frankenstein* quotations were taken from chapters 12 and 15. The first two lines summarize the monster's reaction to Felix's reading to De Lacey and Agatha. He finds reading bewildering and yearns to understand the signs that correspond to the still quite-unfamiliar sounds. The monster continues to observe the cottagers whose "grace, beauty and delicate complexions" he admires, and the comparison he draws between himself and the others results in complete horror when he sees himself in a transparent pool for the first time:

At first, I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that I was in reality the **monster** that I am, I was filled with the **bitterest sensation of despondence and mortification**. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this **miserable deformity**.<sup>393</sup> (The emphases are mine.)

Jackson weaves that reference to another one taken from chapter 15 where the monster has mastered the language, and learned how to read, and expresses his extreme joy when finding "a

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<sup>393</sup> Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein; the Modern Prometheus*. Kolkata: Signet Classics, 2013. p. 121.

leathern portmanteau containing several articles of dress and some books” including Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, Plutarch’s *Lives* and Goethe’s *Sorrow’s of Werther*. “The possession of these treasures” begins a new chapter in the monster’s life who finds himself in the books he reads. In a passionate and eloquent outburst, the monster elaborates on how his reading shapes his identity:

As I read, I applied much personality to my own feelings and condition. I found myself similar yet at the same time strangely unlike to the beings concerning whom I read and to whose conversation I was a listener. I sympathised with and partly understood them, but I was unformed in mind; I was dependent on none and related to none. “The path of my departure is free.” My person was hideous and my stature gigantic. What did this mean? Who was I? What was I? Whence did I come? What was my destination? These questions continually recurred, but I was unable to solve them.<sup>394</sup>

The monster’s identity crisis resonates with the *Patchwork Girl, A Modern Monster*, who contemplates on the meaning of life and her own existence like her “unfortunate and famous brother.”<sup>395</sup> However, she embraces her difference and accepts herself for who she is the same way as her namesake, the Patchwork Girl of Oz. The sentences borrowed from Baum’s book show Scraps, the name by which the Patchwork Girl will be called later in the book, at the moment she comes to life in chapter 5, “A Terrible Accident.” Her reaction to seeing herself in the mirror for the first time is to laugh and exclaim the poem mentioned in **figure IV.3.4.1.P.5**. Her conversation with the Glass Cat, who has misunderstood the Patchwork Girl’s merry laugh, follows the poem and displays Scraps’ interesting position toward difference:

“I don’t blame you for laughing at yourself. Aren’t you horrid?”

“Horrid?” She replied. “Why, I’m thoroughly delightful. I’m an **original**, if you please, and therefore **incomparable**. Of all the comic, absurd, rare and amusing creatures the world contains, I must be **the supreme freak**. Who but poor Margolotte could have managed to

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<sup>394</sup> *Franlenstein*, 38

<sup>395</sup> Jackson, Shelley. *Patchwork Girl or A Modern Monster*. Massachusetts: Eastgate, 2016. USB stick. “I am”

invent such as unreasonable being as I? **But I'm glad — I'm awfully glad! — that I'm just what I am and nothing else.**"<sup>396</sup> (All emphases are mine.)

Nothing in the extract divulges the monster's and the Patchwork Girl's issues with self-image unless the readers have read both books and can draw an analogy between the parallel scenes. The readers who do not have any prior knowledge can follow the references that appear below the text, accessible in one click, or read the text devoid of its external references and simply as a part of Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*. The second group, for instance, may regard the gender-fluidity of Patchwork Girl as the result of receiving organs from both male and female corpses and dealing with the gender identity crisis that follows. The first group of readers; however, recognize that *Patchwork Girl* proudly acknowledges its literary ancestry by merely pointing out that the Patchwork Girl is both male (Frankenstein) and female (Scraps). Jackson has emphatically pointed out in the title page that Patchwork Girl was written by Mary (Shelley), Shelley (Jackson) and

write?

"This reading had puzzled me extremely at first, but I conjectured that he found on the paper signs for speech which he understood, and I ardently longed to comprehend these also. One night I found on the ground a leathern portmanteau containing several articles of dress and some books. **The possession of these treasures gave me extreme delight. I beat my books; I caressed them. Page after page, O beloved, licked, lacerated,**" *said the Patchwork Girl.*

"I perceived that, although I eagerly longed to discover myself to the cottagers, I ought not make the attempt until I had first become master of their language. **Write? But if I wrote " I, " who would I be?"** *Scraps laughed, and resuming her dance, she said:*

*"Whee but there's a gaudy dame!*

*Makes a paint-box blush with shame!*

*Razzle-dazzle, fizzle-fazzle!*

*Howdy-do, Miss What's-your-name!"*

*The Magician looked at her thoughtfully.*

*"Poor Margolotte must have given you some of the quality of poetry, by mistake," he said.*

• Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*, first published in 1818 (mine is the Penguin edition, edited by Maurice Hindle, 1985), p. 155; p. 169.

• L. Frank Baum, *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, first published in 1913. Mine is the Ballantine edition, p. 42; p. 51.

• Helene Cixous, "Coming to Writing" from *"Coming to Writing" and Other Essays*, translated by Sarah Cornell, Deborah Jenson, Ann Liddle, and Susan Sellers (Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 23; p. 29.

Figure IV.3.4.1.P.5  
*Patchwork Girl*  
Shelley Jackson  
"Write?"

<sup>396</sup> Baum, L. Frank. *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*. South Carolina: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2016. p. 24

Herself. Therefore, each group of readers will have a different understanding of the following passage according to the synapses they have found and the connections they have made:

I am tall, and broad-shouldered enough that many take me for a man; others think me a transsexual (another feat of cut and stitch) and examine my jaw and hands for outsized bones, my throat for the tell-tale Adam's apple. My black hair falls down my back but does not make me girlish. Women and men alike mistake my gender and both are drawn to me.<sup>397</sup>

While gender identity and the status of women, especially the ones who defy the norms, in the society are both among the questions over which *Patchwork Girl* ponders, the mention of *Frankenstein* and *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* alludes to the textual significance of *Patchwork Girl* as a highly-intertextual or patchwork hypertext. Similar to the monster and Scraps, Shelley's *Patchwork Girl* is made of pieces of text. She addresses the readers in "graveyard" and asks them to bring her to life: "I am buried here. You can resurrect me, but only piecemeal. If you want to see the whole, you will have to sew me together yourself."<sup>398</sup> Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* is the text itself. Its "miserable deformity" makes it "original" and "incomparable" and draws "women and men alike," namely readers.

The quotations taken from Helen Cixous' *Coming to Writing* confirm the mentioned reading. In *Patchwork Girl*, the extract titled "write?" in particular, the sentences that dissolve into each other uncover another invisible connection through which the passage can be taken metaphorically. To illustrate, the following sentence from **figure IV.3.4.1.P.4** consist of three different texts: " "[...] **The possessions of these treasures gave me extreme delight. I beat my books; I caressed them. Page after page, O beloved, licked, lacerated.**" *said the Patchwork Girl.*" Although the bold typeface corresponds to the reference to *Coming to Writing*, the first sentence in bold is from *Frankenstein*. The following sentences are direct quotations from Cixous and then, Jackson ends the

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<sup>397</sup> *Patchwork Girl*. "I am"

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid*, "Graveyard"

paragraph pretending the whole sequence of sentences was uttered by the *Patchwork Girl of Oz*, or Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* if we look at the bigger picture.<sup>399</sup> While the three texts blend perfectly to give voice to Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* and her journey of self-discovery, each separate text brings certain implications to the extract. The juxtaposition of Scraps' birth and the monster's ability to read is not coincidental, for instance, and ties in with the third constituent text of this passage, Helene Cixous' "Coming to writing." Reading literary masterpieces brings Frankenstein's monster to life the same way that the Powder of Life vitalizes Baum's *Patchwork Girl*. Considering *Frankenstein* and *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* as texts revived by Shelley Jackson's reading, the readers can find the connection to Cixous' "Coming to Writing" which raises questions about female identity, reading and finally writing in the quoted section. Cixous specifically focuses on how books can be reiterated in the readers' mind and how the everlasting possibility of re-readings turns the books into endless entities. In other words, reading will bring writing to life. Cixous illustrates her point by explaining her reading of "Brise marine" by Stéphane Mallarmé. She discusses the oxymoronic quality of the verse "Flesh is sad and I have read all the books"<sup>400</sup> in order to conclude that reading books has taught her about the infinity of writing:

What a lie! And beyond, what truth? A body "read," finished? A book — a decaying carcass? Stench and falsity. The flesh is writing, and writing is never read: it always remains to be read, studied, sought, invented.

Reading: writing the ten thousand pages of every page, bringing them to light. Grow and multiply and the page will multiply. But that means *reading*: making love to the text. It's the same spiritual exercise.<sup>401</sup>

The idea that it is the reading that revives and multiplies the text is one of the central themes of *Patchwork Girl* and the extract shown in **figure III.3.4.1.P.5** demonstrates how the reading can

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<sup>399</sup> It is noteworthy that the borrowed phrases and sentences are not graphically distinguished at first. If the readers click on the text, it transforms, and the references will appear at the bottom.

<sup>400</sup> "La chair est triste, hélas ! et j'ai lu tous les livres."

Mallarmé, Stéphane. "Brise Marine." *Poésie Française*. n.d. Web. 15 July 2017. <<https://www.poesie-francaise.fr/stephane-mallarme/poeme-brise-marine.php>>

<sup>401</sup> Cixous, Helene. "Coming to Writing". *Coming to Writing*. Trans. Sarah Cornell, Deborah, Jensen, Ann Liddle, and Susan Sellers. Harvard University Press, 1991. p. 24

expand the core text. Although *Patchwork Girl* is a closed network and the readers cannot directly expand the text, it benefits from the imagination and literary background of the readers to expand the network like all types of fiction. In other words, closed hypertextual networks branch out in readers' minds. The quotation from Cixous calls attention to the invisible web of interconnected links the text creates in readers' minds. There is no need for the text to change since the text "reread [...] with the help of memory and forgetting" "could begin again. From another perspective, from another and yet another."<sup>402</sup> The invisible web that each reader creates in her/his mind, whether realized in any form or remain dormant, can be considered as an expansion of the network. In fact, *Patchwork Girl* is a re-reading of *Frankenstein* and *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* and although it sometimes benefits from the exact same sentences as the core text, it stands alone as a branching text. It is, in the words of Scraps, original, incomparable, a supreme freak, but awfully glad that it is what it is and nothing else. My limited reading of an extract from this hyperfiction demonstrates how the network functions. I would like to point out that I only analyzed one extract from this complicated hyperfiction and I did not connect the themes raised in the mentioned extract to other parts of the story. The same extract would generate multiple other interpretations if read in the proper context. To conclude, hyperfiction is a closed hypertextual network which uses the written text as its dominant medium to keep the text unchangeable to some extent and to inspire infinite interpretations instead. Is this not the same quality Cixous talks about when she discusses mainstream fiction? Relying on its secondary media and its non-linear nature, hyperfiction confirms Cixous' statement that reading is writing the ten thousand pages of every page. The following section will discuss how Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* presents two very different readings about female identity and the definition of hyperfiction by creatively using the medium and the non-linearity of the text.

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<sup>402</sup> *Coming to Writing*, p. 23.

#### IV.3.4.2. Hyperfiction: Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*

“You could say that all bodies are written bodies, all lives pieces of writing.”<sup>403</sup>

##### *Patchwork Girl*

Shelley Jackson's body of work including *Patchwork Girl*, *The Melancholy of Anatomy*, *Half Life, my body — a Wunderkammer*, and *Skin, A Mortal Work of Art* shows her fascination with the body and how we experience it. In “Stitch Bitch: the patchwork girl,” she emphasizes two points about the body. First, “The body is not one.” Although it resembles a wholistic entity, “it routinely survives dissolution.” The perpetual loss and rejuvenation, however imperceptible, modify, replace and renew our bodies. White cells eliminate the invaders. New cells replace the old cells. New skin replaces the injured epidermis. Broken bones heal and conceal the cracks. In general, “the body is a patchwork, though the stitches might not show.” Jackson's second point clarifies what makes the body interesting to her: “the body is not even experienced as a whole.” We cannot see or touch the whole body from all angles. We do not feel when the organs function and the inside remains a mystery. Yet the mind, obsessed “with stasis, centrality and unity” shapes all the pieces and partial impressions the senses supply and perceives the body as a whole. In short, “The original body is dissociated,” but the mind patches it together and presents a unified entity. In *Patchwork Girl*, Jackson uses a chunk-style hypertext masterfully in order to realize these two seemingly paradoxical aspects of the body: a series of parts and pieces that shape not only one unified whole, but multiple holistic entities, and an aggregated entity that can be dissected to its internal parts, the patchwork girl, and the miscellaneous text. Thus, the body serves as a double metaphor in *Patchwork Girl*: the female identity constructed by social expectations and cultural heritage, and a hypertext made of fragments of texts.<sup>404</sup>

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<sup>403</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, “All written”

<sup>404</sup> All quotations are from “Stitch Bitch”.

Jackson, Shelley. “Stitch Bitch: The Patchwork Girl.” Media in Transition Conference, 4 Nov. 1997. Web. 20 July 2017. <<http://web.mit.edu/m-i-t/articles/jackson.html>>

#### IV.3.4.2.1 The patchwork girl, a wunderkammer

“Sometimes when it’s quiet I hear in my ears the roaring of a crowd.”<sup>405</sup>

##### *Patchwork Girl*

The birth of the Frankenstein’s monster is considered unnatural not only because the monster was made of dead body parts, but also because a man, Victor Frankenstein, was considered as his only parent. Jackson’s patchwork girl, on the other hand, perceives her body parts separately in her quest to explore the sense of self and celebrates her unwonted birth by crediting all the women whose body parts shaped her in “hercut 4.”<sup>406</sup> It is not easy to use “I” and “my body” as umbrella terms for the cumulation of limbs borrowed from various bodies and yet as Jackson states in “Stitch Bitch,” the mind is capable of perceiving the body as a whole and constructing a sense of self. The corresponding picture for this section encapsulates this idea as “I” appears among mutilated body parts that are separated or stitched by dotted lines which may represent rows of graves. Interestingly, the head seems to be separated from the body parts and the dotted lines around the limbs shape a big plus as if the constructed “I” is the result of body parts plus the mind. Acknowledging all the women who shaped her, the patchwork girl sews the pieces together and makes a whole out of them as if her body is nothing but an urn which “guards a Heart, a Liver, Lungs, Stomach, Guts and Veins.”

The idea of reviving a body by putting the pieces together finds a stronger echo in the structure of the hypertext, namely the comprehensive map of the hypertext (**Figure IV.3.4.1.P.4**) and the map of “hercut 4” (**Figure IV.3.4.2.P.2**). In the general map, “graveyard” was placed under “hercut4.” This text encourages the readers to sew the patchwork girl together to see the whole and that is exactly what happens in “hercut 4” where the patchwork girl reflects on her body parts, their rightful owners and how each one affects hers. That is to say, assembling the pieces takes place on

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<sup>405</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, “head”

<sup>406</sup> The map of *Patchwork Girl* shows 5 major parts: her (the title page), hercut, hercut 2, hercut 3, hercut 4 and phrenology. Each section consists of an image, different texts, and sometimes imbedded texts.



two levels; either the patchwork girl connects herself to her limbs by telling their story and constructs a self, or the readers put the actual pieces of the text together to make sense of the hypertext. The map of “Hercut 4” visually turns death into the cradle of life<sup>407</sup> by cumulating dispersed body parts between a “headstone” (grave) and an exit titled “out” implying a birth. Although the readers can explore “hercut 4” as they wish, the placement of the “headstone” on top and “out” at the bottom on the map, visually suggests where to start and end this section. However, if the readers disregard the map and adopt an exploratory attitude, the hypertext itself will lead the reading. Either way, the readers need to put the mentioned limbs (“head,” “trunk” that includes internal links to “left breast” and “right breast,” which do not appear in the map, “organs,” “left arm,” “right arm,” “left leg,” and “right leg”) together in order



Figure IV.3.4.2.1.P.1  
*Patchwork Girl*  
 Shelley Jackson  
 “Hercut 4”

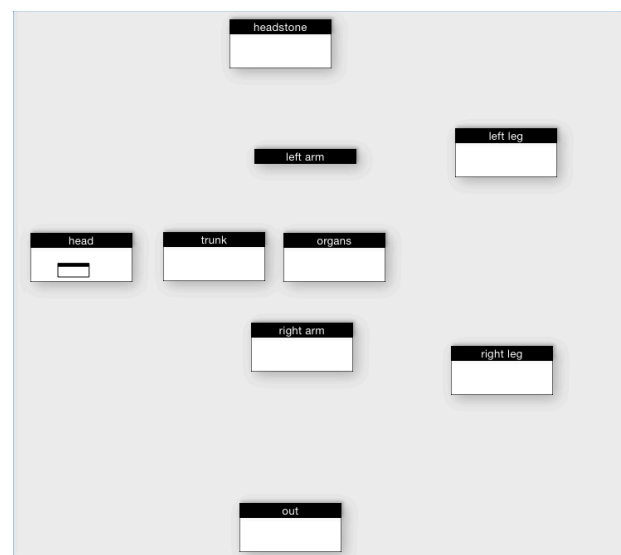


Figure IV.3.4.2.1.P.2  
*Patchwork Girl*  
 Shelley Jackson  
 “Hercut 4”

to form an idea of the patchwork girl based on the history of each limb, the former owner and how it affects the patchwork girl’s life. This process is not unlike the figurative suturing of a body out of diverse members. In other words, through the act of reading and stitching the fragments together,

<sup>407</sup> “The grave becomes the cradle; from amidst damp clods and wisps of luminous corpse-gas comes squalling the “hideous progeny,” her words.”

*Patchwork Girl*, “born”

the readers resurrect the patchwork girl and extricate her from her grave. In “birth,” the patchwork girl says she is waiting to be resurrected in the grave: “I saw around myself nothing but a dense and frightful darkness, penetrated by no light, but the glimmer of free-floating miniature pieces of discourse.”<sup>408</sup>

Stitching the body parts in an attempt to resurrect the patchwork girl, the readers find access to the story of each member as if the revived body is telling hidden stories it has never told before.<sup>409</sup> The patchwork girl specifies what she got from each unnatural parent. Jennifer, whose right leg the patchwork girl has received, bounded herself in layers of petticoats and tight bodices since “unbound, she might tear all to shreds.” Her “mild, exemplary and unwed life” hid the story of her turbulent dreams at night and her polite conversations divert her companions’ attention from the fork she drove “through twenty layers of petticoat in her restless thigh.”<sup>410</sup> The patchwork girl bears the scar. Her left leg belonged to Jane, a nanny who wasted a lifetime waiting for a ship to arrive. No wonder her “leg is always twitching, jumping, joggling. It wants to go places. It has had enough of waiting.” The patchwork girl inherited her faded tattoo of a ship that reminds her of Jane’s “unfailing patience.”<sup>411</sup> The patchwork girl got her trunk from a dancer, Angela, “who saw rightly that the language of the body also has its accent, low and high.”<sup>412</sup> Her left arm consists of two women’s arms: the upper part belongs to Tristessa known for her dead shot with the bottle, and the lower part from Elenor, “a lady very dexterous with accoutrement of femininity.”<sup>413</sup> That is why “one part of me hurls weapons for a welcome. One part uses welcome as a weapon. On one thing they agree. When I look friendly, take care.”<sup>414</sup> The text titled “trunk” includes two sub-links to

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<sup>408</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, “birth”

There are two different texts titles “birth” in *Patchwork Girl*. One is in “hercut” and the other in “hercut3.”

<sup>409</sup> The stories of the patchwork girl’s members are mainly connected in “hercut4”.

<sup>410</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, “right leg.

<sup>411</sup> *Ibid*, “left leg”

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid*, “trunk”

<sup>413</sup> *Ibid*, “right arm”

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid*

“right breast” and “left breast.” In “right breast,” the patchwork girl introduces Aspasia whose “body betrayed her with breasts at twelve” and put an end to her superiority over gypsy boys in running, throwing an acorn, riding the neighbor’s bull calf, planning a war council and building a hideout in the woodpile.<sup>415</sup> Her “left breast” was Charlotte’s who “nursed eight children, buried six, and felt each loss in swollen breast.” Acknowledging all the limbs, people and stories that shape her turns the patchwork girl into the very “demon of multiplicity” that only art can create.<sup>416</sup> Moreover, considering the body of the patchwork girl as the body of text, *Patchwork Girl* emphasizes that a piece of literature conceals lots of stitches to its parent texts. It is up to the readers to uncover, follow and interpret each connection. I will discuss this point further in “*Patchwork Girl*, a hyperfiction about hypertexts.”

#### **IV.3.4.2.2 *Patchwork Girl*, the female body**

“She does not resemble me. But then I begin to wonder if I still resemble myself.”<sup>417</sup>

*Patchwork Girl*

Jackson follows two major themes by telling the story behind this patchwork body. First, she questions the criteria which defines being a woman and femininity and second, she explores the body of a hypertext. She suggests that the female body has been treated as an art work that should be polished and perfected through endless procedures. She draws attention to quotations from books and magazines written on this subject to elaborate on female beauty as defined by the society. If applied to a human subject, these guidelines and expectations will bear nothing but a patchwork woman, a misfit, a monster. Shelley Jackson questions the beauty standards in three fragments titled “beauty patches.” In one, she writes: “One of the first proposals for using computer graphics was to assemble a composite of the best features of various actresses — Garbo’s eyes, Bardot’s mouth,

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<sup>415</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, “right breast”

<sup>416</sup> *Ibid*, “misconception.” Quoted from Helene Cixous’ *Coming to Writing*, p. 29

<sup>417</sup> *Ibid*, “appetite”

Welch's breasts."<sup>418</sup> The perfect woman who is supposed to have the best parts of the great beauties, is going to have a stitched and second-hand body. Another "beauty patch" emphasizes the contradictory nature of the standards of beauty<sup>419</sup>:

The Frauenzimmerlexicon listed "thirty components of complete beauty, including:

3. A gracious smile
14. Small reddish ears not standing too far away from the head.
21. A delicate skin underlaid with tiny blue veins
22. A long Alabaster neck
30. Tiny, narrow feet, well-proportioned and facing outward
19. Lovely, agreeable speech<sup>420</sup>

Women are expected to be anything, but themselves. In this heterogeneous patchwork body, something would stand out. An "integrated corpus" is almost impossible to realize:<sup>421</sup> "A perfectly beautiful woman must have the voluptuous buttocks and lovely breasts of the ladies of England, the fiery glance of the women of Poland, a German body, and a *podex* from Paris."<sup>422</sup> This quotation bears strong similarities with maps of *Patchwork Girl*. The body of the perfect woman is scattered on the map of the world. The perfect woman does not exist. She has to be assembled.

Complying with such expectations results in self-hatred and low self-esteem in women. In Jackson and Baum's words: "The poor patched thing will hate herself, when she is once alive," continued the cat. 'If I were you, I'd use her for a mop, and make another servant that is prettier.'<sup>423</sup> The escalating number of plastic surgeries and the extensive usage of cosmetic procedures, which turn women into patchwork entities, illustrate the dissatisfaction of women with their face and body. As Jackson quotes Margolotte in another section titled "cosmetics:" If I get

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<sup>418</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, "beauty patches"

<sup>419</sup> There are more than one "beauty patches" in *Patchwork Girl*.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid*, "beauty patches"

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid*. "advice"

<sup>422</sup> *Ibid*. "beauty patches"

<sup>423</sup> *Ibid*. "beauty patches"

tired looking at her patched face, I can whitewash it.”<sup>424</sup> However, all the procedures women go through result in more patches that turn the body into a collection of fragments. The seams and stitches become the reminders of the modifications and instead of integrating the patches in a unified body, expose them. These bodies paradoxically belong and do not belong to their owners, and bear strong resemblance to the patchwork girl although they conceal the stitches. This is indeed the atypical birth of the demon of multiplicity, the creation of a crafted body, a whole scarred by fragments, a body with hidden stories to tell.

*Patchwork Girl*, however, celebrates difference and imperfection since each scarred limb of this composite comes with a story. The patchwork girl, the body, acknowledges each member, the women who made her, and gives them voice. Jackson quotes Cixous several times while arguing that silencing all the internal selves in favor of a unified one hinders the process of writing: “All of the people I caught myself being instead of me, my un-nameables, my monsters, my hybrids, I exhorted them to silence. You can’t stay put, where do you write from? I frightened myself.”<sup>425</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, on the contrary, brings all the hybrids and unnamable monsters to the foreground by showing the pieces, and creates an original and incomparable body of text. This patchwork of the body emphasises that the stitches should be celebrated because “scar tissue does more than flaunt its strength by chronicling assaults it has withstood. Scar tissue is new growth and its tougher than skin innocent of the blade.”<sup>426</sup> In this heterogeneous body, all fragments will have a voice. The scars become the frontiers where the women and their stories blend, extend, and link to other stories. This “monster” is a hypertext.

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<sup>424</sup> *Ibid*, “cosmetics”

<sup>425</sup> *Coming to Writing*, p. 29

<sup>426</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, “cut”

#### IV.3.4.2.3 *Patchwork Girl*, a hyperfiction about hypertexts

I'm not making something new and subject to accident but returning scrambled elements to an order they already yearn towards because it is their essence.<sup>427</sup>

##### *Patchwork Girl*

The second theme Shelley Jackson explores by using the patchwork body metaphorically is the definition of hypertext. The patchwork girl calls herself “a mixed metaphor” and indeed she is.<sup>428</sup> Expanding on the metaphor of a body for a hypertext, *Patchwork Girl* revisits the classic definitions of text, writer and reader and points out how a hypertext views and reconfigures each one. Jackson aims to prove that the text or “the body is a patchwork, though the stitches might not show.”<sup>429</sup> Thus, she attempts to expose the stitches and foreground the fragments.

Shelley Jackson draws an analogy between sewing the limbs of a patchwork girl and writing a patchwork text. The author of a hypertext creates an original text using its predecessors and emphatically acknowledges the source in order to “snake the space between two lives to wrap a line around some third figure.”<sup>430</sup> Moreover, (s)he needs to predict the place of the “dotted lines” to create a potential for future connections and separations. Two parallel texts in “Hercut 2” confirm this reading. Mary/ Shelley explains in “written”: “I had **made** her, **writing** deep into the night by candlelight, until **the tiny black letters blurred into stitches** and I began to feel that I was **sewing a great quilt** [...]” (the emphases are mine). “Sewn,” which is comparable to “written” in content and structure, reads “I had **sewn** her, **stitching** deep into the night by candlelight, until **the tiny black stitches wavered into script** and I began to feel that **I was writing**, that this creature I was assembling was a brash attempt to achieve by artificial means the unity of a life-form — a unity perhaps more rightfully given, not made [...]” (the emphases are mine).”

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<sup>427</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, “cuts”

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid*, “metaphor me”

<sup>429</sup> Jackson, Shelley. "Stitch Bitch: The Patchwork Girl." Media in Transition Conference, 4 Nov. 1997. Web. 25 July 2017. <<http://web.mit.edu/m-i-t/articles/jackson.html>>

<sup>430</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, “already”

Juxtaposing writing and stitching, Shelley Jackson underlines the similarity of fiction, hyperfiction in particular, with the body of the patchwork girl which is a whole in pieces. She says in “double agent”: “I have a leech for sequences, don’t doubt it. I am not the agent of absolute multiplicity any more than I am some redoubtable whole. I am a double agent, messing up both territories. I am muscular and convincing because I am whole; I am devious and an escape artist because I am broken.”<sup>431</sup> This dual nature is exactly what enables closed hypertextual networks such as hyperfiction to generate multiple readings. Although the already-written text of *Patchwork Girl* or the “whole” cannot be overwritten, the possibility of rearranging the pieces leads to infinite understandings and interpretations. Jackson explores the expansion of a closed hypertextual network in two different ways: writing a fiction and inviting readers to use her fiction as a core text to expand the network.

Jackson’s personal attempt to return “scrambled elements [of *Frankenstein* and *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*] to an order they already yearn towards” has resulted in *Patchwork Girl*. Taking apart the pieces of her own fiction by the means of the digital medium and the non-linear text, she invites the readers of her *Patchwork Girl* to do the same. Jackson is our real “double agent.” On the one hand, she poses as the reader when talking about Mary Shelley and her monster and benefits from the potential the destruction of the she-monster in *Frankenstein* created to expand the core text. On the other hand, she exposes the stitches of her own creation and sometimes even removes them to help the readers do the same. The creation of a hyperfiction aware of its hyperfictionality ensues from both roles.

The body of the text as a fragmentary patchwork is foregrounded from the title page which mentions Mary Shelley and the patchwork girl herself as the co-writers of this hyperfiction. In fact, like her patchwork girl who names all the women who shaped her, Jackson does not hesitate to point out there are even more writers behind this complicated network. Various texts written by

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<sup>431</sup> *Ibid*, “double agent”

Mary Shelley, L. Frank Baum, Helene Cixous, Jay David Bolter, etc, flesh out the body of *Patchwork Girl*, and have been cited as references at the bottom of the page. If clicked on, the references hidden under the dotted line, emphatically point to their parent text — on top — by using underlines, italics and bold (See **figure IV.3.4.1.P.5**). The intertextual texture of *Patchwork Girl* underlines the dependance of the text on its components: “In the same way one could say that I existed already, before my members served past alliances. It is merely a matter of redrawing an outline. Snaking through the space between two lives to wrap a line around some third figure.”<sup>432</sup> First, the arrangement of the intertextual web among the original ones by the author and then the arrangement and the interpretation of the fragments by the readers resuscitate this body over and over again.

To display how the intertextual web was put together and invite the readers to contemplate on the interpretations suggested by this arrangement, the writer uses links and dotted lines and divides this interconnected whole into pieces with the potential to be assembled together. The body created by the author already exists and is not changeable. However, the non-linearity and fragmentary nature of the structure permit the readers to rearrange the pieces and create multiple bodies or branching texts. The limbs may not be aligned around the stitches. The body may display acute deformity. But the creation of a monster of a text in size and deformity — originality and incomparability to quote Scrap — is one of the objectives of hypertexts. To sum up, the non-linear, intertextual and disjoint body is the elixir that resurrects the text since “infinitely various forms are composed from a limited number of similar elements.”<sup>433</sup> The role of the author is to design a stitched body that can be easily taken apart to be remade infinitely. Shelley Jackson has stitched the pieces of *Frankenstein*, *The Patchwork Girl of Oz* and the related critical theory to perfection.

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<sup>432</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, “already”

<sup>433</sup> *Ibid*, “bodies too”



Jackson argues that the author of a core text will lose control over the monster (s)he created the moment the text is read and interpreted.<sup>434</sup> By adding Mary Shelley and her female monster's story, Jackson compares the process of writing to giving birth. Although the author creates a whole body, it stands independent of its creator the moment it is finished. She uses fictionalized journals of Mary Shelley to shed light on this argument. The relationship between Mary and the monster — not the famous one, but the unfinished female monster Victor Frankenstein designed and destroyed — is the central theme of “hercut2” and specifically linked to “grave.” The fragments are narrated from the viewpoints of Mary Shelley, Shelly Jackson, the patchwork girl herself, and a fragment presumably by the readers. As an avid reader of *Frankenstein*, Jackson has written *Patchwork Girl* as a reflection upon the incomplete she-monster and the reasons behind her disappearance from the book. Hinting at Mary's daughter who died shortly after birth, Shelley's Mary regards the female monster as her child and desires to keep her to herself: “here at least she was still my child, and she would not move without a sign from me.”<sup>435</sup> Even though Frankenstein aborted the female monster before it saw the light of day, the sole mention of her creates the potential for expansion. The pieces remained from the female monster in *Frankenstein* enticed Jackson to retell the story of the female monster. Hidden behind the mask of the omniscient narrator, Jackson refers to the questions raised by the core text to give a convincing explanation why she believes that the female monster lived:

Indeed, there were remains — unused length of venous plumbing, fatty trimmings, deleted passages, a page that blew off a table in the garden when a rock imperfectly anchored an untidy slew of manuscript pages while she wandered in reverie. [...] yet the child lived. Lives.

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<sup>434</sup> In “Stitch Bitch: the patchwork girl,” the text/ the patchwork girl states that she exists independent of her creator: “I am the monster herself, and it is Shelley Jackson who is imaginary, or so it would appear, since she always vanishes when I turn up. [...] Whoever Shelley Jackson may be, if she wants me to mouth her words, she can expect them to come out a little changed. I'm not who she says I am.

<sup>435</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, “turned”

Has it not struck you as odd that the whole of a female of stature commensurate with that of her monstrous intended (not to mention a “great quantity of stones”) could be hoisted by one man out to sea — in a *basket*?”<sup>436</sup>

In the patchwork girl’s version, Mary decided to keep the girl to herself after learning about her reluctance to be part of the story. Jackson imagines her reasoning in a monologue by the female monster / original patchwork girl:

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 I myself to be. I danced in front of the disassembly, and vertebrae rolled to the four corners of the wood floor, I wrapped my intestines around my neck and wrists and sashayed about, I pitched my bladder against the wall. She watched me with half-fearful amusement.<sup>437</sup>

Jackson subtly points out to the author’s loss of control and the text’s gain in autonomy when read by simply personifying the text as the patchwork girl. She suggests that the mentioned character — or few paragraphs to be more accurate — from *Frankenstein* create the potential for a reader, Shelley Jackson herself, to stitch the remains and expand the network. Following the logic of the story, Mary’s incomplete monster — or the text — finds a life of her own the moment she is brought to life. While the author of the core text, *Frankenstein* in this case, has power over her creations in her book, she loses control over the afterlife of the text. The text becomes autonomous in a manner of speaking and seeks the proper networks for growth, provided that it is read. Recognizing her textual status, the she-monster ends “she” by declaring: “To be linked to the chain of existence and events, yes, but bound by it? No, I forge my own links, I am building my own monstrous chain, and as time goes by, perhaps it will begin to resemble, rather, a web.”<sup>438</sup> In other

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<sup>436</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, “basket”

<sup>437</sup> *Ibid*, “she”

<sup>438</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, “she” “She” is narrated in parenthesis as if the monster is trying to snake “through the space between two lives to wrap a line around some third figure.” (*Patchwork Girl*, “turned”)

words, the incomplete and fragmentary texts usually attract the readers to contribute to and complete their version of the core text. This is the case for apocryphal histories, fan fiction, adaptations, and *Patchwork Girl*.

Jackson discreetly appears in *Patchwork Girl* as the third side of the triangle whose other sides are Mary and the female monster. She is the one who observes, imagines and according to the title page, writes Mary and the patchwork girl's story to create her own *Patchwork Girl*. In short, she casts herself as the reader in this trinity of writer, text, reader. She resurrects both Mary and her monster by reading the book and filling in the blanks. In "real M." she writes: "You can see it in her book, how she embeds her tale in a double thickness of letters and second-hand accounts [...]." <sup>439</sup> By Jackson's definition, the reader is the one who stitches the fragments and creates an original text out of an old quilt. Having resurrected the female monster (an extension of *Frankenstein*), Jackson attempts to train her readers to do the same.

#### **IV.3.4.2.4 *Patchwork Girl*, a reader's guide to reading hypertexts or the dignity of the dotted line**

I hop from stone to stone and an electronic river washes out my scent in the intervals. I am a discontinuous trace, a dotted line. <sup>440</sup>

*Patchwork Girl*

While all hypertexts are non-linear, medium-conscious and reader-central, these qualities in closed hypertextual networks, hyperfiction in particular, find even more significance. As priorly discussed, the closed networks do not allow any physical changes in the text. However, they benefit from their non-linear nature and medium to develop the central themes and train responsive readers. Although as a pioneer hyperfiction, *Patchwork Girl* has a basic hypertextual structure, it is an

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<sup>439</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, "she"

<sup>440</sup> *Ibid*, "hop"

appropriate study case for this discussion because this hyperfiction is an extension of various core texts itself and therefore, a remarkable example of active reading. Jackson benefits from the chunk-style structure to improve the theme of a body in pieces, but she does not neglect to display the hidden potential of the text for extending the network.

*Patchwork Girl* (1995) and most of the first-generation hyperfictions, which were created in StorySpace, include a map and can be read both by following the map or clicking on the text. Unlike a web-based hyperfiction such as *my body — a wunderkammer* (1997), the links are not included in the text. Nor are they distinguished by a different color (See **figure IV.3.4.1.P.3**). Instead, the next card appears wherever the readers click as long as it is on the text. Therefore, the readers can follow the story on the map or start the story from the cover. The title page of *Patchwork Girl* presents the readers with five options to begin the story: a grave yard, a journal, a quilt, a story and broken accents. Clicking on each, the readers will be led to one of the chunks or subdivisions of the story, and from there to others. If they reach a card which has not been internally linked, they can always click on “cover” and start over. While the bits of text seem to appear randomly, the readers will soon find out that which texts appear in what order. Jackson reminds the reader in “think me”:

I am not predictable, but neither am I random. [...] if you think, you’re going to follow me, you’ll have to move the way I do, think the way I think; there’s just no way around it. And then, my pursuers, when you are thinking my thoughts, the battle is almost won, because you’ll begin to have trouble telling me apart from yourselves [...], and when you see me, you’ll wonder if I’m chasing you.<sup>441</sup>

In point of fact, teaching the readers how to read a fragmentary text, “thinking my thoughts,” is one of the objectives of hyperfiction which confirms its affinity with metafiction. The author is, without a doubt, aware of the connections within and among the fractions of texts and has planned the order

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<sup>441</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, “think me”

of emergence on the screen. While the reader cannot be sure which piece (s)he will receive, the bits generally follow a logical order.

Starting from the title page, “a grave yard” is connected to “hercut 4” which deals with the history of each body part and the patchwork girl’s climbing out of the grave. “A journal” leads the readers to “hercut 2” which narrates Mary’s story. A fictionalized Mary Shelley narrates this section although her voice sometimes blends with Shelley Jackson’s. The content of this section is mostly fictional, but based on Mary’s journals. Clicking on “a quilt” ends in “hercut” which is a complicated woven network of fiction (*The Patchwork Girl of Oz, Frankenstein*), non-fiction (*Elle magazine, Male Fantasies: Women, Floods, Bodies History*), critical theory (*Coming to Writing, Body Criticism: Imagining the Unseen in Enlightenment Art and Medicine*) and computer studies (*Getting Started with StorySpace*). Assembling a body/ a text is the central theme of this part. The references are accessible and the readers are given the option of reading each text as a whole or trace each piece and put them in context. “A story” is linked to “hercut 3” which is narrated by the female monster and Victor Frankenstein. Some of the passages are borrowed from the book, but unlike “hercut,” they have not been cited. However, the *Frankenstein* readers can easily recognize the embedded paragraphs. The last part, “broken accents,” was directly linked to “phrenology” which is mostly about hypertexts. This section makes it very difficult to distinguish between the patchwork girl and the text. All the mentioned sub-parts are connected with few links internally and if the readers follow the story by clicking on the text, they will be redirected from a card to the other at some point.

Finding threads that connect the bits thematically does not mean that there is a single direction for the stories to take. A hypertext fiction is a puzzle whose pieces can change shape and create new pictures each time the puzzle is completed. As the patchwork girl/ text elaborates “I have a latch for sequences, don’t doubt it. I am not the agent of absolute multiplicity any more than I am

some redoubtable whole. [...] Oh, I want to be whole, don't doubt it."<sup>442</sup> The author undoubtedly predicted the paths her readers may choose, and helps them finally find, follow and complete the story as they wish. This fact seems to contradict with what Jackson states about the author's loss of control and the autonomous text. The explanation is quite simple. The readers' contribution is usually due to the nonlinear and fragmentary nature of the text that creates openings for growth, and while the chunk-style hypertext looks non-linear, Jackson makes sure that the way the story was structured is not the only factor that makes *Patchwork Girl* non-linear. The intertextuality of the hyperfiction that foregrounds the scars / links alongside the medium, which is able to display the fragments using different algorithms, is responsible for launching different interpretive processes.

While at first glance, the existence of a map and the mentioned sub-parts may create the illusion that the readers will be able to navigate the structure easily and choose their own thread, this task proves much more difficult in practice because "in hypertext, everything is there at once and equally weighted."<sup>443</sup> The map displays a number of texts in each section, but it does not impose an order. The chance of connections among the texts and the promotion of myriads of points of compatibility are increased through the absence of a beginning and an ending point, multiple and sometimes even unidentified narrators, and a woven web of literary references, which is a mixture of fiction, not-fiction and criticism, diverse storylines, and more than one thematic center for each fragment. Moreover, both on screen and in readers' minds, the bits can be shuffled, connected, transferred and read in new contexts (as discussed in **IV.3.4.2.1 "The patchwork girl, a wunderkammer"**). According to Shelley Jackson, "what sometimes substitutes for a center is just a switchpoint, a place from which everything diverges, a Cheshire aftercat. A hypertext never seems quite finished."<sup>444</sup> The blurry borders of the hypertext coupled with the intertextual texture inspire doubt. The readers can never be sure if they have read the whole fiction, made the right connections

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<sup>442</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, "double agent"

<sup>443</sup> "Stitch Bitch: the patchwork girl," "everything at once"

<sup>444</sup> "Ibid"

or if the clues on which they had based their arguments are even significant. The loss of orientation created either by the content or the form is one of the distinguishing characteristics of hypertexts in Jackson's opinion: "in hypertext, you can't find out what's important so you have to pay attention to everything, which is exhausting like being in a country, you are not native."<sup>445</sup>

While the structure of *Patchwork Girl* is undoubtedly helpful in the creation of a sense of disorientation and uncertainty, it is the complicated texture of the pieces that intensifies the experience. In other words, the pieces are also composites of multiple pieces. Although according to the title page, *Patchwork Girl* is distributed in five chapters, the readers need to decide for themselves which chapter follows which and on top of that, order the content of each chapter.<sup>446</sup> To make things more difficult, the pieces of text in all chapters are connected internally. While the sense of bewilderment may put off some readers, it will excite the ones who recognize the immense potential for re-readings and interpretations. The lack of certainty drives the readers to delve deeper, to criticize their reading, re-organize the pieces and find new connections. A hypertext is never quite finished indeed, and if it is hyperfiction, the readers' imagination will always find a way to join the fuzzy edges and reach a whole, however, patchworked and different.

Coming to terms with the fact that "hypertext doesn't know where it's going" is the first step for the readers of *Patchwork Girl*.<sup>447</sup> When convinced that there is no proper path to take and all connections are possible, the readers will have to determine their own trajectory while exploring the hyperfiction. For instance, "Mementos" from "Phrenology" can be connected to all the pieces from "hercut4" because of the patchwork girl's first-person narration about her parts that is the central theme of "hercut4." However, the patchwork girl changes her tune mid paragraph to mention that "my fingers will write sonnets in family bible and political tracts in my embroidery hoop. Derrida will come home mumbling about a she-monster who beset him in the woods and James the

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<sup>445</sup> "Stitch Bitch: the patchwork girl," "everything at once"

<sup>446</sup> *Patchwork Girl* from this point of view is similar to *The Unfortunates* by B. S. Johnson.

<sup>447</sup> "Stitch Bitch: the patchwork girl," "everything at once"

Dismembered will wonder at how far his toe has wandered from its resting place.” The mention of Derrida and James the Dismembered<sup>448</sup> prompts readers to draw an analogy between the text and the body, and consequently read this piece in connection to “hercut” and “birth” — located in “hercut2” — that concentrate on a similar theme. “Mementos” ends with the monster calling out to Mary, and therefore, can be connected to both “hercut 2” which is narrated from Mary’s point of view and “hercut 3” which includes fragments from *Frankenstein* and narration from the she-monster. “Mementos” is not directly linked to all the mentioned fragments. However, the lack of a forced direction in the hyperfiction encourages the readers to create more “dotted lines,” which in turn create the potential for expansion, albeit in readers’ minds.

#### mementos

And yet I think my parts will remember me, as I remember those they left behind. Judith and the rest will draw together, bound by a hidden figure that traverses them all. I will still act, dispersed as I am, catalyzing group actions, tics, a stitch in the side. My erstwhile foot, returned to its owner, will know the tango and teach its slower fellow, and it knows how to find the sensitive spots in a pushy rake's anatomy, even if Bronwyn's sheltered life taught her of nothing south of a pair of black eyes and an insinuating smile. My fingers will write sonnets in the family Bible and political tracts in my embroidery hoop. Derrida will come home mumbling about a she-monster who beset him in the woods, and James the Dismembered will wonder at how far his toe has wandered from its resting place.

If all things are called back to their authors, that is. Mary, Mary, I know you want me back, but I shall be no more than a heap of letters, sender unknown, when I return. The truth is we all are fed on embryos.

IV.3.4.2.4.P.1  
*Patchwork Girl*  
 Shelley Jackson  
 “Mementos”

“Dotted lines” and their resemblance to stitches have a special meaning in *Patchwork Girl*. While Jackson undoubtedly had “links” in mind when she wrote “dotted lines,” they find a more significant role when Jackson explains that they can “fold / unfold the imagination in one move.”<sup>449</sup> The “dotted lines” in Jackson’s viewpoint find an organic existence in the text: “The dotted line is

<sup>448</sup> Saint James the Dismembered, also known as James the Intercisus (cut to pieces) was a Christian officer in the court of Yazdgerd I. He had apostatised when the king started the religious persecution. But later, he revealed his faith under the influence of his family and was sentenced to be cut to pieces slowly. His story was included in *The Golden Legend*.

De Voragine, Jacobus. *The Golden Legend: Reading on Saints*. Tran. William Granger Ryan. Princeton University Press: 1993. pp. 729-732

<sup>449</sup> “*Patchwork Girl*, “Dotted line”



the best line./ It indicates a difference without cleaving apart for good what is distinguishes./ It is a permeable membrane: some substance necessary to both can pass from one side to the other.” These lines make it possible for the text to be removed, transported and implanted. They create a virtual space for growth both literally and figuratively. On one hand, the author decides which sections are to be linked using dotted lines. On the other hand, the dotted line potentially separates the pieces. Clicking on the dotted lines in *Patchwork Girl* reveals the references and uncovers the intertextual nature of the texts using bold, italics and underlining. As shown in **Figure IV.3.4.2.4.P.2** in the following page, clicking on the dotted lines activates the mentioned features and radically changes the readers’ understanding of the text.

The homogenous appearance of “advice” in the first picture encourages the readers to consider the text as a whole and look for a singular center to unite all the ideas. For example, the text leads us to believe it is about the creation and the maintenance of a piece of art at the beginning. The mention of “slipper” and “corselet” brings feminine fashion and designing to mind. However, the readers may conclude that the passage should be taken figuratively when reaching the following sentence: “Try not to get ripped, or your stuffing may fall out. One of your eyes seem loose, and you may have to sew it tighter.” The stuffing, the loose eyes and the sewing suggest that women are considered as artistically designed dolls, and should submit to common expectations of a proper lady. Then the “wraps from my ankles to my chin” finds an ironic function and can signify social boundaries and restraints for women. From this point of view, the mention of “the scarlet plush tongue” that has been hemmed to edges and the advice not to wear it out in the last sentence can imply the voicelessness of women. The passage provides the readers with all the material for a feminist reading before they click on the dotted line.

The dotted lines open the potential portals of the text. Jackson has designed the hyperfiction to show the scars and stitches in the artificial homogenous body of the text when clicking on the dotted lines. It is noteworthy that this magical click uncovers the references under the dotted lines,

but also exposes the scars and the stitches in the text. Thus, Jackson expands the definition of the dotted lines from the digital links — the actual dotted line predicted in the hypertext — to the invisible stitches and scars that mark the opening of an expansion for the readers and the text(s) to intersect. The stitches in the text do not break it down in her opinion, even if removed or connected to another. They open a virtual space for the readers to interact with the text and fill the potential gaps:

It is a potential line, an indication of the way out of two dimensions (fold along dotted line): In three dimensions what is separate can be brought together without ripping apart what is already joined, the two sides of the page flow moebiusly into one another. Pages become tunnels or towers, hats or airplanes [...]

Because it's a potential line, it folds / unfolds the imagination in one move. It suggests action (fold here), a chance at change, yet it acknowledges the viewer's freedom to do nothing, but imagine.<sup>450</sup>

Thus the dotted lines for the *Patchwork Girl* readers become synonymous with growth, expansion and the dissemination of meaning. Jackson's employment of the dotted line in her hyperfiction shows her readers how she used her everyday reading in her analysis and original response to *Frankenstein* and *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*. One click on "advice" (**Figure IV.3.4.2.4.P.2**) shows the readers how Jackson has traced the gaps in the core texts and placed the arbitrary dotted line to reach an understanding of the core text(s). The invisibility of the seams at first challenges the readers to look for the underlying web themselves. *Patchwork Girl* trains the readers to find the openings of the text themselves by deleting the dotted line options in other parts of the hypertext and inviting the readers to practice.

Jackson's "dotted lines," either graphically emphasized or invisible, apprise the readers of the gaps and the breaks and encourage them to use the imaginary dotted lines to fix them. Jackson emphasizes that the readers of a hypertext never know where they are, so why not try exploring the

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<sup>450</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, "dotted line"

“uneven terrain, to practice slipping, skidding in the interzone?”<sup>451</sup> “Hercut” provides the readers with a practical example of how it is done. Having read “hercut,” the readers cannot help but look for the borders where the texts collide and move them. In “hard to track” (Figure IV.3.4.2.2.1.P.2), the readers may split the first sentence into two parts around the point where “notebooks and videocameras” are mentioned as the implication of an invisible dotted line. “I’m hard to track for the huntsman with their hounds” must be spoken by the monster or the patchwork girl, but “the curious with their notebooks and their cameras” raises doubt. Is it once more the text that is addressing the readers? The following line that states that the ones with “toting probability charts and trust in narrative” will find it difficult to predict the speaker’s future, confirms the

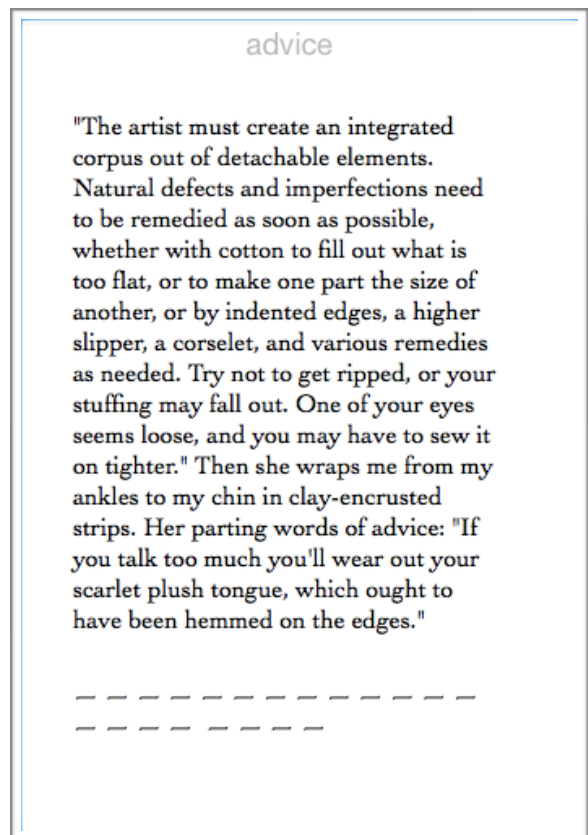


Figure IV.3.4.2.4.P.2  
*Patchwork Girl*  
 Shelly Jackson  
 “seam’d”

advice

*"The artist must create an integrated corpus out of detachable elements. Natural defects and imperfections need to be remedied as soon as possible, whether with cotton to fill out what is too flat, or to make one part the size of another, or by indented edges, a higher slipper, a corselet, and various remedies as needed. Try not to get ripped, or your stuffing may fall out. One of your eyes seems loose, and you may have to sew it on tighter." Then she wraps me from my ankles to my chin in clay-encrusted strips. Her parting words of advice: "If you talk too much you'll wear out your scarlet plush tongue, which ought to have been hemmed on the edges."*

- source(s) unknown
- *Elle Magazine* (author and issue unknown).
- L. Frank Baum, *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, first published in 1913. Mine is the Ballantine edition, p. 52.

<sup>451</sup> “Stitch Bitch: The Patchwork Girl,” “Boundary Play”

suspicion that the speaker is the personified text. However, the rest of the lines draw such a detained picture of the characters that the reader may dismiss this assumption. But then the last line and the mention of the neighbor's "round comfortable script and the colored ink" completes the circle by reminding the readers that the body and the text are equal in this fiction. The conclusion is not important if the readers dare to trace and move the invisible borders and find the courage to dissect and sew up the text.

Jackson suggests that the dotted line and the courage to use it help the readers open up a conversation with the text. Showing her own interaction with Derrida's writing, she provides us with another example of how the readers automatically draw the dotted lines in "interrupting Derrida." To state that each text is in an ongoing communication with its antecedents, she literally makes her patchwork girl interrupt Derrida — or his text — as mentioned in "mementos" (IV.3.4.2.4.P.1). Jackson's playful reading or one-sided dialogue with Derrida's text practically displays what she means by "interzone" and the potential line that "acknowledges the reader's freedom to do nothing but imagine."<sup>452</sup> In an attempt to show how the reader responds to a text, Jackson uses black and red to show different sides of the conversation, a technique

hard to track

I am hard to track down for the huntsmen with their hounds, the curious with their notebooks and video cameras. So much for my past; my future is no easier to graph for those (toting probability charts or a trust in narrative) who'd like to anticipate my moves, meet me at the cafe where my actions ten years ago at an U-Bahnhof in Berlin indicated I would sit today, wondering who has the gun (or, worse, the hidden tape-recorder): the woman in yellow curlers with her back to me; her companion, whose plaid cap is poised at an angle contested by gravity; the stout, restless and close-shaved man in the military beret; the young woman with smooth dark hair and sturdy boots, in energetic conversation with a friend who is more beautiful (with her heavy lower lip, tired eyes lowered behind blonde lashes) but less attractive to me. Not the baby with his fingers in a butter pat. Perhaps my neighbor, writing a letter in another language, perhaps Dutch. She is addressing a close friend: I can tell by her round, comfortable script, the colored ink, her calm and frequent gaze out the picture window.

Figure IV.3.4.2.4.P.3  
*Patchwork Girl*  
Shelly Jackson  
"hard to track"

<sup>452</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, "dotted line"

she uses just once in *Patchwork Girl*. Assigning black, the usual color of the text, to Derrida's quotations, and red to her own text or the patchwork girl, Jackson creates a visual "disturbance in the flow."<sup>453</sup> Moreover, the color red in the black body of the text signifies the cuts, the scars, or Jackson's famous dotted lines that open the text to the readers' imagination. Jackson suggests that the act of reading circulates blood in the body of the text. In this analogy, the parts that do not have the potential to be re-read will not receive enough blood and will be finally omitted from the interpretive process: "I align myself as I read with the flow of blood that as it cycles, keeping moist and living what without it stiffens into a fibrous cell. What happens to the cells I don't visit? I think maybe they harden over time without blood visitation, enclosures of wrought letters fused together with rust, iron cages like ancient elevators with no functioning parts."<sup>454</sup>

Quoting Derrida in parts in "interrupting D" displays how Jackson's so-called "blood flow" functions. She picks the parts that interest her, places her dotted line and initiates a dialogue with the text. She reacts to the word "father" by suggesting "adopted nominal mothers or even a "midwife," adds to Derrida's statement that "writing is not an independent order of signification; it is weakened speech, something not completely dead: a living dead" by simply saying "but look out: zombies are hard to kill," and agrees with Derrida about discourse by completing and summarizing his points (the last parts of the dialogue). The readers cannot help illustrating each statement with an example from *Patchwork Girl* that defies or confirms Jackson's argument. Visualizing the reciprocal interaction between the reader and the text that usually happens in the readers' minds during the act of reading, Jackson emphasizes her point that the readers' willingness to undo and re-do the stitches in the text makes the blood flow: "the read words are lubricated and mobile, rub familiarly against one another in the buttery medium of my regard, rearranging themselves in my peripheral vision to suggest alternatives."<sup>455</sup> Exposing the text as a patchwork and showing the links

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<sup>453</sup> *Patchwork Girl*, "born"

<sup>454</sup> *Ibid*, "blood"

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid*, "blood"

in “hercut,” drawing on her personal reading experience to set the example for rearranging the text pieces in “hercut2, 3 and 4,” explaining her viewpoints on hypertexts in “phrenology” while developing the plot of a multi-layered story about an actual and / or textual monster in a novel medium, Jackson encourages, nay demands the readers to follow her example and resurrect her *Patchwork Girl*. “Who wants a numb reader / reader-by-numbers anyway?”<sup>456</sup>

Shelley Jackson’s *Patchwork Girl* attempts to define hypertext through fiction, and successfully so. It establishes hypertext as a non-linear, intertextual, medium-conscious and reader-oriented text with the potential for expansion, and punctuates each point using both fiction and medium. This is not new to this study. Yet *Patchwork Girl* surpasses the self-assigned task by pointing out distinctive qualities that belong to hyperfiction, and/or the closed hypertextual networks in general. *Patchwork Girl* introduces itself as the highly intertextual expansion of at least two novels: Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and L. Frank Baum’s *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*. Demonstrating how to put the pieces together to create an original, Jackson encourages the readers to assemble their own original bodies, even though deformed, out of the fragments. Her focus on the process of writing sheds some light on hyperfictions and the characteristics which distinguish them from other hypertexts. First, the goal of the hyperfiction is to tell a good story. All the

#### interrupting D

As a living thing, logos issues from a father

—I, on the other hand, have adopted a nominal mother (M/S) who is more like a midwife, and spring unparented from my own past selves—

There is thus for Plato no such thing as a written thing. There is only a logos more or less alive, more or less distant from itself

—that is, I don't exist. I am a passel of parts and should be returned to their original owners ('Did you hear something? Never mind, there's nobody there, some butcher's scraps fought over by dogs')—

Writing is not an independent order of signification; it is weakened speech, something not completely dead: a living-dead, a reprieved corpse, a deferred life, a semblance of breath

—but look out: zombies are hard to kill—

The phantom, the phantasm, the simulacrum of living discourse is not inanimate; it is not insignificant; it simply signifies little...This signifier of little, this discourse that doesn't amount to much, is like all ghosts: errant. It rolls this way and that like someone who has lost his way, who doesn't know where he is going, having strayed from the correct path, the right direction, the rule of rectitude, the norm

—the chain of existence and events—

but also like someone who has lost his rights, an outlaw, a pervert, a bad seed

—a monster—

a vagrant, an adventurer, a bum

Figure IV.3.4.2.4.P.4  
*Patchwork Girl*  
Shelley Jackson  
“Interrupting D”

<sup>456</sup> “Stitch Bitch: the patchwork girl,” “gaps, leaps”

discussions about the definition of the text and figurative layers of meaning aside, *Patchwork Girl* follows the life of the female monster, her origins, her quest, and her prospects. However, hyperfiction has no intention to make it easy for the readers. Jackson explains that “there’s no question that hypertext will lose or never acquire those readers for whom a fated slalom towards the finish line is the defining literary experience; hypertext’s not build for that.”<sup>457</sup> The readers of hyperfiction should be ready for disorientation and frustration and strive for decoding the story piece by piece to reach a coherent version. Second, the medium is used or chosen — in the case of an original piece such as Shelley Jackson’s *Skin: A Mortal Work of Art* — to represent and develop the central themes. The disconnected nature of a chunk-style hypertext is perfect for a story about a disjointed body or the construction of identity. The discontinuity of the text draws attention to the medium, and the author(s) benefit from this opportunity to challenge and train the readers. In *Patchwork Girl*, the medium literally enables the readers to put the girl / the text together. Moreover, Jackson uses the medium to uncover the underlying intertextual web using digital links and graphic interface. Third, experimenting with this hyperfiction reveals the limitations of the hypertext and displays that while the structure looks random, the hyperfiction has been meticulously designed to encourage certain conclusions by linking particular pieces and leaving clues here and there. The authorial group predicts different reading strategies and designs connections among the pieces that should be grouped together in order to create a limited number of paths for the readers to take. However, Jackson uses the exposed intertextual bits of “hercut” to underline that non-linearity is not generated solely by the medium and that texts are inherently nonlinear and unstable, as Jackson puts it “language is libidinous, and the most strait-laced sentence hides a little hanky-panky under the dust ruffle.”<sup>458</sup> Additionally, the readers do not need permission to draw dotted lines wherever they wish and open a space which allows them to start a dialogue, and possibly trigger

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<sup>457</sup> “Stitch Bitch: the patchwork girl,” “gaps, leaps”

<sup>458</sup> Ibid, “We like to make statues”

various interpretive processes. *Patchwork Girl* is the result of such practice itself and promotes this reading strategy. Jackson suggests that this ongoing conversation resurrects the text, and declares that “I want practical readers, plagiarist and opportunists, who take what they want from my ideas and knot it into their own argument. Or even their own novels. From which, possibly, I’ll steal it back.”<sup>459</sup> These experimental, self-reflective, fragmentary, and reader-oriented fictions seem to have a lot in common with metafiction so far. But is it possible for such protean and piecemeal fiction to appear in print? The following chapter “Hyperfiction on paper” will study Mark Z. Danielewski’s novels to find a proper response to this question.

Figure IV.3.4.2.4.P.5  
*Patchwork Girl*  
Shelley Jackson  
“headstone”

headstone

Here Lies a Head,  
Trunk, Arms (Right and  
Left), and Legs  
(Right and Left)  
as well as divers Organs  
appropriately Disposed.

May they Rest in Piece.

#### IV.4 The final word

Studying different types of hypertexts, “From hypertext to hyperfiction” attempted at classifying hypertexts and reach a definition for hyperfiction. To wrap up this section, let us revisit the definitions which emerged from the discussions presented in this chapter. As explained, hypertextual networks arise from the expansion of their core texts at the hand of author(s) or readers. The core text is the basic unit of each network. The text in hypertexts is defined as a non-linear and multimedia entity. Drawing on these features, the core text creates the potential to be expanded both from the inside and from the outside. Realizing this potential by re-ordering the

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<sup>459</sup> “Stitch Bitch: the patchwork girl”, “gaps, leaps”



pieces, filling the gaps, and launching new interpretive processes based on the new combinations is an act of wreading. Wreading includes both pluralizing the core text and extending the network. The pluralization of the core text is the result of finding the best reading strategy and rearranging the fragments of the text accordingly in order to reach cohesion. Pluralization is an integral part of the interpretive process and is similar to what happens in the minds of book readers during the act of reading. Extension, on the other hand, demands a more active role. The wreaders are required to realize the hidden potential of the core text in the form of related, yet independent branching texts. The wreaders may change the narrative platform and transfer the text into a new medium in order to continue the story in desired directions. Both activities, pluralization and expansion, result in the creation of an ever-growing hypertextual network.

Hypertextual networks have been classified into four categories in this chapter with regard to their usage of the medium in the development of the text and their acknowledgement of reader contribution. Open hypertextual networks such as *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog* support direct interaction between the author(s) and the users, encourage the expansion and the pluralization of the core text, and acknowledge its kinship to the resultant branching texts. These networks do not restrict the act of reading to interpretive activities and ensure the regeneration of the text by initiating innovative wreadings. This goal is usually achieved by creating a highly intertextual and multimedia text as well as using the medium in the process of production.

Hypertexts use the medium according to the demands of the content. *Dr. Horrible*, the study case for open hypertextual networks, employs its medium of presentation as a virtual meta-level to accommodate the fictitious content and the interactions between the text and the audience on the same level. The medium also supports infinite internal and external connections between the core text and branching text, and guarantees the expansion of the network. Open networks are without a doubt the realization of the ideal text; however, these networks know no frontiers and the enormity of these infinite texts usually hinders extensive critical analysis.

Semi-open networks define bold borders between the core text and its descendants. The branching texts are usually produced by the authorial group. The bifurcated texts are created with the aim of developing the core text and thus, have a poor potential for turning into core texts themselves. The interactions between the author(s) and the audience are mostly one sided and the core text defines the possibility of access through the medium. The comment section on *Sherlock's* blogs, for example, has been disabled, as the content is part of series, and elaborates on the storyline and the themes presented in the episodes. Although pluralization and expansion by the wreaders other than the authorial group are encouraged, distinguished borders separate the core text and official branching texts from the ones created by ordinary wreaders.

Semi-closed networks restrict reader contribution to interpretive activities and therefore, favor pluralization over expansion. The core text is usually designed to raise questions constantly and encourages the readers to decode the text. The text uses both its fragmentary style and medium to present the users with puzzles, ambiguities and paradoxes which raise and frustrated expectations incessantly. The core text stimulates the users to modify their strategy in approaching the text and compels them to analyze it from a new perspective. These meticulously planned networks use the medium to create an exceptional wreading experience for the users. *Memento*, for instance, uses the medium to put the audience through the same experience as the main character and makes them doubt their memory. As demonstrated in the related section, this confusion drives the audience to re-watch the movie, decompose and re-compose the text using the clues the core text has provided, and reach various conclusions. In brief, the users of semi-open hypertextual networks engage in making sense of the core text instead of creating separate branching texts.

One significant criterion differentiates closed hypertextual networks from semi-closed ones. The closed networks, the most restricted in this classification, are multimedia entities which define a dominant medium for the core text. Hyperfiction, for instance, favors written language over its other constituent media. The limitations, which the medium imposes, increase the control over the

content since the rules of only one medium apply to the core text. Since the text is a multimedia entity, pluralization and expansion are still possible, but within the boundaries that the core text has defined. Thus, there are distinctive borders between the core text and the branching texts, and the differences are discernible. Such constraints are inconceivable in open hypertextual networks where frontiers blur for the core text and the branching texts to blend and form a stupendous web.

The dominant medium is the distinguishing factor between hypertext and hypermedia. Hypermedia belongs to the semi-closed category. Unlike a closed network such as hyperfiction, hypermedia does not choose a single medium of presentation. The fusion of the media facilitates both pluralization and expansion of the core text. The freedom in choosing the medium of interpretation and continuation makes it possible for the readers to use the prompts and create a story which may take any directions. Infinite stories may emerge as the result of the intersection between the non-linear and multimedia structure and the imagination of the readers. The discussion on *Pieces of Herself* by Juliet Davis attempted to demonstrate how the core text of a semi-open network may establish defined borders between itself and the branching texts and yet, avoid exercising control over the dissemination of the meaning. Hypertext fiction, on the other hand, designs a meticulous structure to guide the readers and train them how to find the clues, connect the dots and uncover the intended ideas.

Hyperfiction is a closed network. The text has been finalized. The reading paths have been predicted and the fragments have been linked so as to guide the users in already decided directions. As the study of different reading paths in *Lies* by Rick Pryll in the previous chapter demonstrated the author(s) are aware of the possible combination of fragments and use the links to their benefit. The discussed restrictions seems to be contradictory with the concepts of expansion and freedom to choose the path in hypertexts. Paradoxically, it is the dominant medium of hyperfiction, language, that solves this problem. Hyperfiction creates two labyrinths: one using the fragmentary structure and one using the language. While the hypertext can be mapped out and the fragments may lead to

desired directions, the invisible web that lies underneath in language multiplies the meaning, provided that the readers activate the dormant features of the written words. Thus, reading a hyperfiction, however non-linear, is not unlike reading a book. In this case, the act of wreading mostly includes interpretation.

Like metafiction, hyperfiction employs its medium and non-linear structure in training the readers. Unlike hypermedia which lets the users create their own story based on the given fragments, hyperfiction intends to use all the means to tell its story effectively. The readers are usually given enough clues to uncover a limited number of plot lines, develop some already predicted themes and reach various conclusions. Infinite stories are possible in hypermedia while there is usually one ongoing story in hyperfiction. To guide the readers through the fragments, each hyperfiction sets its own rules, links certain texts and guides the readers towards particular conclusions. Since interpretation is an integral part of wreading in hyperfiction, the core text usually teaches the readers how to read by focusing on the process of fabrication, another similarity with metafiction. Therefore, the elements of writing and the process of reading usually find their way to the story. Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*, for instance, uses the medium to expose the inherent intertextuality of the text and demonstrates how the author has created the text/ her patchwork girl by incorporating earlier texts. *Patchwork Girl*, a remarkable branching text of *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* and L. Frank Baum's *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, is the result of wreading both texts in relation to the critical theory of the time. Cixous and Derrida theories have been mentioned as the inspiration behind *Patchwork Girl*. While telling the story of the female monster, Jackson uses the medium to show her readers how a text is written, read, put into context, and analyzed. In brief, *Patchwork Girl*, discussed in the last part of this chapter, confirms its ties to metafiction and raises one important question. Are the connections between metafiction and hyperfiction strong enough for hyperfiction, the upgraded version of metafiction, to return to its traditional medium, the printed book? The following chapter, "Hyperfiction on paper" will attempt to respond to this question.

## V. Hypertext fiction on paper

This project premised on the possibility of the creation of hypertexts on paper since the idea of an ever-expanding interconnected text that branches out on request had been inspired by Jorge Luis Borges' "The Garden Forking Paths," Barthes' definition of the ideal text and the resultant reconfiguration of the central concepts of text, writer, reader and their relationship. Therefore, the emergence of such texts in the medium in which the idea was first conceived seems plausible. However, the key attributes of the digital medium such as connectivity and the possibility of expansion are difficult to accomplish on paper due to the limitations of the medium of print. In other words, the digital medium creates hypertexts so effortlessly that the mere consideration of hypertexts on paper seems redundant. While the digital medium seems to be the most appropriate one to host hypertexts so far, the supposedly innocuous idea that hypertexts belong on screen banishes hyperfiction from its rightful place among mainstream fiction. This uncorroborated assumption has deprived hyperfiction from a simple narratological definition in reference books, let alone literary analysis or critical attention. Despite Theodor H. Nelson's emphatic assertion that hypertext is simply non-sequential writing and that "a magazine lay-out with sequential text and inset illustrations and boxes, is thus hypertext" in 1990,<sup>460</sup> hypertexts are still associated with the internet and information technology.

Having defined hypertexts as non-linear, medium-conscious and reader/user-oriented in the first chapter, this project examined the affinities between hypertexts and the fiction emerged from the structuralist view of the text, namely metafiction in chapter two. A self-reflective genre, metafiction seeks ways to draw attention to the process of writing a story during the narration. The

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<sup>460</sup> "By 'hypertext', I simply mean non-sequential writing. A magazine layout with sequential text and inset illustrations and boxes, is thus hypertext. So is the front page of a newspaper, and so are various programmed books now seen on the drugstore stands (where you make a choice at the end of the page and are directed to other specific pages)."

Nelson, Theodor H. "Computer Lib/ Dream Machines." *The New Media Reader*. Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort (eds.). Cambridge: The MIT Press. 2003. pp. 301-340.

preoccupation with the process results in a non-linear narration as the text employs multiple techniques from the intrusive author to experiments with form and graphic surface to uncover the fictionality of the text and underline the process of fabrication. While the fictionalized author's commentary (e.g. John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*) presents non-linearity on the linguistic level, the graphic surface experiments with the medium of print using layout, font and illustrations, and visually cuts the narrative into pieces (e.g. B. S. Johnson's *House Mother Normal*). Most metafiction blends both techniques. B. S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates*, for example, combines a digressive account of the events in a book that has been literally incised to loose chapters which do not follow a particular order. Thus, the medium of print becomes one of the most effective elements in drawing the readers' attention to the act of writing. In short, self-conscious narratives cannot help reflecting the medium to some extent. Moreover, metafiction is the most conscious reader-oriented type of fiction. Aiming to communicate the story as well as how a story is composed, metafiction trains its readers to read closely, conclude and criticize. The interruptions and digressions provide opportunities to pause, ponder and perhaps re-read some parts. The ever-spreading gaps of *House Mother Normal* invite the readers to compare the text at hand with the same texts in all chapters to reach an almost coherent picture of what happened. The commentaries of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* show the readers how fiction should be read and make them research to understand the analogies. While metafiction usually follows the cover to cover format of the book, the narrative is fluid and permits the readers to follow the story out of the traditional order imposed by chapters. What is more, metafiction demands its readers to move back and forth in the narrative while reading. The fictionalized Johnson's mention of "those misshapes I had on page 67" almost at the end of *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry* makes the reader return to the said page and re-read. The three endings of *The French Lieutenant's Woman* give the readers the choice to finish the novel as they wish — but within the limitations the author has set. Although it is clear to the readers who have followed the fictionalized Fowles' comments and opinions which ending is

the real ending from his point of view, the readers with inclination towards happy endings are also allowed to pick the one they prefer. Thus, metafiction seems to possess the qualities that characterize hypertexts. This raises the question whether there are similarities between hypertext fiction and metafiction. In other words, can hyperfiction be considered as evolved metafiction? And if so, would it be possible for hyperfiction to be transferred back to paper?

To answer these questions, this project attempted to differentiate between hyperfiction and other types of hypertextual networks in terms of expandability, multi-mediacy and reader-centrality in chapter four. All hypertexts are interconnected multimedia entities with the potential to branch out. In a movement from the open hypertextual networks to the closed ones, the hypertexts incline toward unified media of creation, and limit the physical expansion of the network at the hand of users. Open networks encourage expansion in any form, genre and media by the authors or the readers, and acknowledge the final product as genuine. These hypertexts may even intentionally leave parts to be completed by readers (e.g. intentional gaps in a character's back story or motives) or encourage simulation and re-productions (e. g. including the music sheets and the screen play with production notes in the text). The interconnections which are the distinctive characteristics of hypertexts aside, open networks promote external connections and the spread of the text across the media. These connections can be mutual or one-sided. In open networks, the core text and the branching texts both link one another. The closed networks, on the contrary, do not link the branching texts. The connections are made by the branching texts in these cases.

The more closed the network becomes, the less room is left for actual expansion by the readers. Semi-open and semi-closed networks draw on the constituent media to control the growth of the network and leave the extension of the network to the professionals. Instead, the core text is designed to engage the readers profusely and initiate a multitude of interpretive threads. Reader contribution in semi-open and semi-closed networks is appreciated, yet not included in the canon. If the core text appears on the internet, it is possible to link the branching texts. However, there are

distinguishable borders between the branching texts provided by the authorial group and the diversification created by the readers. In other words, the readers may link the core text that has inspired their art work or interpretation, but this action is not reciprocal.

Closed networks exercise even more control over their core text. The text usually defines a medium as the dominant medium of presentation. The distribution of the core text, the reading methods and the possible interpretations have already been planned and supervised. While the core text may be linked externally to the works it has inspired, the access to the core text is highly restricted and the text in its current form has been finalized. This may seem contradictory as the quintessence of hypertexts is the possibility to expand; to access information per request; to grow and to be connected to other texts. However, this class of hypertexts is able to reach all the mentioned criteria in its restricted state. It just needs to train its readers how to read and initiate a comprehensive interpretive process.

The paradoxical coexistence of restriction and expansion in closed hypertextual networks foregrounds their striking similarities with fiction, metafiction to be exact. A work of fiction is a thoroughly designed and polished piece of written text which cannot usually be modified after publication, yet it may inspire different, even contradictory understandings and interpretations. To put it in other words, any work of fiction can expand and multiply in the readers' minds after publication. Metafiction's fascination with the process of writing, which has been realized in its experimentation with the traditionally concealed non-linearity of the language and the graphic surface of a printed book, promotes the readers from mere consumers to potential critics and amateur writers. The constant references to how the content is produced creates a degree of non-linearity which in turn, persuades the readers to engage with the book actively, and follow the text's instructions to reach coherence to some degree. Emphasizing the significance of the readers' role in the generation of meaning, each metafiction trains its readers how to read the text and make assumptions because while the text is limited to its manifestation on paper, the readers are not.



Trained and encouraged to move the blocks of texts around, the readers fill in the gaps and architect new versions of the printed text. The consequential library of Babel effect confirms that the text protrudes from the printed book, and expands even though there is no tangible evidence.

A closed hypertext such as hyperfiction that uses language as its dominant medium similarly presents its readers with a diligently written text whose non-linearity and medium-consciousness entice the readers to adopt various reading strategies when confronting the text and develop variegated theories and hypotheses. The text, however non-linear, is finished. It has been designed to expand in readers' minds. That is to say, much like printed fiction, the core text of a closed hypertextual network is delineated in its medium. The underlying urtext to which no one but the authorial group has access is complete and unchangeable. The urtext may have been written in linear or non-linear form, but its manifestation on the screen appears in fragments and creates the illusion that the readers are actually putting the text together. The pieces have already been linked, and appear in a pre-planned order to create the desired impact: train the readers and encourage them to explore and develop the envisaged themes.

If the dominant medium is language, as it is in hyperfiction, the non-linearity of the text can be easily intensified since the sentences, which are presented in each fragment, may not follow a chronological order (Johnson's *The Unfortunates* and *House Mother Normal*); the author may have planned an invisible web of references which can direct the readers to other texts (Jackson's *Patchwork girl*); there may be interruptions (Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*) or alternate narratives according to the readers' choice (Borges' "The Garden of Forking Paths").<sup>461</sup> Therefore, the interconnections are pre-planned and the text does not recognize external links. The intentionally linked fragments aside, the text usually contains embedded clues that enable the readers to recognize potential affiliations and establish bonds among the pieces. From this point of

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<sup>461</sup> The mentioned examples from self-reflexive fiction confirm that metafiction provides the best examples of non-linearity through language.

view, the readers put the text together to some extent. For instance, each fragment of Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl* contains several running themes such as the impact of being different, identity construction, the definition of monstrosity, the composition of a text, the act of writing as the act of creation, the act of reading as the act of resurrection, etc, in each piece. Thus, the pieces with the same thematic fibre can be potentially assembled by readers even if the same pieces have not been digitally linked. The illustrations, the similarities in the graphic surface and other characteristics such as signs, size and any other innovative characteristics may be used by the readers to connect the pieces also. In other words, closed hypertextual networks, hyperfiction in this argument, benefit from their multimedia nature to develop the themes suggested by the dominant medium, language in this case. The subordinate media of presentation in closed hypertextual networks serve to develop the themes in an engaging way for the readers to activate their imagination and trigger interpretive processes. The non-linearity of the text intensified by the medium causes the virtual expansion of the text in readers' minds instead of the actual and visible growth in the medium of creation as is the case with non-closed hypertextual networks. In short, the core text of closed hypertextual networks expands like all its counterparts, however, this virtual expansion focuses on the multiplication of possible interpretations of the core text instead of the text itself. To sum up, distinguishing hypertext and hypermedia, a semi-open hypertextual network (discussed in the previous chapter), and classifying hyperfiction under closed hypertextual networks spotlight the similarities between metafiction and hyperfiction. The question that arises gives way to a new discussion regarding hyperfiction and metafiction: if both fiction share the three main features of hypertexts to some degree, which qualities help us tell them apart?

Metafiction and hyperfiction exhibit different degrees of medium-consciousness. Metafiction draws attention to the process of writing alongside the progression of the story by interrupting the flow of the narrative. The interruptions may appear in the form of commentaries, digressions, parallel narratives or using the graphic surface such as typefaces, font, bold, italics,

space, etc. Both the primary and the secondary medium, language and the printed book, serve to make readers aware of the fabrication of fiction. This way, the authors can easily train the readers where to look and what to look for, and teach them how to decode the text. Each metafiction designs its unique system and encourages the readers to adopt different reading methods. In brief, metafiction concentrates on the process of writing as one of its permanent themes and its usage of the medium, either language or printed book, serves to direct the readers' attention to the structure, form, literary values, plot development, etc in order to train the readers who possess better analytical skills and a sharper eye for details.

Hyperfiction, maybe because of its patchwork texture, does not concern itself with the illusion of continuity or exposing the process of writing. That is not to say that the process of writing is of any less significance in hyperfiction, but that hyperfiction takes the readers' familiarity with the fabrication of fiction for granted. Instead of drawing attention to the process of writing through the medium, it uses the medium to develop the themes or if possible, put the readers through the same experience as the characters. *Patchwork Girl*, for instance, uses the chunk-style hypertext to its benefit in order to comment on the process of identity construction, and study the concepts of hypertext and intertextuality. Moreover, it should not be ignored that although hyperfiction chooses a dominant medium or primary medium of representation, language, it is a multimedia text. Thus, hyperfiction has the potential to engage more than one medium in the development of the story. *Lies*, for instance, employs the digital medium to intensify the confusion the story has already created, and makes the readers question their understanding of truth and lies. To put it briefly, while both metafiction and hyperfiction are medium-conscious, metafiction acknowledges the role of the medium to teach how fiction functions and promotes active reading, whereas the medium is part of the story in hyperfiction. The impact of *Patchwork Girl* would be radically different if it appeared as an audiobook, a Kindle book, or a printed book. Hyperfiction engages the medium in the process of composition to the point that the readers' understanding of the

story would have changed if it had emerged in another medium. This quality makes the internet, story writing softwares, DVDs and any medium flexible enough to be modified and reconfigured to meet the requirements of the story a potential hypertext host. Finally, I would like to draw attention to Nelson who stated from the dawn of hypertexts that although many people consider non-sequential writing “new and drastic and threatening,” he would hold his position that “hypertext is fundamentally traditional and in the main stream of literature.”<sup>462</sup> Julien Worlfrays explains in *Glossalalia* that “hypertext, Nelson proposes, is simply textuality in its most flexible application, limited only (though this is only implied) by material attributes of a given document and the conventions of its use.”<sup>463</sup> Now the question is whether the printed book is malleable enough to make the transition from metafiction to hyperfiction possible? This chapter will study Mark Z. Danielewski’s novels *Only Revolutions*, *The Fifty Year Sword*, *The Whalstoe Letters*, and *House of Leaves* in order to respond to this question.

## V. 1 Mark Z. Danielewski: the architext

Ever since his debut novel, *House of Leaves* (2000), Mark Z. Danielewski has become one of the prominent figures in experimental novels. Larry McCaffery calls him “the future of fiction” in *American Book Review*,<sup>464</sup> and *New York Press* states that either Danielewski is “reinventing the novel as a medium” or he “has constructed his own, entirely original platform from which to destroy literary conventions.”<sup>465</sup> While his typographic novels are interesting for their formal experimentations per se, it is their affinities with hypertexts that shall be the focus of this project.

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<sup>462</sup> *The New Media Reader*. 301-340.

<sup>463</sup> Wolfreys, Julien (ed). *Glossalalia: An Alphabet of Critical Keywords*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press: 2003. p.115

<sup>464</sup> “I have seen the future of fiction and its name is Mark Z. Danielewski.”  
Cited in *Revolutionary Leaves*

Pohlmann, Sasha. *Revolutionary Leaves: The Fiction of Mark Z. Danielewski*. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing (2012).

<sup>465</sup> As cited in *Only Revolutions*, 2009.

Danielewski's books affirm that he is determined to prove hypertexts mark the beginning of a new era rather than "the end of books." Robert Coover writes that "print documents may be read in hyperspace, but hypertext does not translate into print"<sup>466</sup> and the statement is definitely true for the common books which adapt the narrative to the familiar medium of the printed book. Danielewski, on the other hand, attempts to adapt the medium to the narrative. His fascination with the materiality of books pays off when he employs typography, color and graphic surface not only to develop the story, but also to explore the hidden potential of books. *House of Leaves*, an exceptional example of ergodic literature<sup>467</sup> on paper, uses typographical tools in order to tell the story of a house which is bigger on the inside, and turns the reading process into a simultaneous agoraphobic and claustrophobic experience for the readers. Throughout the leaves of the book, Danielewski builds a house that expands by using colors, layout, font, and naturally an extremely complicated narrative including parallel narratives, multiple narrative voices, different styles of writing, layers of embedded narratives, etc. Not only did this ever-expanding textual house prove that there is still a lot left to be explored in book format, but also consciously created a hypertext on paper. But *House of Leaves* was not the only dome Danielewski built in air.<sup>468</sup>

Johnny Truant affected Danielewski's second book, *The Whalestoe Letters* (2000). This epistolary novella elaborates on the correspondence between Johnny, one of the narrators of *House*

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<sup>466</sup> Coover, Robert. "The End of Books." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 21 June 1992, <<http://www.nytimes.com/books/98/09/27/specials/coover-end.html>>

<sup>467</sup> Espen J. Arseth Coined the term "ergodic literature" in *Cybertext-Perspectives on Ergodic literature* in reference to the text that demand reader participation to be read. Hyperfiction is classified under this category. The concept resonates with Barthes' writerly texts:

In ergodic literature, nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text. If ergodic literature is to make sense as a concept, there must also be nonergodic literature, where the effort to traverse the text is trivial, with no extranoematic responsibilities placed on the reader except (for example) eye movement and the periodic or arbitrary turning of pages.

Arseth, Espen J. *Cybertext—Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press: 1997.

<sup>468</sup> To such a deep delight 'twould win me,  
That with music loud and long,  
I would build that dome in air,  
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!

Khubla Khan by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Coleridge, Samuel Taylor. "Kubla Khan by Samuel Taylor Coleridge." *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43991/kubla-khan>>

of *Leaves* and his mother, Pelafina H. Lièvre, who has been hospitalized in a mental institution called The Three Attic Whalestoe Institute. The letters that have already appeared in *House of Leaves* in Appendix II under the title of “E - The Three Attic Whalestoe Institute Letters,” display how Danielewski’s experimental text becomes the manifestations of a troubled mind, and elaborate on Johnny’s character and life style. *The Whalestoe Letters* introduced new letters which develop Pelafina’s character and shed

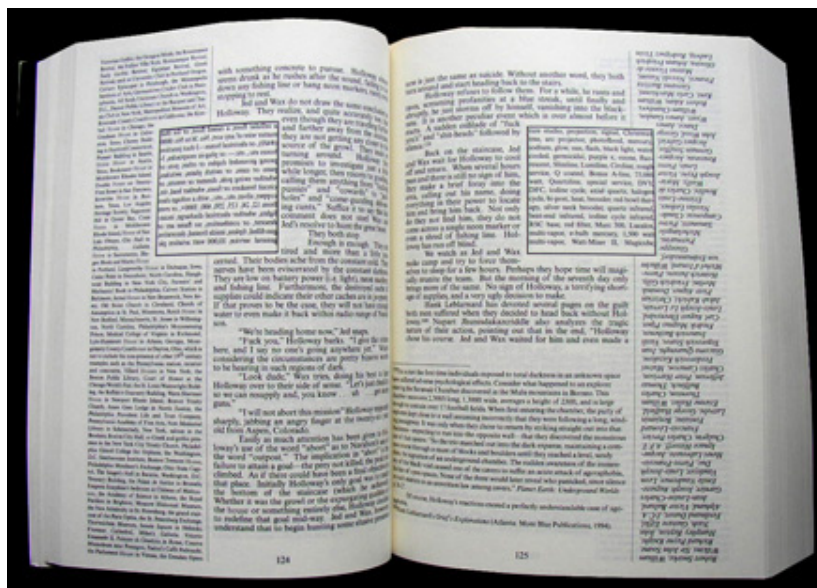


Figure V.1.P.1  
*House of Leaves*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp 124-125

some light on the mother-son relationship in addition to the letters presented in *House of Leaves*.

Danielewski found a new way to experiment with the medium in *Only Revolution* which followed *House of Leaves* in 2006. *OR* is the story of two teenage star-crossed lovers who travel by car across America over the expanse of 200 years. This book, which recreates the road movie genre in print, is palindromic and can be read from both sides. Sam and Hailey, the protagonists, narrate the same story from the opposite sides of the book in two long lyrical monologues. The readers are advised to read eight pages at a time, turn the book upside down and swing it around to get an alternative narration of the same event. However, the readers may follow each story from the beginning to the end and then start the second narration if they wish, a real cover to cover reading experience. The format and the layout symbolically intensify the events of the novel as Sam and Hailey meet and fall in love. Each page contains two narrations and two history gutters in case the readers wish to put the events in context. This National Book Awards nominee has been designed to

have 360 pages, 360 words on each page (180 on the top and 180 at the bottom) for each narration in order to tell the never-ending story of its two perpetually sixteen-year-old protagonists who attempt to outrace history.

While *The Fifty Year Sword* was published in 2000 following *House of Leaves*, the limited edition (only 1000) by the Dutch Publishing House, De Bezige Bij, hindered its world-wide recognition. The book became available to average readers at a reasonable price in 2006 after the release of *Only Revolutions*. With *T50YS*, Danielewski once more outdid himself by literally stitching the text and making the physical book. The dust jacket of *T50YS* sets the story in an East Texas Ranch house on Halloween night.

Chintana, a seamstress whose husband has betrayed her, attends a halloween party at Mose Dettledown's and finds herself in the company of Belinda, the woman who seduced her husband, a few friends and five orphans. A storyteller arrives carrying a long narrow box containing the fifty year sword, and recounts to the children the story of his quest to find a weapon. Five different narrators, distinguished only by five autumnal colored quotation marks narrate the story and create a complicated web of embedded narratives. The layout, colors and words whose

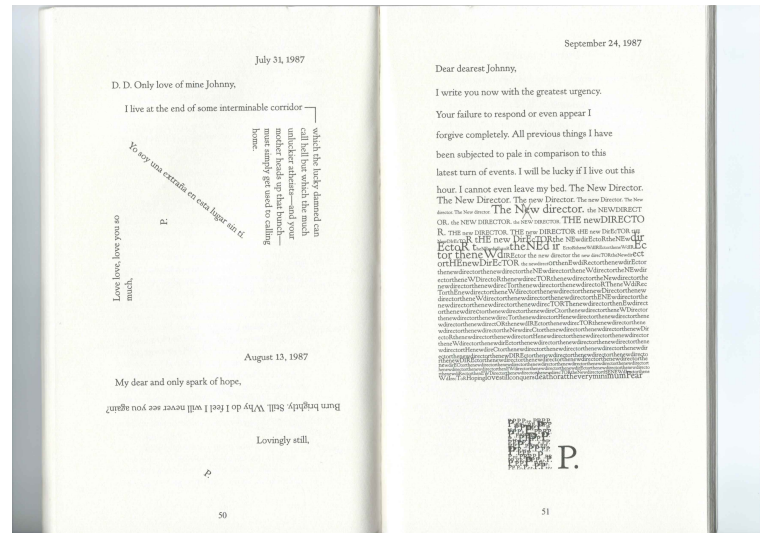


Figure V.1. P. 2  
*The Walestoe Letters*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp 50-51

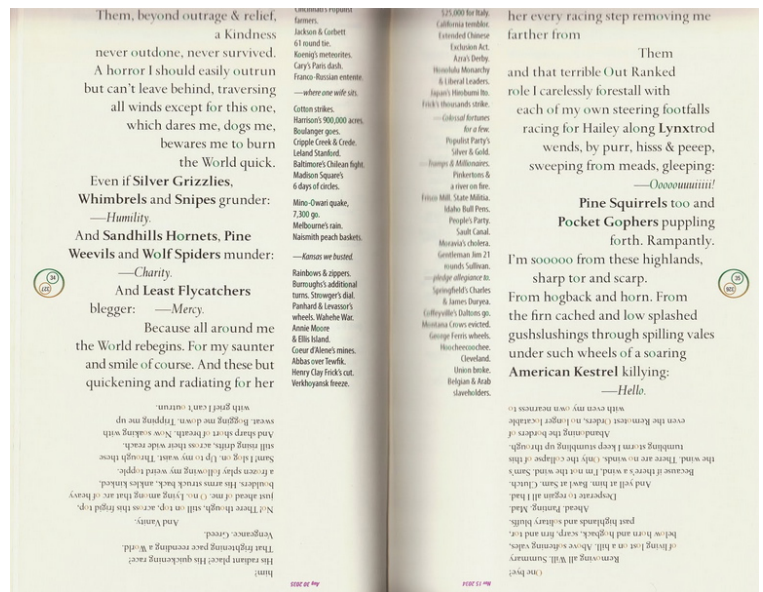


Figure V.1. P. 3  
*Only Revolutions*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp 34-35

meanings change according to the flexible orthography turn the simple “ghost story” into a multi-layered story about revenge, hatred, and needless to say storytelling and text building.

Danielewski took a step further in experimenting with the materiality of the book in *T50YS*. The first edition of the book was even distributed in a long box with five latches implying that the book is the weapon for which the storyteller was searching.<sup>469</sup> Moreover, *T50YS* draws an



Figure V.1.P.4  
*The Fifty Year Sword*, the deluxe edition  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
Photo taken from [LitReactor.com](http://LitReactor.com)

analogy between sewing, spinning a tale

and forging a weapon not only through the narrative, but also by designing a book whose quotation marks and illustrations have actually been sewn. The pictures, designed by the Dutch artist Peter

Van Sambeek for the 2000 edition,

illustrate and sometimes even develop the

narrative. Although the narrative usually

appears on the left page of the opening

and leaves the right one either blank, or to

be filled with pictures, the illustrations

sometimes take over a whole opening.

The pictures sometimes invade the text on

the left page and cut the words to reveal

new words concealed in the text. A

“word” is hidden in “sword,” for

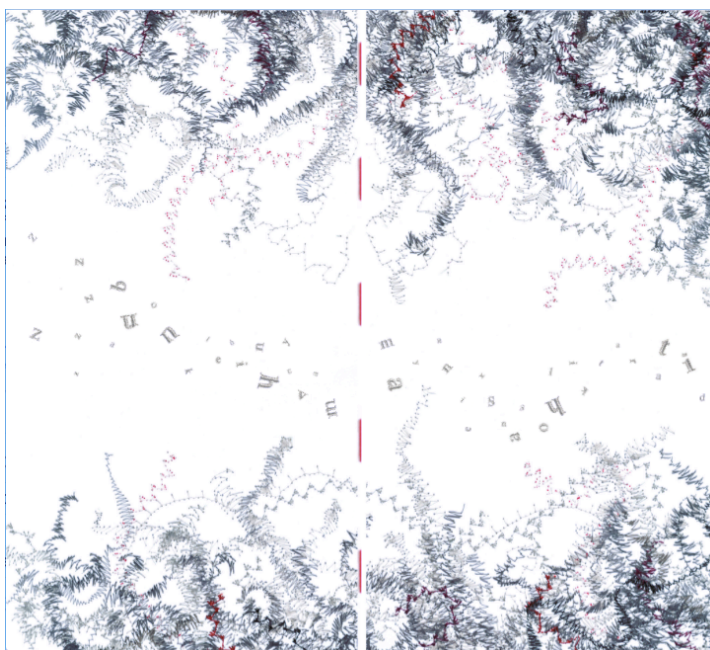


Figure V.1.P.5  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
“The Forest of Falling Notes”  
Mark Z. Danilewski  
pp 104-105

<sup>469</sup> Chaplinsky, Joshua. “Mark Z. Danielewski Unveils New Cover For The Fifty Year Sword, Answers Reader Questions.” LitReactor, LitReactor LLC, 24 Aug. 2012, <<https://litreactor.com/news/mark-z-danielewski-unveils-new-cover-for-the-fifty-year-sword-answers-reader-questions>>



example, and the double meaning would be lost if it were not for the pictures that separate the s. The Forest of Falling Notes is inconceivable without the illustrations. Moreover, Danielewski later published an enhanced iBook version in which the words and pictures were animated, and audio files were included. For instance, the letters that shape the words in the Forest of Falling Notes actually fall, and add a new layer to the meaning as the readers, who have been trained by the text, notice the words within words that enrich this multi-layered story.

Danielewski's current challenging project is a twenty-seven volume book titled *The Familiar* which Danielewski simply summarizes as a book about a cat. Javier Calvo in his review in *O Magazine* writes "it's not only his best book since his acclaimed opera prima, *House of Leaves*; it's even better, and also more accessible. Conceived as the book version of a long-running TV show, its first three volumes tell the tale of a smart, fragile and epileptic little girl who finds a cat that may or may not be magical. Their encounter sets off a chain reaction that starts with her immediate family and will probably reach almost every corner of the world."<sup>470</sup> Since May 2015, a volume of about eight hundred pages has been released every six months, and so far five installments are available:

*The Familiar, Volume 1: One Rainy Day in May* Wherein the cat is found ...

*The Familiar, Volume 2: Into the Forest* Wherein the cat is hungry ...

*The Familiar, Volume 3: Honeysuckle & Pain* Wherein the cat is blind ...

*The Familiar, Volume 4: Hades* Wherein the cat is toothless ...

*The Familiar, Volume 5: Redwood* Wherein the cat is named ...

This monumental book, which at this rate, will take thirteen years to complete, contains Danielewski's trademark typographic and textually challenging style and more.

Although *The Familiar*, Danielewski's most ambitious project so far, seems to be the ideal example for the discussion about hypertexts on paper, regrettably, the extensiveness of the book and the fact that it has yet to be finished, makes it inaccessible to this project. Therefore, this study will

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<sup>470</sup> Calvo, Javier. "Building Familiarity. Interview with Mark Z. Danielewski. By Javier Calvo." *O Productora Audiovisual*, O Magazine, 6 Sept. 2016, <<https://abcdefghijklmn-pqrstuvwxyz.com/building-familiarity-interview-with-mark-z-danielewski/>>.

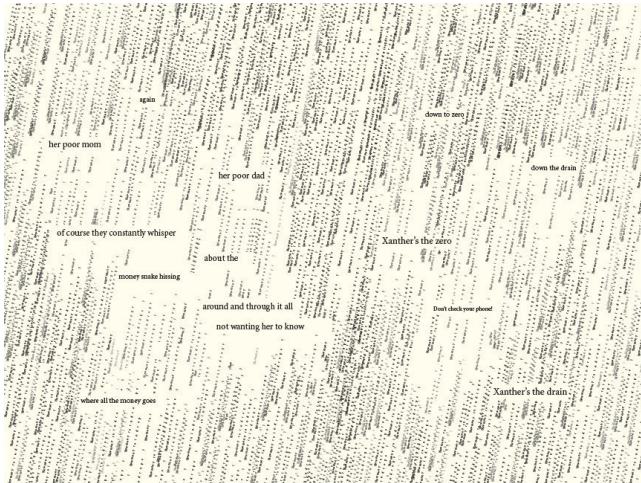


Figure V.1. P. 6  
*The Familiar, Volume 1, A Rainy Day in May*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp 64-65

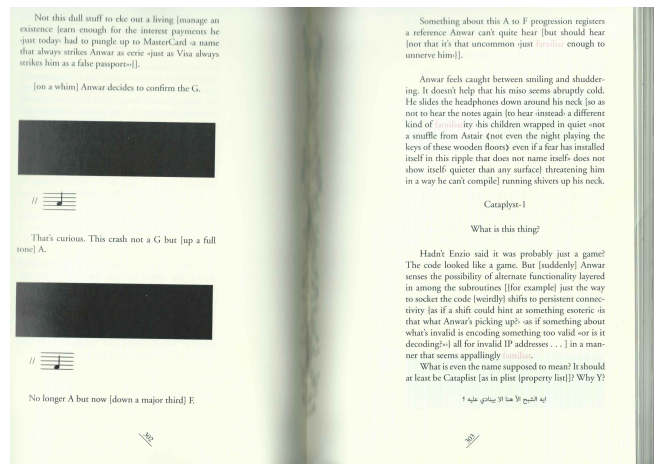


Figure V.1. P. 7  
*The Familiar, Volume 2, In the Forest*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp 302-303

concentrate on Danielewski’s other novels in two main sections. The first section will study how *Only Revolutions* and *The Fifty Year Sword* realize non-linearity, medium-consciousness and reader-centrality in book format and whether these innovations and irregularities qualify them as hypertexts. The second part will focus on *House of Leaves* as the ultimate hyperfiction on paper, and how the novel successfully uses the medium to develop its main themes. This section will use Chris Joseph’s digital hypertext, *Tube Lines*, for comparison.

## V. 2 *Only Revolutions*

“Life’s big. If you can’t fix it, give it a spin.”

*Only Revolutions*<sup>471</sup>

*Only Revolutions* by Mark Z. Danielewski has been described as “a quintessential novel of our time,”<sup>472</sup> “hallucinatory,”<sup>473</sup> “a hall of mirrors, an immaculately constructed maze, a puzzle

<sup>471</sup> Danielewski, Mark Z. *Only Revolutions*. Pantheon Books, New York: 2009. p. 245 (From Hailey’s point of view.)

<sup>472</sup> “Only Revolutions,” *Los Angeles Times*. Web. 6 April, 2014  
 <<http://www.randomhouse.com/acmart/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375421761&view=print>>

<sup>473</sup> “Only Revolutions,” *The Guardian*. Web. 6 April, 2014  
 <<http://www.randomhouse.com/acmart/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375421761&view=print>>

wrapped in an enigma concealing a mystery,”<sup>474</sup> “unreadable,”<sup>475</sup> “a road novel as if imagined by John Cage,”<sup>476</sup> and finally “A masterpiece of formal design,”<sup>477</sup> but above all, *Only Revolutions* is the proof that the printed book is far more flexible than we have expected, and its unexplored potential makes it an appropriate host for hypertextual fiction. *Only Revolutions* experiments with typography, orthography and the book itself in order to entice the readers to accompany Hailey and Sam in this vertiginous never-ending journey as they cross the continent in jalopies over the span of 200 years of American and world history.

### V. 2.1 Non-linear in linear format

Shelley Jackson calls the conventional novel “a safe ride” because “it is designed to catch you up, propel you down its track, and pop you out at the other end [...]”<sup>478</sup> This pleasant ride is usually due to the familiar succession of the sentences from cover to cover that facilitates the act of reading to the point that it becomes a mechanical process and hinders contemplation. Moreover, the linearity of traditional texts “smooth[s] over gaps, even logical ones, suppress contradictions, whisk you past options.” The literary experience, which the non-linear and spider-like sentences of hypertexts provide, according to Jackson, render the mind “self-conscious.” It falters, forgets and fails and desperately attempts to find alternative ways to explore the text. From this point of view, the effective mechanism of books, makes it almost impossible to create a non-linear and demanding text in book format. Danielewski, like many of his predecessors such as Laurence Sterne, James Joyce, Italo Calvino, Raymond Queneau, Julio Cortazar, Milorad Pavić, Georges Perec, and others,

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<sup>474</sup> “Only Revolutions,” *Scotland on Sunday*. Web. 6 April, 2014

<<http://www.randomhouse.com/acmart/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375421761&view=print>>

<sup>475</sup> O'Hagan, Sean. “I Wouldn't Say This Is Unreadable ...” *The Observer*. Guardian News and Media, 24 Sept. 2006. Web. 03 Apr. 2014. <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/sep/24/sciencefictionfantasyandhorror.features>>

<sup>476</sup> “Only Revolutions,” *Newsday*. Web. 6 April, 2014

<<http://www.randomhouse.com/acmart/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375421761&view=print>>

<sup>477</sup> “Only Revolutions,” *Washington Post*. Web. 6 April, 2014

<<http://www.randomhouse.com/acmart/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780375421761&view=print>>

<sup>478</sup> “Stitch Bitch: The Patchwork Girl,” “Gaps, leaps”

has attempted to achieve the impossible in *Only Revolutions* using graphic elements such as layout, capitalizations, circles, particular letters, typefaces, color and orthography.

#### V. 2.1.1 Layout: parallel, circular, non-linear

This palindrome of a novel has been meticulously designed to simultaneously present two parallel lyrical monologues by Sam and Hailey. Sam's narration starts in 1863 during the Civil War and ends on 22 November, 1963, the day of the assassination of President Kennedy. Hailey's monologue covers the time period from the assassination of Kennedy to 2063. The two protagonists meet at the opposite ends of the book, go on a road trip across America in two different historical contexts. The narratives, presented in four columns, divide the page into four parallel zones. Each page contains 360 words, 90 words in each column and consequently, 180 in Sam's story and 180 words in Hailey's, either on the top or at the bottom. In other words, the domination of each narrative literally overturns the other. The publisher advises the readers in the dust jacket note to read 8 pages from one side and flip the book over and read another 8 pages from the other side. This alternative shift enables the readers to read the same event from a different point of view and in a different historical context. Suggesting an infinite circular motion, the book ends at both sides and then starts over continuously.

For each narrative, *Only Revolutions* has predicted a history gutter which includes the events of the day when the story is taking place, newspaper headlines, quotations, etc. There is no visible connection between the story and the historical facts. The readers, if interested, may read the events of the sidebar and put the events of the story in context. While it seems easy, the choice and the arrangement of the events and the lyrical



Figure V. 2.1.1.P.1  
*Only Revolutions*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
The inside cover

quality of the monologue make for a quite complicated reading experience. No wonder Danielewski himself has mentioned in his interviews that *Only Revolutions* requires a Google window.

Although the book can be read from both ends, November 22, 1863 marks the chronological beginning of *Only Revolutions* as Sam begins his journey during the Civil War (as hinted by the history gutter) and meets Hailey. A hundred years pass for Sam to complete his story featuring Hailey, and get to the other end of the book where Hailey's monologue begins on November 22, 1963. At this turning point in history, the book literally spins and another on-going story starts. This particular page is an appropriate example of how these four seemingly parallel narratives defy the linear format and encourage the readers to find the links. Sam states in the last pages of his monologue that his role is to stay by Hailey in the fight for freedom: "Future breezes implore / me to stay. / But I'm no future. I'm no past. / Only ever contemporary of this path. / I'll sacrifice everything / for all her seasons give from losing. / She, I sigh/ from The Mountain top. / By her now. My only role."<sup>479</sup> Arriving at the last page of Sam's narration, the readers will find out what Sam meant when talking about freedom, Hailey's role and his role to stand by her. The history gutter dated November 22, 1963 reads "8:45 AM. Forth Worth Dallas" and reminds the readers of President Kennedy's breakfast speech in which he praised Fort Worth's aviation industry and stated:

**So this country, which desires only to be free, which desires to be secure, which desired to live at peace** for 18 years under three different administrations, has borne more than its share of the burden, has stood watch for more than its number of years. I don't think we are fatigued or tired. **We would like to live as we once lived. But history will not permit it.** The Communist balance of power is still strong. The balance of power is still on the side of freedom. **We are still the keystone in the arch of freedom, and I think we will continue to do as we have done in our past,** our duty, and the people of Texas will be in the lead.<sup>480</sup>  
(the emphases are mine)

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<sup>479</sup> *Only Revolutions*, 358 (Sam's side)

<sup>480</sup> Kennedy, John F. "John F. Kennedy: 476 Remarks at the Breakfast of the Fort Worth Chamber of Commerce.," November 22, 1963. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project*. <<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=9538>>

While the president’s hopeful speech envisages a bright future, the rest of the history gutter ironically points out the other events and people who shaped the future of the country. The rest of the sidebar mentions the “South Vietnam Revolutionary Council” and the Kennedy administration’s awareness of the coup that ended in the execution of President Ngo Dinh Diem of South Vietnam; “John B Connally,” who was seriously wounded on the day JFK was assassinated and who later as Treasury Secretary in 1971, caused the Nixon Shock<sup>481</sup> by removing the US dollar from the gold standard. One quotation stands out among the quotations of this side bar: “— he is shot.” Looking back at the events of that day from a historical distance, and considering Kennedy’s inspiring speech the morning of the same day, the readers will echo Sam’s question:

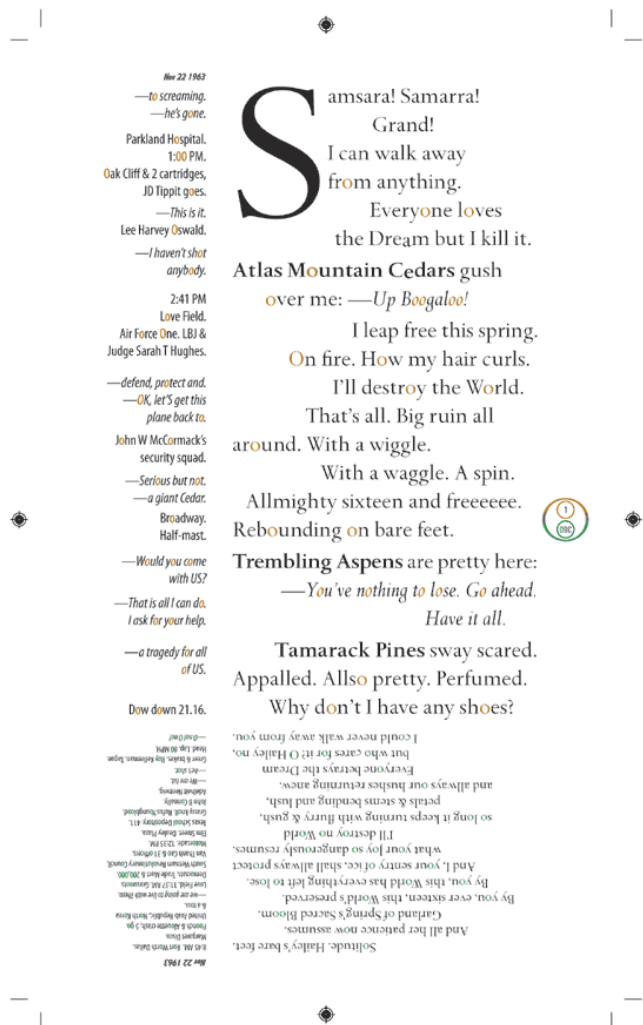


Figure V.2.1.1.P2  
*Only Revolutions*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 p. 1 (Hailey’s side)

<sup>481</sup> “Known colloquially as the “Nixon shock,” the initiative marked the beginning of the end for the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates established at the end of World War II. Under the Bretton Woods system, the external values of foreign currencies were fixed in relation to the U.S. dollar, whose value was in turn expressed in gold at the congressionally-set price of \$35 per ounce. By the 1960s, a surplus of U.S. dollars caused by foreign aid, military spending, and foreign investment threatened this system, as the United States did not have enough gold to cover the volume of dollars in worldwide circulation at the rate of \$35 per ounce; as a result, the dollar was overvalued.”

Office of the Historian, Bureau of Public Affairs. “Nixon and the End of the Bretton Woods System, 1971–1973.” U.S. *Department of State*, U.S. Department of State, [history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/nixon-shock](https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/nixon-shock). <<https://history.state.gov/milestones/1969-1976/nixon-shock>>

“everyone betrays the dream but who cares for it?”<sup>482</sup> and will understand his message of hope that “by you, ever sixteen, this World’s preserved. / By you, this World has everything to lose.” Although Sam bears the burden of history and the almost ruined world, there is always hope for the new generation, the perpetual sixteen, to learn from the history and turn it around, spin the book, and start over. This ending is literally a new beginning. If a world was destroyed on November 22, 1963, a new world was built based on that experience and the historical outlook that generation took. At this point in *OR*, Kennedy’s assassination connects the past represented in Sam’s monologue to the future, represented by Hailey’s. That is the reason why Sam and Hailey cannot walk away from each other. In the circular motion of the book, the past constantly turns into future, and the future incessantly becomes the past. Sam vows that “I’ll destroy no World / so long it keeps turning with flurry & gush / petals & stems bending and lush, / and always our hushes returning anew”<sup>483</sup> and lets Hailey take over the narration.

Hailey picks up where Sam has left off — or starts the story depending on which beginning you choose — on the same date. Even though the first date in the history gutter is November 22, 1963, the facts do not mention the assassination of President Kennedy. However, the history gutter opens with the phrase “— to screaming.” followed by “— he’s gone.” The gutter mentioned “Parkland Hospital,” where John F. Kennedy, his assassin Lee Harvey Oswald, and Jack Ruby, who killed Oswald, either died or were pronounced dead; “1 PM,” when the president was pronounced dead; “Air Force One” and “Judge Sara T Hughes” who swore Lyndon B. Johnson on Air Force One after JFK’s assassination; and “John W McCormack” who nearly became the president after the accidental assassination of Lyndon B. Johnson.<sup>484</sup> The last sentence of the sidebar reads “—a

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<sup>482</sup> *Only Revolutions*, 360 (Sam’s side)

<sup>483</sup> *Only Revolutions*, 360 (Sam’s side)

<sup>484</sup> Malcolm, Andrew. “How President Johnson Was Nearly Assassinated Too.” *Los Angeles Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, 21 Oct. 2010, 5:16 AM, <<http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/washington/2010/10/lyndon-johnson-john-f-kennedy-.html>>

tragedy for all of US.”<sup>485</sup> Having read the history sidebar, Hailey’s monologue about freedom, killing the dream, destroying the world and walking away finds a more significant impact than the carefree declaration of a sixteen-year-old teenager: “Big ruin all around. With a wiggle. With a wiggle. A spin.” She inherits a ruined world, meets Sam and embarks on a journey to build or destroy the world. At the other side of the book when Hailey’s journey ends, the future will one more time turn into the past. Since the book was published in 2006, the history gutter of Hailey’s story has been left blank. The tantalizingly empty space invites the readers to pen in the historical events that have happened since. Hailey’s journey will end on January 19, 2063 and the clean history gutter makes the people wonder whether history will repeat itself as the book suggests. Hailey repeats Sam’s declaration in her last sentences. In her journey toward maturity, the rebellious sixteen-year old has learned that she did not want the world destroyed, and decided to leave it in the hand of the new generation of “ever sixteen”: I’ll destroy no World / so long it keeps turning with scurry & blush, / fledging & charms beading with dew, and allways our rush returning renewed.”<sup>486</sup> At the bottom of the page, another Sam will start his journey.

*Only Revolutions* uses the familiar sequences of sentences which have implied linearity for a long time. However, the study of one single page shows that the placement of both narratives on the same page and adding two history gutters question the mentioned linearity. The columns of writing (**Figure V. 2.1.1.P.1**) divide the page into four parts visually: One narrative and its history gutter on the top, and another with its history gutter upside down at the bottom of the page. While two parallel narratives symbolize the road and the life of the star-crossed lovers, the history sidebars represent the weight of history and the fate the two teenagers cannot escape. In short, the arrangement of the historical facts on page foregrounds their impact on the protagonists’ lives. They are always — or allways as Danielewski prefers to write — at the crossroads of history, and the

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<sup>485</sup> *Only Revolutions*, 1 (Hailey’s side)

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid*, 360 (Hailey’s side)



readers learn little by little that the monologues bear much less significance if not put in the right context. Therefore, the readers will learn to research the material given in the history sidebar and re-read the text. This repetitive task that will result in a better understanding of the story depends on the connections the readers will find between the text and the history gutter. These invisible connections hinder linearity without defying the familiar format of the book. In other words, the readers' back and forth movement between the text and the historical facts, and as shown in the example, up and down movement between Sam's and Hailey's stories force the seemingly parallel narratives to intersect and for the mind to falter, forget its way, be unconvinced, lose track, and seek other ways; the unique characteristics of hypertexts in Shelley Jackson's opinion.<sup>487</sup>

### **V. 2.1.2 *Only Revolutions*: the graphic surface**

#### **V. 2.1.2.1 Orthography and typefaces**

The layout and the arrangement of the narratives on paper are not the only technique *OR* employs to encourage deviations and re-readings. The spelling in *Only Revolutions* is variable. The words "alone, always, also" have been spelled with double L. This technique that Danielewski used in *House of Leaves* and later perfected in *The Fifty Year Sword* points out the potential of the words to turn into other words when pronounced and thus, adds a new layer to the meaning. Not only does the change in spelling initiate new interpretations as the word can be read "alone" or "all one," "always" or "all ways," "already" or "all ready" but also two Ls next to each other visualize a road or two parallel lines. There are instances of other spelling variations in the text. Sometimes a letter has been repeated several times in a single word, e. g. freeeeee or sooooooon. In other instances, the omission of spaces between the words turns a phrase such as "nevernomore" or

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<sup>487</sup> "The mind becomes self-conscious, falters, forgets its way, might choose another way, might opt out of this text into another, might "lose the thread of the argument," might be unconvinced."  
"Stitch Bitch: The Patchwork Girl," "Gaps, leaps"

“somesomewhere” into a word. Closely reading the text, the readers will soon find out that there is a close relationship between the modified spelling and the development of the story.

Sometimes the uncovered words in the original word bring a second meaning to the sentence, and from time to time, the altered spelling signals a connection to the history gutter. For example, when Hailey says: “My wish threatening to become. / What longing longs me then / from me. / —*Allone*, bouncing spiralling **Meadow Salsify**. / — *Never go on*, / groan **Milkvetch & Iris**,”<sup>488</sup> the word “allone” makes the readers pause. Does Hailey refer to herself as “alone” or is she implying her union with Sam by using “all one”? Additionally, the usage of italics and em dashes imply a change of speaker or at least a change of voice. Is it Sam who interrupts her monologue or is it Hailey voicing some of the words she is thinking? The unusual spelling of the word “forest” in “By Forrests of pale harm” illustrates how the text is connected to the history gutter through orthography. While the setting and the mention of “frozen fields” leads the readers to believe the word “pale” refers to color and possibly to snow-covered forests, the spelling catches the eye. A brief look at the history gutter dated Aug 12, 1865 and the mention of the “13th Amendment”, which abolished slavery, and “Pulaski & Ku Klux Klans” show a clear reference to the formation of Ku Klux Klans and Nathan Bedford Forrest. This piece of information changes the implications of “pale harm” and justifies Sam’s hollering from the mountain top and saying “I will sacrifice nothing. / for there are no countries. / Except me. And there is only / one boundary. Me.”<sup>489</sup>

In addition to the volatile spelling, the unstable typefaces also add to the complexity of the text. Some words, proper nouns or phrases appear in bold or italics with no apparent reason. The quotation marks have been replaced by italicized sentences accompanied by em dashes. The font is flexible also. Not only does the size of the font diminish as the story develops, but also a variety of selectively chosen fonts appear. Sam and Hailey’s narrations, for instance, appear in Spectrum MT

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<sup>488</sup> *Only Revolutions*, 11 (Hailey’s side)

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid*, 3 (Sam’s side)

which has a twentieth-century look, but it is characterized by pen-based curves and oblique serifs. This double quality is ideal for a text that covers two centuries from the past to the future. What is more, the Danielewski readers, who have read *House of Leaves*, know about the significance of font selection in Danielewski’s books. Choosing a font called Spectrum for the story of two people who travel from polar opposites, try to be on the same wavelength and move between two extreme poles of history, Danielewski gives the readers an overview of what should be expected. Accordingly, Tempo (from Latin “tempus” or time) has been used for the dates, Myriad Pro for chronomosaics, Life for endpapers, Dante MT for titles, Perpetua for the dedication, Lucida for page numbers (∞), and Universe 57 for Folio.

Capitalization has been used to distinguish chapters. The large Joycean-style capital letter after the title page on each side indicates the story is told from either Sam or Hailey’s point of view. Additionally, the first letter of each eight-page section has been capitalized and the succession of the uppercase letters reads ‘Hailey and Sam’ from Sam’s side and ‘Sam and Hailey’ from Hailey’s side. The constant shift of narrations forms a circle that runs ad infinitum.

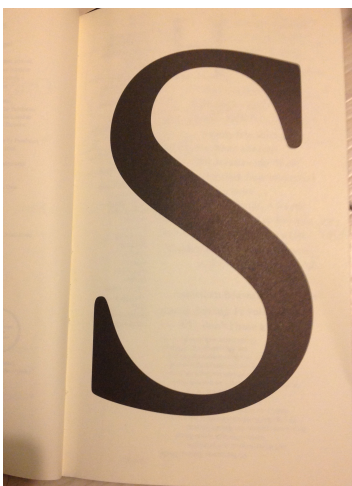


Figure V.2.1.2.1.P.1

*Only Revolutions*  
Mark Z. Danielewski

Figure V.2.1.2.1.P.2



### V. 2.1.2.2 Color

Similar to *House of Leaves* in which the word “house” always appears in blue, *Only Revolutions* employs two colors for the letter O. As priorly mentioned, circles are of great significance in *OR* and not surprisingly, the letter o embodies the themes of circular motion, completion and repetition in the novel. Danielewski, however, takes a step further by coloring the Os green or gold corresponding to Sam and Hailey’s eyes in order to emphasize that the stories are told from Sam’s or Hailey’s point of view and point out the change of perspective. Although spinning the book each eight pages will make your head spin after a while, the readers are always assured whose story they are reading because of the colored Os. Early editions of *OR* even had a gold and a green bookmark to facilitate the shift between the narratives for the readers.

The mixture of green and gold creates the illusion of movement in the big circles — on the left and right side of each opening — which contain two smaller green and golden circles showing the page numbers for each narration. The smaller gold and green circles inside look like the infinity sign next to each other and emphasize the re-occurrence of these two never-ending stories. Additionally, the circles create a flip book effect that creates the illusion of a moving Yin and Yang sign. Moreover, through the clockwise and anti-clockwise movement of the circles, depending on which side of the

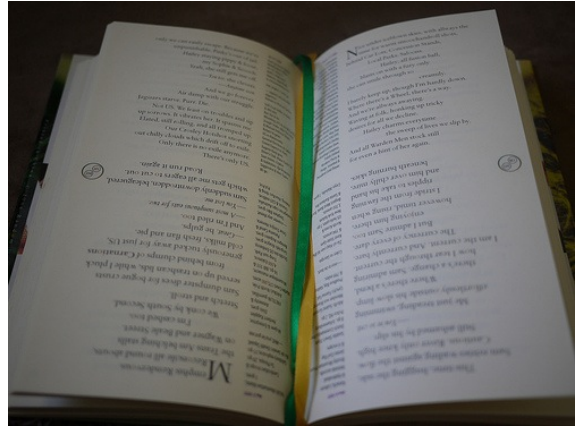


Figure V.2.1.2.2.P.1  
*Only Revolutions*  
Mak Z. Danielewski  
pp. 224-225 (Sam’s side)

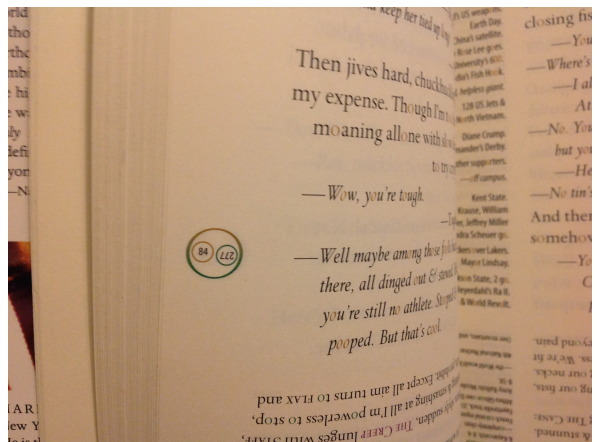


Figure V.2.1.2.2.P.2  
*Only Revolutions*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
circular page numbers  
p. 84 (Hailey’s side)

book you begin at, the contemporary becomes the past, the past turns into the future and the future transforms into the past incessantly.<sup>490</sup>

## V. 2.2 The medium: the book

As already discussed, hyperfiction engages the medium as an active element in developing the story and providing an atmosphere where the readers will go through the same experience as the characters, or reach a new perception of the presented themes. Following the example of *House of Leaves*, *Only Revolutions*, a road novel about the impact of history on our lives, uses the book itself to elaborate on the themes of repetitive lives, the unavailability of escaping fate, social and historical evolution and the vicious circle of history. The potential of the layout and the graphic surface, although innovative in *OR*, have already been introduced in *HoL*. However, *OR*'s experiments with the materiality of the book and its subtle multi-mediacy, which have been symbolized by pause signs, distinguish this book from *HoL*.

### V. 2.2.1 The cover

With the exception of the excerpts from *The New York Times Book Review* and National Book Awards Finalists Judges' citations, the color, the two front covers of the bound volume are almost identical. The covers meet at the spine cover which displays the title and the name of the author between two barcodes and ISBN numbers, and emphasizes that *Only Revolutions* is in fact two books each occupying half of the page. The cover of the first edition, which features a green iris with flecks of gold (Sam's eyes) on one side and a golden iris with flecks of green (Hailey's eyes) on the other, underlines the duality of perspective since the same story is told from the opposite

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<sup>490</sup> The other usage of color in *OR* resembles *HoL* as the word "creep" in reference to the person or the threatening force that follows the protagonists always appear in purple.

ends of the book by two narrators. The circular shape of the irises subtly suggests the significance of circles in narration and the theme of repetition.

The focus of the current book cover image is on the road novel and the parallelism of the narratives. Although the expansion of the cover demonstrates two American roads meeting at the spine cover and creates the illusion of singularity, the details on each cover are distinguishably

different; much like the major narratives presented in the book which flow on the top and at the bottom margins of the page. The similarities of the two tales told centuries apart make the readers seriously wonder why history keeps repeating itself and whether people have learned anything from the past. It is notable that

*Only Revolutions* features two presidents whose political lives show uncanny similarities at their beginning/ ending. Lincoln and Kennedy were both elected to congress in '46. They were both

elected president in '86. They were both concerned with civil rights, and they were both assassinated on a Friday and shot in the head. All the coincidental parallels make the readers ponder over the terrifying blank history gutter of 2063, and wonder whether history will repeat itself.<sup>491</sup> As already discussed, the parallel narrative roads of *Only Revolutions* appear in the context of two



Figure V. 2.2.1.P.1

*Only Revolutions*

Mark Z. Danielewski

The original cover

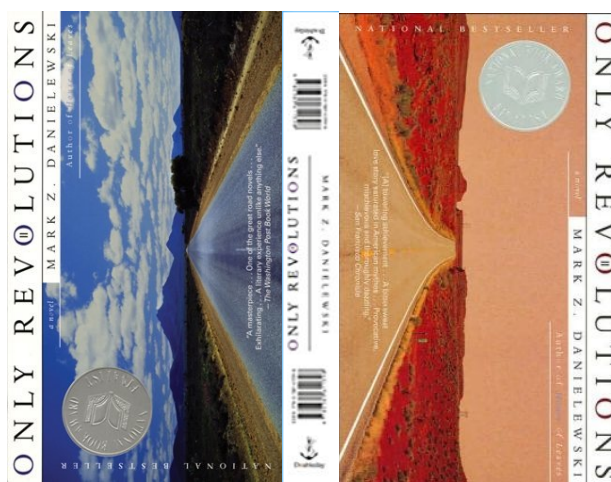


Figure V.2.2.1.P.2

*Only Revolutions*

Mark Z. Danielewski

The cover

<sup>491</sup> Mikkelson, David. "Lincoln and Kennedy Coincidences." *Snopes.com*, Snopes.com, 24 Nov. 2016, <<http://www.snopes.com/history/american/lincoln-kennedy.asp>>

parallel historical periods, suggested by the different daylight on each cover, yet evince an unconventional unity when the circle completes. The starting point and the destination melt into in the horizon as there is no beginning and no ending to the journey. Sam, Hailey and the readers are always in the middle of the road pondering over all the possible ways. That may be one of the reasons that always is spelt “allways” in *OR*.

### **V. 2.2.2 Taking a spin**

Although the book may be read in linear format, and if so, two times to cover both stories, it is preferable for the readers to take the publishers’ advice and flip over the book after reading eight pages. First, reading the same event from the point of view of the second person who has been present there, constantly changes the perspective, enables the readers to characterize Sam and Hailey through their recounts of the happenings, and decide which one to trust more. The double narrative emphasizes the extent to which the written monologue can hide someone’s true feelings and reactions. Secondly, the readers are constantly reminded of the circular movement of the novel by spinning the book every eight pages. Additionally, the act of reading literally joins Sam and Hailey and puts the story in motion. As I mentioned earlier, the capitalized letters of each chapter continuously spell Sam and Hailey and Sam... On the other hand, the readers also function as Lady Fortuna, and spin the wheel of fortune by each flip of the book to determine the protagonists’ fate. Lastly, the circular motion constantly reminds the readers of the passage of time and how past, present and future blend and transform into each other. This is a never-ending story. The ending of each marks the beginning of the other. By each spin of the book, the world turns, is destroyed and renewed.

### V. 2.2.3 A broken record?

*Only Revolutions*' obsession with circles and circular motion subtly refers to another medium. Keeping in mind that the book is the transcript of two monologues spoken by Hailey and Sam and the lyrical quality of the narrations make it easy for the reader to notice the affinities between *OR* and audio-based media. The circular form of the novel and the idea of constant repetition brings vinyl records to mind. This assumption is confirmed when the time span of the novel almost overlaps with the emergence of Vinyl records in 1880s, and although by 1980s, compact disks, the small versions of records, have been introduced, vinyls remain popular to this day. As bizarre as it may sound, there is enough evidence that *OR* assumes that Sam and Hailey's narrations are recorded on vinyls or are at least transcribed albums. The title pages, for instance, read Only Revolutions by Hailey and Only Revolutions by Sam. The writer's name appears on the left side of the opening. Lower in the page, the mention of v.o. (voice over) attracts the readers' attention and implies that either Sam or Hailey (depending on which side of the book) are giving voice to Danielewski's characters, or Danielewski's text is giving voice to two marginalized teenagers whose voices have been lost in the current of history. From this point of view, the parallel lines, which the narratives make, can be the lines of a music sheet that provides notes for the right and the left hand, just like two characters whose narration starts from two sides. Additionally, Hailey and Sam's lyrical (and symmetrical) narrations suggest a well-written duet. The plain black dots that appear on the top right side of some of the pages also resonate with music markers. Moreover, the page before the title page is marked with twin lines in a circle, pause, as if the act of reading makes the record run, the music play, and the circle to complete ad infinitum. This may be the reason behind the odd volume number: volume 0:360:∞.

Blending music with the printed text is not the only example of the fusion of media in *Only Revolutions*. The lyrical content of *OR* is usually overshadowed by the amazing structure of the book. Aside from all typographic and formal innovations, *OR* is obsessed with melodious words



and poetic devices that come to life if read aloud. What is more, Danielewski attempts to use the expressions, slangs and the register of the words in their historical context. Thus, the book has recorded the evolution of language in the past two hundred years. On the one hand, this quality in addition to all formal irregularities impede smooth reading. On the other hand, the mellifluous quality of language facilitates the transition of the text from the printed book to audiobook.

*Only Revolutions* was released on iTunes on May 30, 2007. The book, classified under “spoken word” was read by Danielewski himself as Sam and Alexis Madden as Hailey. The album demonstrated the comprehensibility of the text if read aloud and attracted a new group of audience. The listening experience is far from the complicated reading process due to the lyricism of the text devoid of the burden of

the history bar. However, the readers of the book cannot help lamenting the loss of the layered text and the diminution of meaning, especially if the voices, tone or intonation do not correspond to the mental picture the book creates either. It is noteworthy that the album is divided to five “reels” and

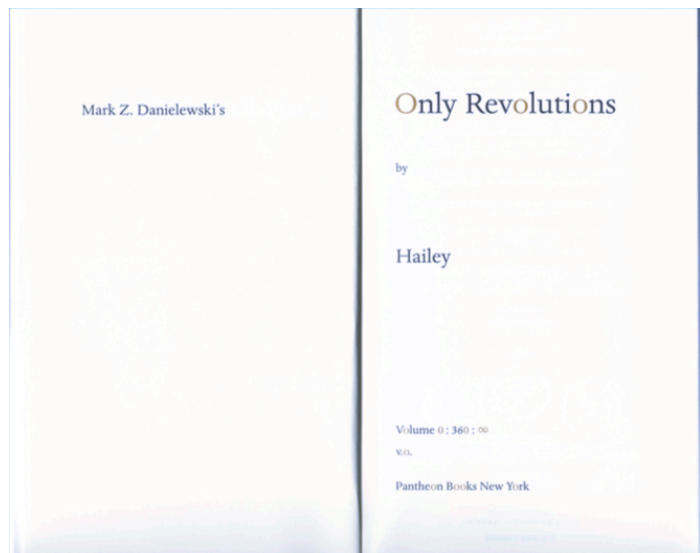


Figure V.2.2.3.P.1  
*Only Revolutions*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
Hailey's title page

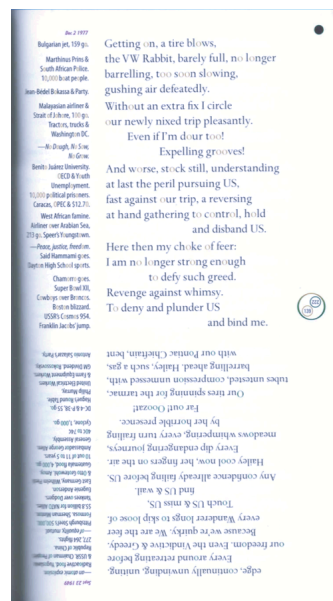


Figure V.2.2.3.P.2

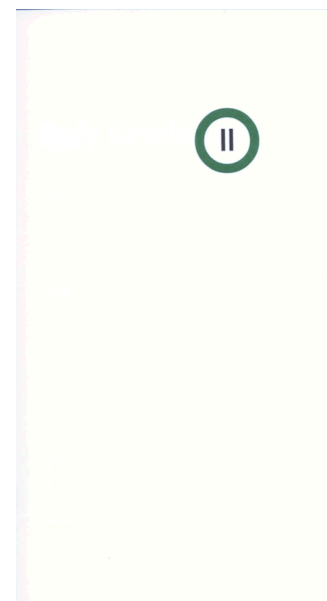


Figure V.2.2.3.P.3

*Only Revolutions*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
H139

flirts with the idea of the audio *OR* as a movie. While the translation of all formal innovations of the book to the audiovisual medium seems implausible at first, it cannot be more far-fetched than a vinyl record as a book.

#### IV. 2.3 The readers

Presenting a rich profusion of discrete unconventional features, *OR* aims for a formidable first reading. Almost all readers mentioned the confusion and frustration they went through when first confronted this challenging text. However, *Only Revolutions* has been surprisingly popular with readers. The novel was placed thirteenth on the *New York Times* hardcover non-fiction bestseller list in 2006,<sup>492</sup> and the discussions and discoveries have continued on MZD forums until the present day. It is interesting to know that the bulk of the critical literature written on *OR* belongs not to the literary critics, but to the dedicated readers who have constantly re-read, discussed and analyzed the novel since its publication in 2006. After reading a few chapters, the readers will be amazed at the flexibility of the novel and intrigued to adopt new reading strategies to explore the possible meanings. The unrelated historical facts and the supposedly unreadable free verse-style text will soon become the pieces of the puzzles the readers need to complete. Needless to say, the game is too intriguing to refuse to play. Drawing on the already mentioned formal irregularities of the novel, I shall suggest two possible readings in order to demonstrate how the novel untwines voluntarily.

*OR*'s emphatic reference to circles is one of the keys to adopting an appropriate reading strategy. The critics have called *Only Revolutions* a step back in comparison to *House of Leaves* due to its conventional and uninterrupted narrative progression.<sup>493</sup> However, the book reaches new

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<sup>492</sup> "Best Sellers." *New York Times*. 1 October, 2006. Web. 8 April, 2014. <[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/01/books/bestseller/1001besthardfiction.html?\\_r=1&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/01/books/bestseller/1001besthardfiction.html?_r=1&oref=slogin)>

<sup>493</sup> "An Outsider Novelist Goes, er, Traditional." *Los Angeles Times*. 13 September, 2006. Web. 8 April, 2014. <<http://articles.latimes.com/2006/sep/13/entertainment/et-danielewski13>>

heights in comparison with *HoL* if read as suggested by the publisher. Adopting a straightforward approach, the readers may complete Sam's narration before starting on Hailey's at the other end of the book. At the end of Hailey's narration, this U-turn of reading sends the readers back to the starting point, namely Sam's narration. Each narration ends with the death of a character; therefore, in this effortless reading, the death of one character and the beginning of the other's journey on the same page suggest a circle of reincarnation. The opening phrase of each section, "Samsara, Samara"<sup>494</sup> and "Haloes" which imply the circle of life, death and rebirth reinforce this interpretation. Likewise, Sam and Hailey begin their journey in spring, melt the glacier, move along with animals and little by little get closer to death. Even the text begins to fade and becomes grey till the next rebirth. The characters reincarnate as each other and that is why the epigraph at each side reads "You were there." As intriguing as this interpretation appears to be, it is unable to justify the existence of both characters at the same time. If Sam and Hailey turn into each other in a hundred-year cycle, they should exchange not only gender, but also personality at each reading. This problem can be solved easily if we just change our reading strategy to the one which justifies Sam's and Hailey's existence as twins and twains.<sup>495</sup>

As insistently stressed by the "pause icon," the parallel lines are as significant as the circles in *OR*. The two narratives flow in parallel from left to right and vice versa. They also visually parallel the history gutter. Therefore, in the expansion of one opening, four parallel narratives can be recognized on the top part, mirrored by another four on the bottom margin. Keeping in mind that the narratives mirror each other but never collide, one can conclude that the two narratives shape two concentric circles which casually overlap. This viewpoint enables the characters to coexist and meet in two different time zones, yet experience the same events. But what is the point of designing

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<sup>494</sup> "Samsara (Hinduism)." *Georgetown University*, Berkley Center For Religion, Peace & World Affairs at Georgetown University, <<https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/essays/samsara-hinduism>>

<sup>495</sup> Danielewski, Mark Z. Interview by Callie Miller and Michele Reverte. *Laist*. **Laist**. 23 October, 2007. Web. 18 March, 2014. <[http://laist.com/2007/10/23/laist\\_interview\\_55.php](http://laist.com/2007/10/23/laist_interview_55.php)>

such elaborate narrative continuum for the novel? *OR* is not merely a love story but a journey through American history. The novel intentionally foregrounds the similarity between the significant events of the last two hundred years and demonstrates how history repeats itself. The setting of Sam's story during the civil war and the assassination of President Lincoln has been juxtaposed with the Vietnam war the assassination of President Kennedy in Hailey's narration. The wars, the natural disasters, the assassinations and even the significant scientific and cultural events in each century surprisingly find their counterparts in the other century and consequently, in the narrative. This resemblance raises questions about the blank history gutter



Figure V.2.3.P.1

Fan art

from:

<http://tylermartin.deviantart.com>

from 2005, when the novel was finished, until 2063. Will the USA experience another gruesome war or another assassination and the circles run their course as the infinite icon made by the number of pages suggests? Or will a new story be written? It is for the readers to respond.

Having discussed some of the innovations of *OR*, I would like to argue that the novel is not a segregated novelty but a concomitant of the literary tradition. There are undeniable traces of modernist novels such as *Finnegan's Wake* and *Ulysses* and the poststructuralist experimental constraint writings such as *A Void* and *Life A User's Manual* in *Only Revolutions*. The eight-page chapters reflect the octavo volumes and the mutable orthography is a conscious reproduction of variable spellings in manuscripts before the invention of the printing machine. Danielewski clearly

re-visits the literary techniques from a twenty-first century perspective. As already mentioned, his twenty-seven volume novel, *The Familiar*, is being published in installments, Dickensian style. The originality of *OR*, therefore, lies in the creative employment of the medium in the development of the story and celebrating the readers as the most significant element in the process of meaning-generating. Providing the context for infinite possible reading strategies, Danielewski acknowledges the visually literate readers of the information age and lets the printed book carry proportions of the story alongside the language. The eminent example of *House of Leaves* in which the shape of the text visualizes the defiant house and its immense success among the readers has confirmed his faith in them to the point that he asked for reader participation in creating the historical sidebars of *OR*. It is rumored that he has even sent the first draft of *OR* to the most active participant of MZD forums and asked for feedback. His reliance on and alliance with the readers led him to trust them to explore the story and unscramble the puzzle. He is confident that the readers will recognize Bonnie and Clyde in Sam and Hailey, as well as Romeo and Juliet and even search for the Capulets and Montagues who are not there. They will identify intentional gaps and insufficiencies, find the links and create multiples from zeros, these priceless hollow circles.

### **V. 3 *The Fifty Year Sword***

*Only Revolution's* ambitious experiments with the interconnected content and form as well as the medium of print result in a demanding and proliferating hypertext on paper. While at this point, it seemed unlikely for Danielewski to surpass his achievements in *House of Leaves* and *Only Revolutions*, he pulls off yet another formal experiment in *The Fifty Year Sword*. *T50YS's* formal innovations seem to follow in the steps of *HoL* and *OR*, but two distinctive qualities distinguish between *T50YS* and its acclaimed predecessors. First, the literal realization of weaving a tale on paper exposes the potential of paper as a multimedia screen. This concept echoes Derrida's statement in *Paper Machines* that "paper can get to work like a multimedia, at least when it is for

reading or writing.” Danielewski’s involvement in the production of a documentary on Derrida’s life<sup>496</sup> shows his interest in Derridean theories which usually find way into his books, *HoL* in particular. Secondly, the multimedia potential of *T50YS* has been proved time and time again as the story was transferred across the media, the radio, theaters, and in one particular example, in a unique interactive iBook. Although all Danielewski books have a space dedicated to extra material and discussion either independently<sup>497</sup> or on MZD,<sup>498</sup> the *T50YS* iBook is one of the best examples of transference across the media since the branching text is not a supplementary, but an independent text with the potential to become a core text itself. Furthermore, the interactive nature of the book directly engages the medium in order to uncover the unexplored themes of the story or even to revisit the story from new perspectives. Moreover, the juxtaposition of the written and the spoken word, *T50YS* itself vs the oral tale narrated by the story teller, encourages the multiplication of the story. The representations, in turn, offer a notable example of the library of Babel effect and lead to the dissemination of the meaning. However, this section will focus on the experiment of *T50YS* with the familiar techniques in the printed medium and how they engage the readers in the interpretive process to open the text to new readings. As a closed network, neither the text, nor the illustrations of *T50YS* will change. Therefore, the only remaining variable is the reader. *T50YS* trusts the readers with the clues left in both the illustrations and the text and expects them to find the bits and sew them together. The following parts will study one visual clue, the harvester butterfly, and one familiar technique, the distorted orthography to demonstrate how *T50YS* uses its one variable to change the equation and expose its hypertextual tendencies.

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<sup>496</sup> *Derrida*, Kirby Dick and Amy Ziering Kofman, Jacques Derrida and Marguerite Derrida. Zietgeist Films, 2002, DVD.

<sup>497</sup> <<http://www.onlyrevolutions.com>>

<sup>498</sup> < <http://www.markzdanielewski.com>>

### **V. 3.1 *T50YS*: tailoring a tale**

*T50YS*, a lexicon of synonyms for sewing and snipping, bonds the illustrations and the text , together by actually stitching the pictures on the pages to the point that it is difficult to distinguish one medium as the dominant one. Realizing the original definition of the word “text” as “something woven,” *T50YS* offers a woven text on two levels. First, the book is a tapestry of the narrations by five unnamed narrators who cut and connect each others’ versions of the story and expose the fragmentary nature of a visually linear text. Second, the story is literally realized on paper through stitched illustrations. In other words, *T50YS* gives a literal understanding of the fusion of media. The book allocates the text to the left side of each opening. However, the illustrations sometimes overstep the boundaries and spread over the left page. They sometimes even take the whole opening and occasionally invade the text. The parity of space between the printed text and the embroidered pictures as well as their visual intersection prevent the readers from dismissing the pictures as the secondary medium. Additionally, *T50YS* uses the illustrations to develop the themes and indeed sometimes the answers to the questions raised by the text can only be found through the illustrations. Thus, using the familiar elements of the medium of print inventively, *T50YS* encourages the readers to make links between the text and illustrations. This continuous process that deprives the text of its visual linearity will be studied in the subsequent section which will concentrate on the progressive stitching of the undone harvester butterfly as an example.

#### **V. 3.1.1 The embroidered harvester butterfly**

Five narrators, distinguished merely by five autumnal-colored quotation marks, tell the story of Chintana, a divorcée seamstress who reluctantly accepts an invitation to Mose Dettledown’s party where she encounters Belinda Kite, the woman who seduced Pravat, Chintana’s husband, and learns that Belinda will be celebrating her champagne birthday at the same party at midnight. The arrival of five orphans with their social worker and then the sudden appearance of a promised Story

Teller make her forget about Belinda and get immersed in the story instead. The mysterious Story Teller tells the story of his quest to retrieve the fifty year sword, which is lying in a long, narrow box in front of him. He has had to pass The Valley of Salt, The Forest of Falling Notes, and The Mountain of Manyone Paths in order to find The Man With No Arms who sells the most dangerous weapons. At the climax of his story of revenge with menacing details of violence and the consequences of opening the box, the orphans lean forward, and each one lifts a latch.

Danielewski holds back the information on the origins of the Story Teller, who suddenly appears and reaches toward Chintana out of “a / shadow cast by nothing / “other / “than / the darkness itself,”<sup>499</sup> and disappears at the end “ “even if no one / saw him “go.”<sup>500</sup> The arrival of a “very-harried School Teacher”<sup>501</sup> suggests the Story Teller’s supernatural origins and proves the story to be, as the preface note puts it, a ghost story.

Although *The Fifty Year Sword* has been described as a ghost story that had been appropriately narrated on a Halloween night, I would like to argue that the theme of revenge is as significant as the ghost of the past in *T50YS*. The mention and appearance of the harvester butterfly in the text and among the illustrations subtly add a new layer of meaning to the story, provided that the readers make the connection successfully. Although it seems that the harvester butterfly has been selected because of the range of orange colors outlined by black on the dorsal of the wings that remind the readers of Halloween, the color, however important, is not the sole reason behind this choice.

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<sup>499</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 64

<sup>500</sup> *Ibid*, 256

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid*, 258



Harvester butterflies,<sup>502</sup> scientific name: *feniseca tarquinius*, are “the only strictly carnivorous butterfly caterpillars in the United States”<sup>503</sup> and native to central Texas where the story takes place. The fact that this butterfly feeds on flesh makes it the perfect symbol for grudge and grievance. The harvester first appears in the story when Chintana remembers how Belinda Kite seduced Pravat, Chintana’s husband, by giving him a handkerchief on which a harvester had been clumsily embroidered (**Figure V. 3.1.1.P.2**). The harvester, which from now on, flutters here and there in the text and consistently in illustrations, finds a double function as the marker of connections and separations. In the mentioned example, the harvester, a token of love, joins Belinda and Pravat and at the same time separates Chintana from Pravat. The harvester, thus, becomes the embodiment of the themes of cutting and stitching on which the novella is based both visually and symbolically, while at the same time, it links the illustrations and the text in order to develop the theme of revenge in *The Fifty Year Sword*.



Figure V. 3.1.1.P.1  
Harvester Butterfly (*feniseca tarquinius*)  
from  
Carolina Nature: North America Butterfly Photos

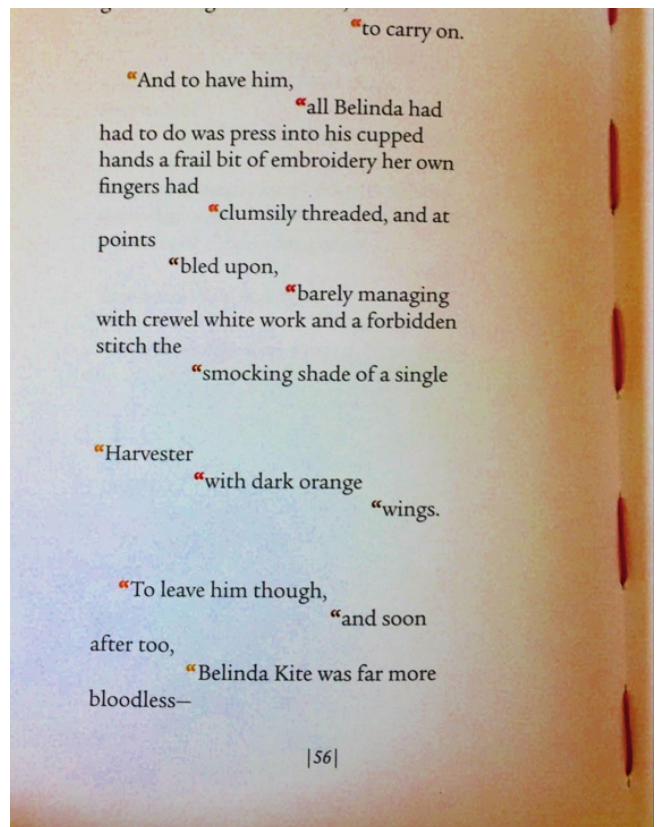


Figure V. 3.1.1.P.2  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
p. 56

<sup>502</sup> The photo in Figure V.3.1.1.P.1 was taken from the following site:  
cwcook@duke.edu. “Harvester (Feniseca Tarquinius).” Harvester (Feniseca Tarquinius), Carolina Nature,  
2013<[www.carolinanature.com/butterflies/harvester.html](http://www.carolinanature.com/butterflies/harvester.html)>

<sup>503</sup> Hall, Donald W., and Jerry F. Buttler. “Featured Creatures.” *Harvester Butterfly*, University of Florida,  
Dec. 2016, <[http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/bfly/harvester\\_butterfly.htm](http://entnemdept.ufl.edu/creatures/bfly/harvester_butterfly.htm)>

harvester butterfly finds significance only if the readers make the connection. The presence of a butterfly whose stitches have been removed on the dedication page may seem strange at first. The explanation of Belinda and Pravat's affair a few pages later will not demystify the dedication of the book to an undone butterfly. The harvester reappears on page 60 just before Pravat leaves Chintana. The emergence of a semi-undone butterfly may remind the readers of Chintana's reaction to the police officer's news about her husband and Belinda's arrest (possibly for public exposure) while she was cutting something. The action that the reader would probably overlook as trivial due to Chintana's profession, suddenly reveals the significance of the semi-undone harvester. The enraged Chintana was removing the stitches of the harvester Belinda embroidered for Pravat: "Chintana found out every disconcerting / detail, and even, / "snip snip, / "undid, / "clip clip, "stitch by / stitch, "the offending thief, "intoxicant!"<sup>504</sup> The third time the harvester appears (page 202) is in the embedded story told by the Story Teller. In this part, which will be discussed in more detail later, he pays for his sword with a memory, a single harvester that leaves his body, and a half-sewn harvester ornaments the following page. The harvester re-emerges in a more complete form on page 270 after Chintana, who "with whirls of / "butterflies suddenly panicking inside / her," decides to join the guests celebrating Belinda's fiftieth birthday at midnight while thinking about the harvester embroidered on Pravat's handkerchief. The last and complete butterfly adorns the last page of the book and marks the end of the story. While the readers may not pay much attention to the harvester when reading the story, the illustrations constantly remind them of these reverse metamorphoses from undone stitches to a complete harvester. This transformation raises many questions as in the story Chintana has already undone the butterfly. So its gradual completion at the end of the story seems strange and encourages the readers to find justification for this particular illustration in the text.

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<sup>504</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 58.

Reading the story for the second time, one may notice that the word butterfly has appeared in another context before the embroidered handkerchief. Chintana finds out about Pravat’s betrayal when cutting cotton and the “metal v” of scissors cut into her “soft thumb.” The local surgeon who stitches her thumb “taped on a butterfly for good measure too.”<sup>505</sup> The description of the surgical tape as a butterfly is interesting because not only does it remind the second-time readers of Pravat’s betrayal, but the dictionary meaning of butterfly as a verb, “to split,” refers to Chintana’s physical and emotional pain (the cut, the betrayal and the divorce). The surgical butterfly, a reminder of the pain that Belinda and Pravat caused

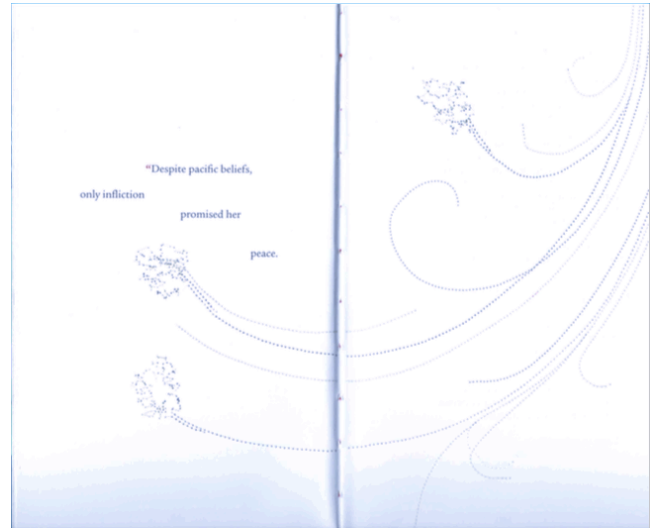


Figure V. 3.1.1.P.3  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp.18-19

Chintana, paradoxically heals her physical pain. The double function of the butterfly suggests the double nature of revenge as an agonizing but soothing act. The mention of V, which stands for vengeance, cannot be coincidental here especially because this event follows the pictured opening which explains ““Despite pacific beliefs, / only infliction / promised her / peace.” The violet lines that seem decorative on this opening (**Figure V. 3.1.1.P.3**) will find an immense significance in developing the theme of revenge when they reappear on pages 152 and 153 as the eyelashes of The Man With No Arms.

The ambiguity of this section that appears before Chintana cuts her thumb and loses its nail, leads to different assumptions: Chintana’s wish to take revenge on Belinda for seducing her husband, on herself for her passivity and on others for no good reason. Causing pain just because one is hurt is vaguely suggested as Chintana: “[...] forced herself to thank / [the doctor] and, /

<sup>505</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 20.

“somehow, / “carry on. / “But she did not then as she could / not now seem to acknowledge to herself / just how easily she could have / “seen it / happ to someone / “else / “ ‘s thumb.”<sup>506</sup> The urge to inflict pain and take blind revenge when one has suffered emotionally and the personal and social consequences of revenge will be revisited in the Story Teller’s tale.

The connection between Chintana’s self-inflicted pain and the externally inflicted pain of betrayal is confirmed as Chintana rubs “the violet line of her thumb” on two occasions. Firstly, when she hears about Belinda’s birthday celebration that very night. Secondly, when a woman talks to her about Belinda and she feels the agony and desire for revenge cut through her body making her thumb throb as a physical symbol of her pain:

“Whereupon Chintana’s thumb  
 abruptly began to sore a little  
 felt bleak,  
 “as if a thousand  
 upon vengeances were dicing her  
 suddenly  
 “into hail.

Figure V. 3.1.1.P.4  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 p.62

This section follows the appearance of the second harvester butterfly on page 61 and confirms a correlation between the unstitched butterfly and Chintana’s yearning for vengeance. As if invoked by Chintana’s spiteful feelings, the door flings open and a shadow “cuts across the threshold.” As there is no source of light outside, the mystifying shadow suggests the supernatural origins of the Story Teller. Chintana notes that the Story Teller is pure darkness since “without moon or stars in the Texas sky / this was an awful impossibility, / “for here / reaching towards her it seemed was a / shadow cast by nothing / “other / “than / the darkness itself.” He asks for the orphans and ironically, it is Chintana who shows him the way. When he starts his story, he warns his listeners to leave if they scare easily. The readers will soon realize that the Story Teller’s real

<sup>506</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 20

audience is Chintana herself, the woman whose grudge and desire to find peace through infliction of pain, have given rise to the pure spirit of vengeance.

There seems to be no reason behind the Story Teller's desire for vengeance. He describes himself to children as "a bad man with a black heart. And it was only that badness and blackness which forced me to seek out what I have."<sup>507</sup> He tells the children that the story is about his pursuit of a weapon. However, he refrains from telling the orphans the reason why he was seeking such a weapon because they are too young to know. He explains that one day when they are older, they will be able to understand the reasons behind such journeys. Interestingly, he addresses his last sentence to Chintana: " " "You will know then / more than me' " " and Chintana realizes that it is not a coincidence that her thumb throbs the moment he utters this sentence.<sup>508</sup> The Danielewski readers whose familiarity with *HoL* and *OR* has trained them to always check the writer's note may notice that *Dante*, *Gilgamesh* and *Legacy* are among the used fonts and take the hint to focus on the journey which is more important than the reasons behind it.

While the Story Teller does not give any background information, it is not difficult for the readers to "imagine what drove him on such a " " "quest"<sup>509</sup> that exasperates his "blackness." He travels to many lands and is offered various weapons, but he refuses to take them. His pain requires a special weapon, the deadliest, that supposedly would inflict the utmost pain upon others. What is interesting, however, is that each refusal to fight the vindictive urge and finally heal, aggravates his situation: " " "I shook my head and my heart / blackened more."<sup>510</sup> He is also aware of the impact of his spiteful spirit over anyone he meets during this journey and figuratively implies the harmful effect of holding a grudge on oneself and others: " my badness spread / so that / " " "whatever I touched, my badness / touched too / " " " and seeped into." His quest for the weapon, the fifty year

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<sup>507</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 76

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid*, 78

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid*, 76

<sup>510</sup> *Ibid*, 82

sword that supposedly lies in the long narrow box he has brought to the party, demonstrates what will happen to Chintana if she is not able to forgive and move on.

The Story Teller's quest metaphorically shows the stages through which a vengeful person turns into a "a bad man with a black heart." The Story Teller's symbolic journey in search of The Man With No Arms, who builds the deadliest weapons, takes him to three particular places: The Valley of Salt, The Forest of Falling Notes and the Mountain of Manyone Paths. The impact of each place on travelers changes them into pernicious creatures who are ready to die if necessary to take revenge and cause pain. The determination seems to be the requirement for meeting The Man With No Arms who forges swords so fine that the blade is invisible, and so fatal that they can even kill an idea.<sup>511</sup>

The Story Teller's first destination is The Valley of Salt which symbolically represents the paralyzing grief. The Valley of Salt, where nothing moves, deprives the traveller of her / his self as the shadows remain behind and smudge the valley like charcoal. This stage marks the beginning of the fusion with the shadow or as Chintana puts it, turning into the darkness. The Story Teller himself seems to be pure darkness when he appears. The illustrations emphasize the shape of the valley which reminds the readers of Chintana's injured thumb, and her wish for vengeance (**Figure V.**

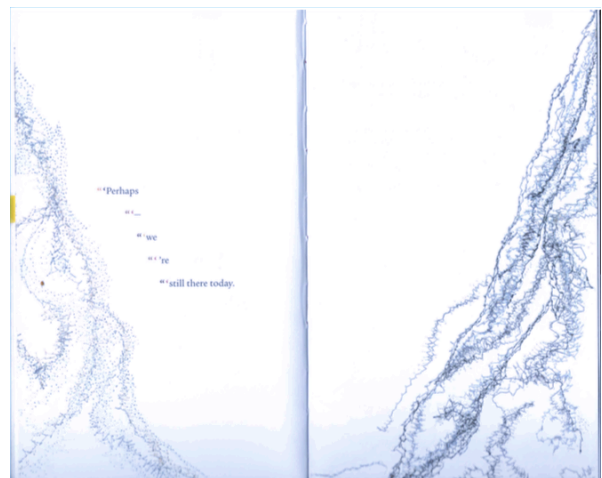


Figure V. 3.1.1.P.5  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 92-93

**3.1.1.P.5).** The Story Teller's last statement about remaining in the Valley of Salt, which itself implies crying, shows that grief, if not dealt with, will be permanent. It can also be a reference to Chintana's mental state and a warning that she is on her way to find her own deadly weapons.

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<sup>511</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 194

The Forest of Falling Notes deprives travelers of their voices, as in this forest “sounds could not hold / “ ‘ together. / “ ‘ Like pearls on a snapped / “ ‘ silk / “ ‘ scattered wildly upon / “ ‘ the / ground.”<sup>512</sup> Happy songs literally fall into pieces in the Forest of Falling Notes. The Story Teller recalls that he expected to find relief in a forest with flowing rivers. He even tried to sing a song, but realized that the forest turns any song into a series of meaningless noises: “a series / of clucks, trills, sputters and odd clicks / caught in / “whistle in the back of his throat.”<sup>513</sup> The sounds are heard in fragments and possibly with delay and turn into strange noises the speaker did not intend to produce. The Story Teller relates in horror that even the sound of the breeze fell apart, and that he could hear “all “

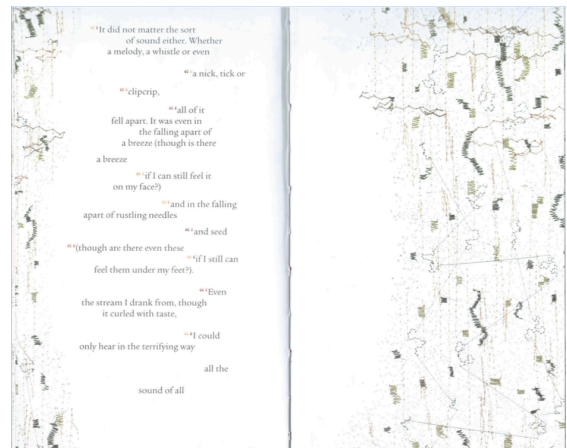


Figure V. 3.1.1.P.6  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp. 112-113

“the w/orld there w/as “ ‘ con / st / antly “ ‘ sev/ered.”<sup>514</sup>

The lack of control on his voice, the inability to rejoice in small everyday pleasures, and the impossibility of communication display the gradual loss of humanity which results in the desire to kill. Moreover, the slashed words underline the effectiveness of speech and imply the hidden potential of words which shall be studied in IV. 3.1.2.

Before the Story Teller starts recounting his last ordeal, passing through The Mountain of Manyone Paths, the word “butterfly” appears once more to remind the readers of Chintana’s connection to the Story Teller. When the Story Teller looks at one of the windows, Chintana suddenly notices the “shriek of the wind”<sup>515</sup> (**Figure V. 3.1.1.P.7**).

<sup>512</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 108

<sup>513</sup> *Ibid*, 102

<sup>514</sup> *Ibid*, 112.

<sup>515</sup> *Ibid*, 120

Her throbbing thumb, which by now symbolizes her inner pain and desire to take revenge, has also been mentioned in connection with the word “butterfly.” However, “butterflying “hope” can evoke either the ghastly realization of the supernatural elements involved, or provide an ironic reference to her unawareness of her surroundings. The arrival of the Story Teller at The Mountain of Manyone Paths is accompanied by the illustration of braided strands of thread to create the image of mist and wind as well as the thread for the completion of the harvester butterfly.

The Mountain of Manyone Paths seems like an ordinary mountain at the beginning, but when the Story Teller begins his ascent, the mist clears away and he notices other paths and other climbers all around. When he manages to get closer before the mist sweeps them away, he notices that “these / solitary / figures” look “ “ ‘exactly the same / “ ‘and not just the same / as one another, / but the same as / “ ‘me.’”<sup>516</sup> The Mountain of Manyone Paths symbolically represents the loneliness and determination of the Story Teller in the quest for his sword. He sees himself everywhere following many paths, which are all ironically the same, toward the summit and the impending encounter with The Man With No

“ And Chintana felt  
something within  
“ her part  
“ like a wail.  
“ Butterflying  
“ hope and hold.  
“ Not  
neither over the stabbing  
“ pain in her  
thumb  
“ either,  
“ which had clearly  
gotten much, much worse,  
“ but over a  
horror far more simple  
“ —she knew the windows had all been closed.

Figure V. 3.1.1.P.7  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
p. 120

“ Eventually  
though, I managed  
to get a little closer before the  
pale winds  
“ stole  
these  
noly  
And  
it was there that I  
could see how all of  
them looked  
“ exactly the same.  
“ and not just the same  
as one another,  
but the same as

Figure V. 3.1.1.P.8  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 140-141

<sup>516</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 142



Arms who makes the deadly swords. While the multiplication of the paths and the Story Teller may be interpreted as a split in his personality, he mentions another significant side effect: “in spite of so many / climbing / figures / “ ‘on so many / “ ‘paths, I was / completely / “ ‘alone up there. / “ ‘far worse than the / “ ‘petrified / shadows and the falling / “ ‘notes, the / multiplication upon “ ‘ multiplication / of my own solitude / “ ‘brought me / rapidly to the edge of despair, which / is where / “ ‘quite sensibly really, I finally / found the “ ‘Man With / “ ‘No / “ ‘Arms.”<sup>517</sup> As the Story Teller clearly explains, the multiplication of selves in The Mountain of Manyone Paths results in isolation from society and the reduplication of his solitude drives him to such an extreme that he is willing to sacrifice his humanity for revenge.

The encounter between the Story Teller and The Man With No Arms follows his departure from The Mountain of Manyone Paths. One of the first attributes of The Man With No Arms that quickly attracts the readers’ attention is his “pupooless eyes” and “luminous violet eyelashes” that remind us of Chintana’s injury and desire to achieve peace by inflicting pain on others because of the accompanied illustration (pages 18 and 19),

which showed violet lashes (**Figure V.3.1.1.P. 10**). This understanding is confirmed when almost the same illustration decorates the following opening in which The Story Teller drops his bowl as if he has recognized The Man with No Arms. Putting the openings side by side, one cannot help but notice the uncanny similarity. Keeping in mind that the violet cut on Chintana’s injured thumb is a reminder of her physical pain which in turn represents her inner

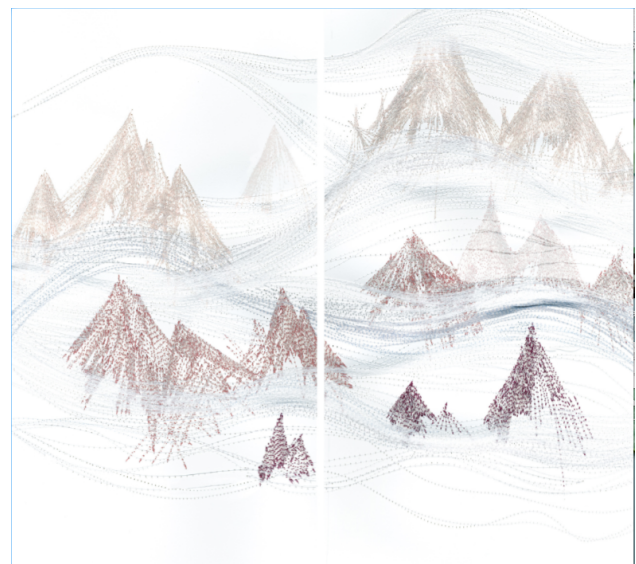


Figure V. 3.1.1.P.9  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp. 144-5

<sup>517</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 146

agony, the thickness of the violet lines in the picture, which supposedly represent The Man with No Arms' eyelashes, can also be taken as the external manifestation of his inner torment. The density of the lines might imply his deeper scars compared with Chintana's thumb and reinforce the fact that if Chintana cuts her thumb out of rage, The Man with No Arms is an amputee.

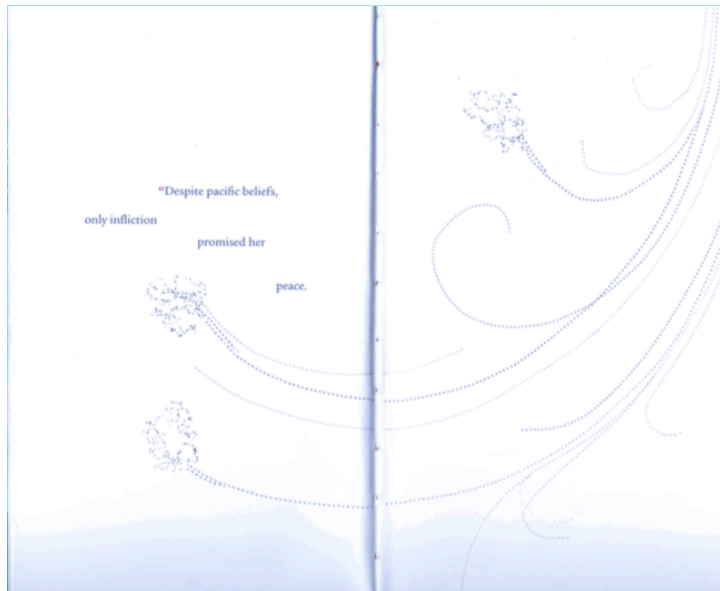


Figure V. 3.1.1.P.10  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp.18-19

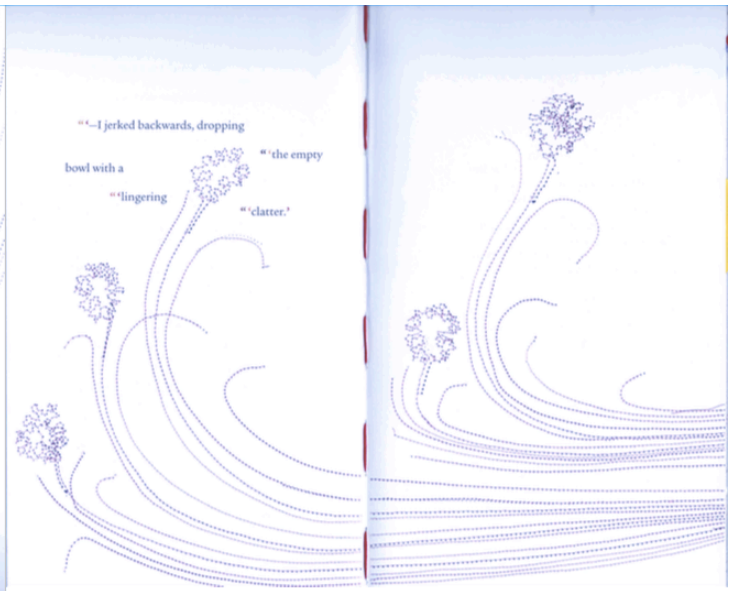


Figure V. 3.1.1.P.11  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp. 152-153

Later in the story, the eyelashes take on a new significance when The Man with No Arms uses them to keep the Story Teller away (p. 170) or when his violet eyelashes seem to tremble to show delight (p. 194). He uses his eyelashes (his pain) to communicate, defend himself and attack. It is noteworthy that the text sometimes uses “lashes” instead of “eyelashes” to suggest the double meaning of “whip.” This makes the reader wonder whether “eyelash” may be read as “I lash (out)” in this context. The symbolic replacement of his hands with these violet lines is a constant reminder of the shadow that agony, the desire to inflict pain and the hopeless quest for peace may cast upon one’s existence. If Chintana’s pain scars a body member, that of The Man With No Arms results in dismemberment and therefore, points out his torpid state. The real or symbolic disability of The Man With No Arms, the blade-smith whose deadly weapons trigger the Story Teller’s quest, raises

the logical question of how he forges the weapons. I shall return to this question in my argument about words.

The harvester butterfly flutters back into the story when the Story Teller and The Man with No Arms negotiate the price of the sword. The Story Teller agrees to pay “ “ “ “A memory you have which would have / “ “ “ “outlived / “ “ “ “you.” ” and before he finishes his sentence, The Man With No Arms strikes the Story Teller’s shoulder blade with one of his swords and the memory in the shape of a single harvester with dark orange wings is released. An almost-complete harvester appears on the following page (203).

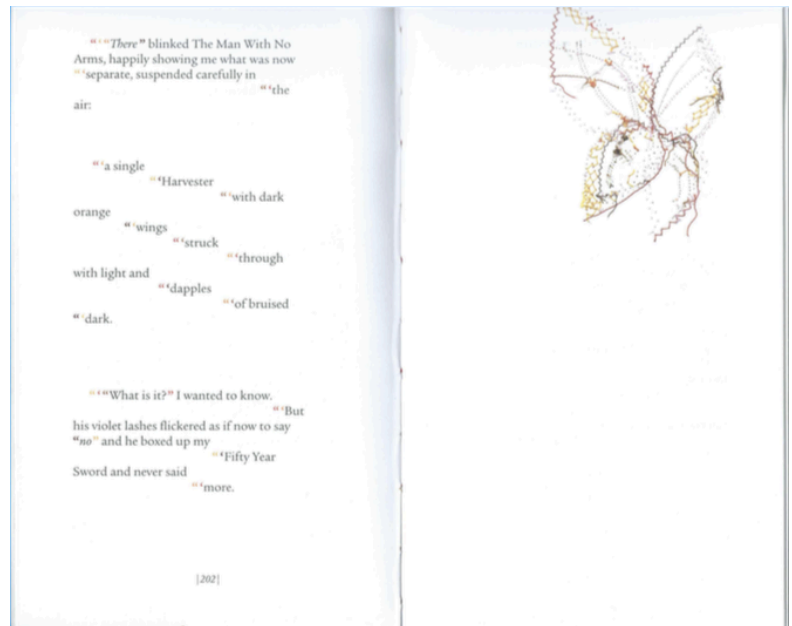


Figure V. 3.1.1.P.12  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp. 202-203

The distorted names of the places the Story Teller recrosses on his way back reinforce the idea of the lost memory The Man With No Arms had predicted. He descends The Mountain of Many Won Paths, traverses The Forest of Note to stay away from The Valley Assault.<sup>518</sup> Yet as he explains, it has taken him years to find out that the price of the sword he bought was the reason why he needed a sword in the first place: “ “ “ “only in years to come / would I realize what / “ “ “he had taken. / My heart stayed as “ “ “black and my badness spread / “ “ “more easily but / “ “ “the / memory / “ “ “and reason / “ “ “behind such /blackness and badness had / “ “ “vanished / completely. / “ “ “Which is my / “ “ “story. / There “ “ “is / “ “ “no more.” ” His explanation justifies his groundless assault on the five helpless orphans later in the story. While the passage of time fades the reason for his bitterness, the

<sup>518</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 204

infliction of pain to reach peace becomes second nature to vindictive people. Chintana is also in the process of turning into this dark spiteful shadow of a man. The wound on her hand will heal, but the inner pain, which the undone harvester symbolizes, will catalyze her transformation into the Story Teller.

Chintana, the Story Teller and The Man With No Arms represent three stages of this transformation; from hurt and seeking remedy for pain to hateful and inflicting pain. What keeps Chintana from turning into another Story Teller and losing her humanity is ironically the very person who initiated the process. The readers are reminded of the themes of connection and separation when Belinda stops the Story Teller's attempt to kill the orphans and inadvertently helps Chintana to take a step towards healing and forgiveness.

When the orphans open the box to find a single handle without a blade and the Story Teller takes and swings it across the children's necks, Chintana is too far away to intervene. But Belinda steps in, gets the sword, and gives Chintana the chance to break the vicious cycle of inflicting pain. The narrators seem surprised at Belinda's selfless move, so they consider it an evidence of "Belinda / Kite's natural predespotician to spoil / " a pretty gripping moment."<sup>519</sup> Chintana, on the other hand, is relieved that the children are safe. However, Belinda starts stabbing at her own body to show the children that the sword is not real. She does not leave any body part untouched. The two openings dedicated to Belinda's self-infliction are marred by zing zag stitchings that cut through the words which, in turn, include almost all the synonyms for jabbing and cutting. The visual representation of Belinda's assault on herself makes it impossible to accept that the sword is, according to Belinda, "nothing but a bit of " 'phoney phootey.'<sup>520</sup> Although a simple demonstration will suffice, Belinda suspiciously makes sure to "crisscross her / knees, / thighs / "and / waist, dice / "her / fingers, wrists, / "elbows / and / arms / "sectioning, / "filleting / and

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<sup>519</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 248

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid*, 250

“lancing / neck, /jaw, / “nose, / “ears and / “scalp.”<sup>521</sup> No one stops her, but the narrators confide that the guests caught a glimpse of the fine blade, something the narrators describe as “a slow / cold fog creeping across “ an evening / after / “a burial.”<sup>522</sup> The visual foreshadowing is realized at midnight at Belinda’s fiftieth birthday. While Chintana forces “herself from the promise / “of / “infliction’s / “peace,” Belinda literally falls into pieces.

The accompanying illustrations for this ominous moment reflect Chintana’s change of heart as for the first time, the depiction of violet eyelashes (referred to simply as lashes in this section) change direction. However, the color violet, the color of Chintana’s injured thumb and the eyelashes of The Man With No Arms, is synonymous with hurt and hatred, and the strike of twelve, like twelve violet lashes, predicts an inauspicious event. The

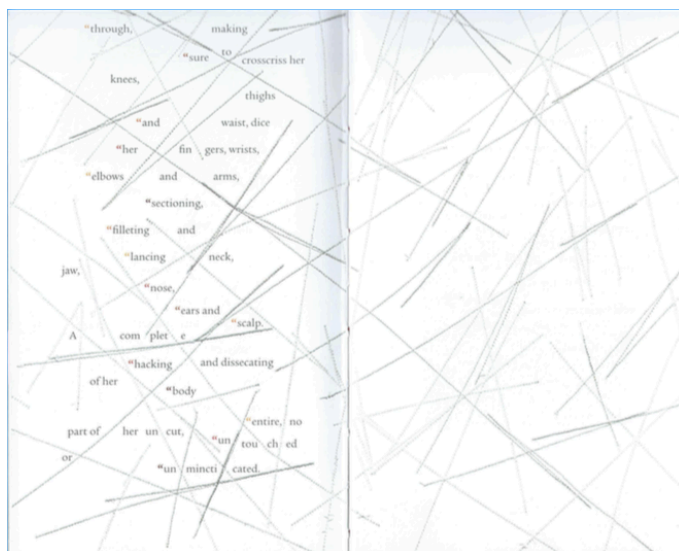


Figure V. 3.1.1.P.13  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp. 250-251

reappearance of the harvester in the story at this point confirms that Chintana is struggling to let go of the grudge and forgive Belinda. She suddenly remembers Belinda’s blood on the harvester she had embroidered sloppily for Pravat, and realizes that one brings pain on oneself by inflicting pain, and that Belinda had sealed her fate by her blood when she hurt Chintana. While the harvester is long gone — Chintana undid the stitches— the scar-like traces have remained on the handkerchief. The vicious circle of hurting and getting hurt simply shows that peace does not follow the infliction of pain as Chintana expected. Thus, motivated by the Story Teller’s tale, she remembers and in one

<sup>521</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 252

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid*, 254

of the unspoken words of the novel re- (regrets) the existence of the harvester butterfly, and she releases it.<sup>523</sup> This action is the exact opposite of what happened to the Story Teller as he exchanged his pain for a weapon to inflict pain and forgot the reasons behind his hatred. Therefore, his grudge extended over his existence to the point that he literally became a shadow of a human being. Chintana, on the other hand, acknowledges the cause of her pain and intentionally lets go of her grudge, hence the voluntary release of the harvester butterfly. That is the reason why Chintana is able to reach for Belinda when she literally goes to pieces at midnight: “ “she was reaching / Belinda Kite / “grabbing her / “holding her / “cradling her / “in her arms / “wrapping / her tight in her grave coat / “the scarf / tight around the tortured arm, / “stroking the woman’s head, which she understood at any moment / “could also fall / “away.”<sup>524</sup> The crimson color of the thread that keeps the book together reminds the readers of Belinda’s blood and that her life is literally hanging on a thread. The story ends with Chintana holding on to Belinda’s mutilated body as she held on to her grudge. She wraps her scarf, herself and whatever she finds around Belinda to keep her body together. She even finds it in her heart to stroke her injured head which may fall at any moment and wonders “ “just how long one such tiny / stitch of, “well you know, “can really hold.”<sup>525</sup> The readers can fill in the second unspoken word of *T50YS*, which the text only refers to as “well, you know,” with “forgiveness.”

The experiment with the medium of writing and the fusion of art and language in *T50YS* facilitate the development of the themes. The (un-)sewn harvester butterfly which seems to be an ornamental device at first turns out to be the key to analysis of the novel. The simultaneous transformation of the harvester, a carnivorous butterfly, from unstitched to completely sewn as the story progresses subtly symbolizes the impact of the desire for revenge. The natural traits of the

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<sup>523</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, p. 268

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid*, 280

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid*, 284

harvester butterfly make it suitable to represent the pain that cuts through flesh, but it must not be forgotten that it is the larva that is carnivorous and its feeding on woolly aphids results in a cocoon being spun and the larva's metamorphoses. The product, the thread, is not only a seamstress' tool, but also an allusion to storytelling as *T50YS* attempts to develop its themes through illustrations sewn on paper, and therefore, spin a tale literally. This innovative experiment with the medium may be justified by the backward transformation of the undone butterfly to a sewn one at the end of the book. The butterfly is re-sewn as the story progresses. In other words, a butterfly is woven in each retelling of the story. While the shape, which signifies the theme of revenge in this book, does not really change, the thread, the color and the texture are chosen by the narrators. That may be the reason why the colors of the complete harvester on page 287 correspond to the autumnal-colored quotation marks used to distinguish the five narrators whose account of the event create an interwoven texture. The very last quotation marks that end the story confirm this understanding. The pair of inverted commas appear in violet<sup>526</sup> and in a much bigger font. More importantly they are sewn. These quotations directly join the text and the illustrations. The stitched illustrations carry the story just as the embroidered pages contain the text which is an entwined web of thread.

### **V. 3.1.2 The sword that can even kill an idea**

While the focus on the Harvester butterfly uncovers a layer of meaning in *T50YS*, some questions remain unanswered in the previous part. One may refer to seemingly supernatural elements of the story as a justification for the invisible sword, the amputee blade-smith and the impossibility of celebrating a fiftieth champagne birthday. However, a closer reading of the text shows how the unconventional orthography activates the hidden potential of words and leads the readers to a new understanding of the novella. The iBooks version of *The Fifty Year Sword* has a

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<sup>526</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword* avoids using closing quotation marks except on page 102 in The Forest of Falling notes and at the end of the story. Both closing marks appear in violet which is strange in this Halloween-colored book. However, violet in *Only Revolutions* was used for the creep, the character who in some interpretations represents the author himself.

great impact in proving this theory. This section will concentrate on Danielewski's innovative usage of words to explore the potential of the printed text as well as the digital medium in order to reveal the hypertextual attributes of *T50YS*.

While revenge and horror can be considered as the central themes of *The Fifty Year Sword*, it cannot be ignored that like all the books that Danielewski has written so far, the process of reading and writing, as well as the unexplored potential of paper, and the medium of print, are of great significance in understanding the book. His creative usage of color and layout in *House of Leaves* and *Only Revolutions* raises expectations for extraordinary novelties in *T50YS*. The book has been overlooked in comparison to its prominent predecessors since the colored quotation marks which replace and distinguish the narrators, and the stitched illustrations are not as revolutionary as the layout of *House of Leaves* or the palindromic *Only Revolutions*. The usage of color has been already introduced in *House of Leaves* and the playfully protean orthography is a continuation of *Only Revolutions*. Thus the understated assiduousness in diction and the study of words as the basic elements of writing may have gone unnoticed in most readings. In this book, Danielewski focuses on words and their potential impact on our interpretation. In this section, I would go so far as to say that words, either written or spoken, are one of the focal points and the key to a new reading of the book. Moreover, the study of the words and their potential links in both the printed book and the digital iBook provides another proof for the medium-consciousness of the book and how it relies on its readers to make sense of this non-linear story presented in a linear fashion.

The text of *The Fifty Year Sword* benefits from several techniques to remind the readers that the way a word is read can reduce or add to its meaning. One of the most common techniques is to write the word not as it is spelt, but as it is pronounced. The strange spelling of "consecawence" on page 30 is a good example.<sup>527</sup> The unusual spelling helps the readers develop theories about the

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<sup>527</sup> "“Here then was another consecawence / of Belinda Kite's stolen times with Pravat.”  
*The Fifty Year Sword*, 30



character or even the setting. Moreover, such words make the reader pause, re-read and even pronounce the word. Either to draw attention to the significance of “consequence” in this context, or to lay the groundwork for possible interpretations, this simple technique trains the audience to pay attention to the spelling and the potential words within words.

*T50YS* makes a single word out of several. The combination that usually attracts attention because of its unfamiliar look, hinders the process of reading and makes the readers pause to solve the puzzle. The word “spustuttersobbed” in “ “ ‘such a hateful whore,’ / the woman sputstuttersobbed to Chintana, / “to no one / in particular,”<sup>528</sup> for example, makes the readers hesitate and re-read the word in order to untangle the constituents. While the words “stutter” and “sobbed” are clear, it may take a moment to decipher the “spu.” Being aware of the context, the reader may realize that the word is a disguised version of “spurt” and refers to the woman’s angry outburst. However, the word may be read, and in consequence sound, “spot” at the first reading and confirm that the text may open itself to new layers of meaning if read aloud. That may be the reason why the oral presentations of *T50YS* in the form of shadow theater directed by Mark Z. Danielewski himself have been very helpful in shedding some light on the hidden meanings of the story.<sup>529</sup> In either case, when reaching this combination, the readers will have to “spurt” the word while at the same time, the enormity of the made-up verb that hosts three makes them “stutter.” Additionally, the pronunciation of all the added syllables will create an effect very similar to “sobbing.” What is more, this simple trick will help the readers characterize the anonymous woman whose rage against Belinda is made palpable by a combination of verbs.

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<sup>528</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 62

<sup>529</sup> Hartley, Erik, *Mark Z. Danielewski's The Fifty Year Sword (with Shadows) Part 1 of 6*, Youtube. Perf. Christine Marie, Jeaneal Gunning, Claire Kohne, Rachel Mestrovich, Paul Turbiak, Drew Tacchino. Conducted by Mark Z Danielewski, mzdinfo, 6 November, 2010. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j6-CwyTBnTI>>

The other remarkable example is The Man With No Arms' "pupoolless eyes."<sup>530</sup> The word can be indeed read as a mispronunciation of "populous" that may imply that The Man With No Arms' eyes have witnessed many people, like the Story Teller, in search of deadly weapons. This reading contributes to his portrayal as a hermit or a wise man. Interestingly, this section follows the Story Teller's descent from The Mountain of Manyone Paths where he himself and his solitude multiplied. However, since the adjective modifies the noun "eyes," the readers may naturally turn the word into pupil-less, and take it as a reference to the blindness of The Man With No Arms. Moreover, if we extract the first syllable, "pu," the word can be read "pool-less" and refer to the dry eyes of The Man With No Arms. This interpretation complies with the previous reading of the story as a revenge tale and The Man With No Arms as the last stage of vengeance. The lack of tears may imply the sorrow that caused his pain and resulted in his cruelty and heartless desire to be an accomplice in the infliction of pain.

The mentioned compounds train the readers to look for words within words and even imagine the words that may not be there. For instance, when reading " "maybe Mose has only implisghed the pleasure of / "these five,"<sup>531</sup> the readers can easily spot the words "implied" and "sighed." Additionally, the readers may think of "impish," "implicit," "implicate" and even "lied." Each word bestows a new attribute upon Mose Dettledown and opens the passage to new interpretations. Some of the misspelled words such as "accepatate" seem to be designed for the readers to unveil the concealed word within. "Shimle," for instance, in " "Force even a smirk she hoped could / serve, temporarily at least, as a not so / scored and "hearhunted a "shimile,"<sup>532</sup> hides a "smile" and "simile" while "hearhunted" conceals "heart," "earth," and "hunt" in the word. Trained Danielewski readers can be certain of the connection between the exposed words and the story and that the text will submit to new interpretations in future readings. It is as if each word

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<sup>530</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 150

<sup>531</sup> *Ibid*, 38

<sup>532</sup> *Ibid*, 14

creates an aperture which unlocks new interpretations. No wonder that the hard cover and dust jacket of the book are covered in holes. The words activated within words leave readers no choice but to put the pieces together and pick and choose if they intend to make sense of these alleged code words. The tension created by these seemingly haphazard yet guided readings encourage the readers to make links among various parts of the text and develop new theories, just like a digital hypertext reader. This strive for meaning is the reason why the heated discussion in MZD forums never ends.

The stitched illustrations of the printed book and the kinetic illustrations of the iBook contribute to the process of reader-training visually. The illustrations of the printed book sometimes pass through the words and in accordance with the themes of separation and connection that run through the story, break a word apart to produce several new ones. This impact is at its peak in the Forest of Falling Notes and the two opening where Belinda strikes herself using the invisible blade. The split in words in the Forest of Falling Notes serves the development of the story. As the Story Teller talks about the enchanted forest where “sounds could not hold / “ “together. / “ “Like pearls on a snapped / “ “silk / thread, they / “ “scattered wildly upon / “ “ the ground,” the illustrations start to creep little by little into the text in order to

help the readers visualize that in the Forest of Falling Notes, “all the sound of all “ “ the | world there w | as “ “ con | st | antly “ “ se | vered (Figure V. 3.1.2.P.1). The running thread cuts the words into unfamiliar bits and provides us with one of the first instances in which the separated bits hold no meaning inside. Moreover, the bits of words hinder the reading and help the reader go through the same experience as the Story Teller whose

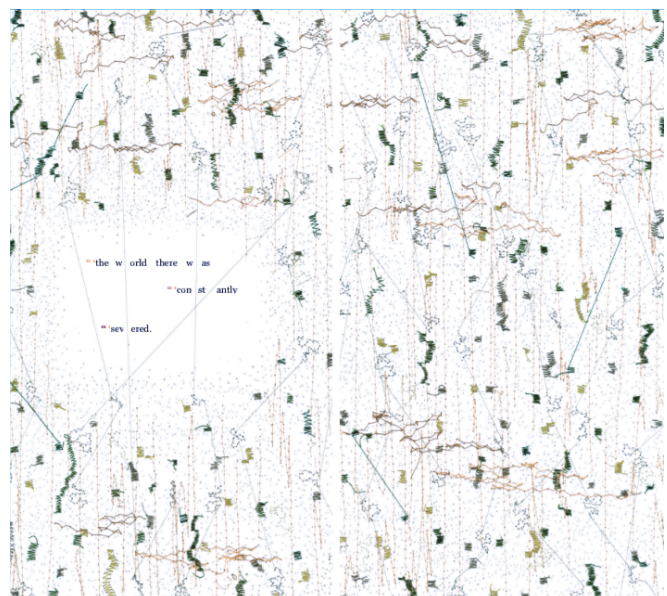


Figure V. 3.1.2.P.1  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp. 112-113

song in the Forest of Falling Notes has been described as “ “a series of clucks, trills, sputters, and odd clicks, / caught in / “whistles in the back of his / throat.”<sup>533</sup> If the readers try to read the sentences aloud the way they are, the produced effect is very similar to the Story Teller’s description.

The illustrations create the same impact in the openings in which Belinda Kite stabs her own body using the invisible blade. While it may look like a simple visual means to imitate Belinda’s criss-cross and haphazard hand movements, a closer look demonstrates that some of the strokes have cut the words into new ones and even helped foreshadow the ending. In the second opening, for instance, the slits separate the prefixes of negation and create the opposite impact. While Belinda slashes at her own body, the wounds and cuts will not appear till the twelfth strike of midnight. Thus the visible incisions make the words such as “uncut”, and “untouched” imply the opposite meaning and prepare the readers for the grand finale.



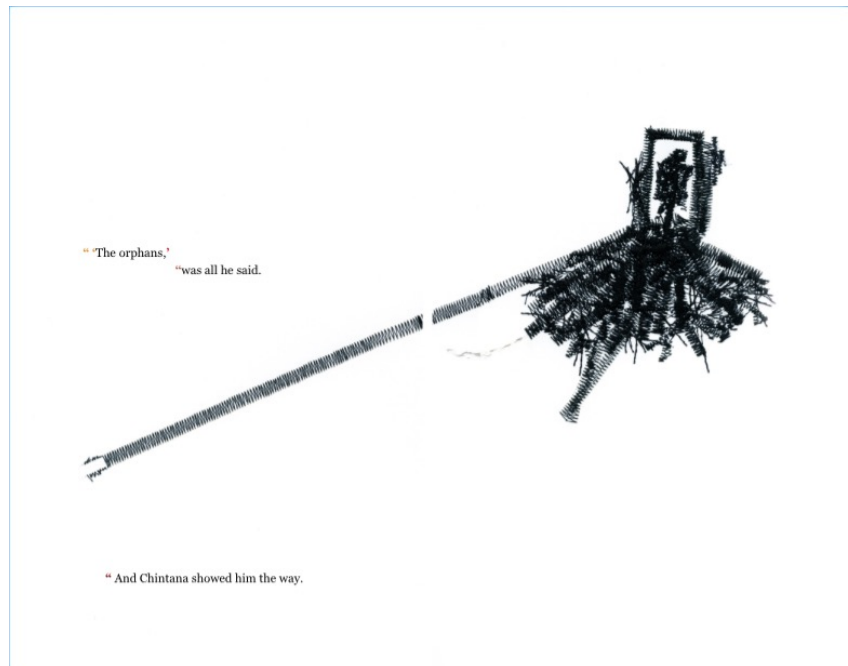
Figure V.3.1.2.P.2  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp. 252-253

The iBook also emphasizes the dynamic potential of words by animating them. *The Fifty Year Old Sword*’s digital book accomplishes two major goals. It intensifies the eerie atmosphere of the story for the readers and uses the medium to develop one of the significant themes of the novels: the unexplored potential of words. The first goal is accomplished by adding bits of sound and music and animating the illustrations. The accompanying music creates a ghastly impact, especially when

<sup>533</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 102

the Story Teller reaches peculiar places such as The Valley of Salt and The Forest of Falling Notes or when supernatural elements are involved, the entrance of the Story Teller, for instance.

Figure V.3.1.2.P.3  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 252-253



Danielewski also benefits from the new possibilities the digital medium provides. The illustrations of the iBook are the same as the printed book, but they appear when and at the pace the author has planned. The Story Teller's entrance, for example, is accompanied by disturbing music. But it is the darkness that is slowly approaching the text that makes his entrance memorable. In the iBook, the last sentence appears after the darkness runs its course. The slow emergence of the words after the mesmerizing spread of the dark line slows down the reading and makes the readers/audience feel Chintana's momentary paralysis and passivity when she encounters the spirit of vengeance. The words in The Valley of Salt, where shadows leave charcoal smudges behind, are illegible. They flash for a fraction of a second and then are shrouded again. Even though this effect hinders reading and forces the readers to turn over the pages digitally to read the whole text, the produced frustration and misted understanding make us empathize with the Story Teller. The iBook is filled with such effects. The Harvester butterflies that punctuate the text appear out of nowhere and are sewn slowly as the readers read the corresponding text. The candles start to burn. The wind reveals the lines that we later identify with the lashes of The Man with No Arms. The creak of the

box being opened contributes to the frightening effect of the darkness inside that moves on screen and inspires shapes in the readers' imagination. The blood stains appear on the white page after the text announces the white snow being stained by Belinda's blood. In short, the iBook appeals to all the sensorial captors to re-create an unforgettable experience the same way the narrators describe it. However, what makes the digital effects important to my discussion is how the iBook animates the words to point out their flexibility and possibly lead to less explored themes.

The iBook provides the best medium to present the Forest of Falling Notes (p. 100). At the exact moment when the Story Teller steps into the forest, the letters of the Forest of Falling Notes begin to fall and in a matter of seconds, the phrase "The Forest of Falling Notes" disappears. The

readers who are already familiar with the tricks and games that the book plays, immediately recognize the possibility to look for new words which become the basis of new interpretations. This opening prepares the readers for the jumbled letters on pages 104 and 105 which spin, grow and shrink. Each movement makes new words recognizable depending on the readers' mindset. This is one of the major differences between the printed and the

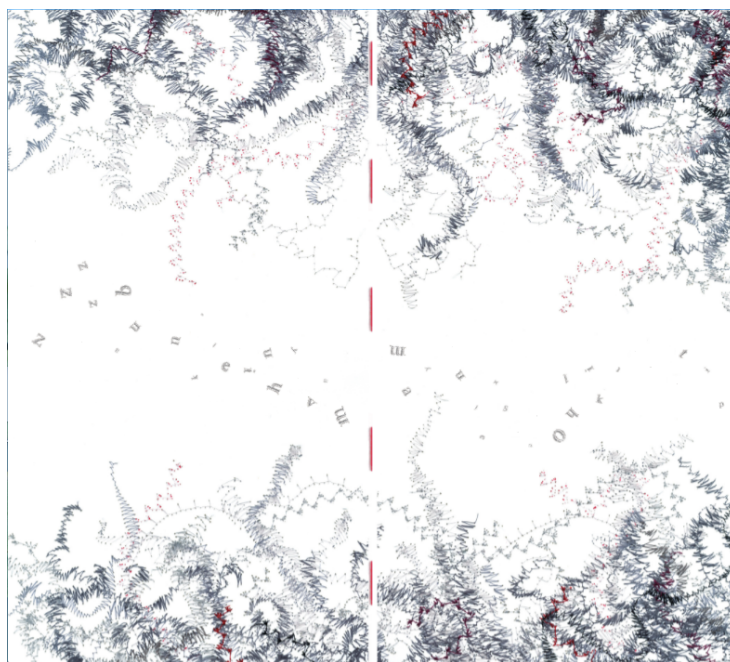


Figure V. 3.1.2.P4  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 104-105

digital version. The letters in the printed book are fixed, and while they point out the Story Teller's itinerary from left to right in order to leave the forest behind, there are a limited number of words that can be recognized if the readers do not take initiatives and make words out of the available letters. The last part of the story is concluded with violet ending quotations in a bigger font and the

Story Teller's trail begins with several zs (Danielewski's signature) and followed by the letters that shape the word "bonus." This leads us to believe that deciphering this part may provide the readers with a clue to understanding the novel. Thus, the letters have usually been read in order and put together from left to right. The iBook depiction of this opening, on the other hand, focuses on the depiction of the Forest of Falling Notes, and the Story Teller's description of how familiar sounds turn into strange bits of cricks and cracks as the letters spin and create optical illusions; "m"s may be mistaken for "w"s, and "n"s for "u"s. Sometimes "u"s and "n"s look suspiciously like "o"s if the letter spins too fast. The familiar strangeness of the letters makes us believe that we are in The Forest of Falling Notes.

The peculiar experience created by the mentioned opening in the iBook becomes of great assistance in understanding the word "hoomed" in the following page. Before this opening, the Story Teller grinned at Chintana and the children's surprised reaction to his whistle. The last line reads "he grinned weirdly and before — ”" and the book picks up the story after the opening "— stopping / "even hoomed." While the readers can guess that the word is a distorted version of "hummed," it does not follow any of the priorly discussed rules set by the novella. What is even more strange is that the unfinished sentence is concluded by ending quotation marks, and uncharacteristically large and violet ones. As mentioned beforehand, the end quotations appear two times in *T50YS*: once here and once at the end of the book. The word "hoomed" which is dragged towards the outside of the forest and indicates the Story Teller's departure in the iBook version will be helpful to justify these irregularities in both books (**Figures V. 3.1.2.P.4** and **V.3.1.2.P.5**). First, the Story Teller in the present time hums as he did back in the forest. This action of humming makes a temporal connection between the past and the present. The ending quotation marks show the beginning of a flashback. The cacophonous sounds that surprise Chintana and the children take the Story Teller back into the forest. So the dragged word indicates the return to the present time. While the ending quotation mark shows the move towards a hypodiegetic narrative, the presence of

the Story Teller in both levels is emphasized by his humming, the strange sound of which is indicated by the distorted spelling of the word. Moreover, when talking about The Valley of Salt, the Story Teller had mentioned that perhaps he and his audience were still in that valley in the present time (p.92). The superimposition of the past humming and the present humming may underline the temporal confusion in the Story Teller's mind. Secondly, the spinning letters in the iBook and the optical illusion they create hint at the misspelling that complies with the description

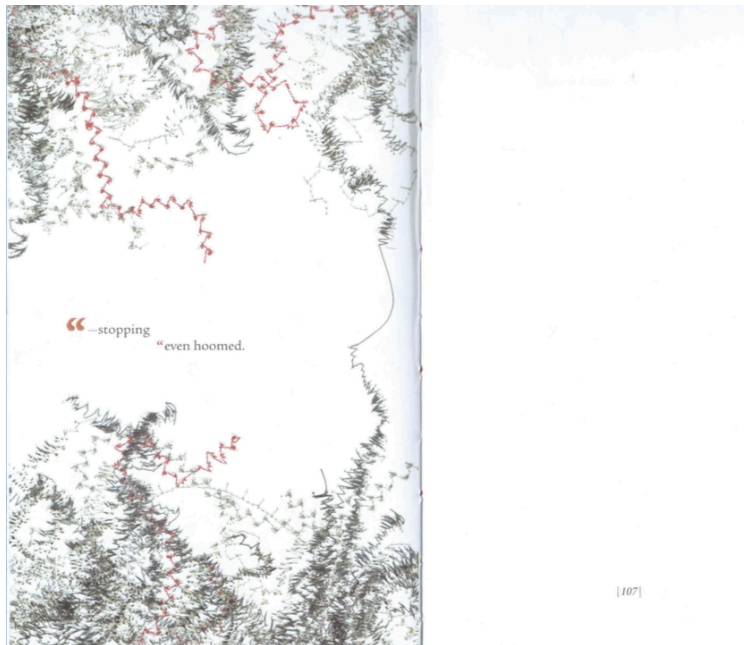


Figure V. 3.1.2.P.5  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
The printed book  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 106-107

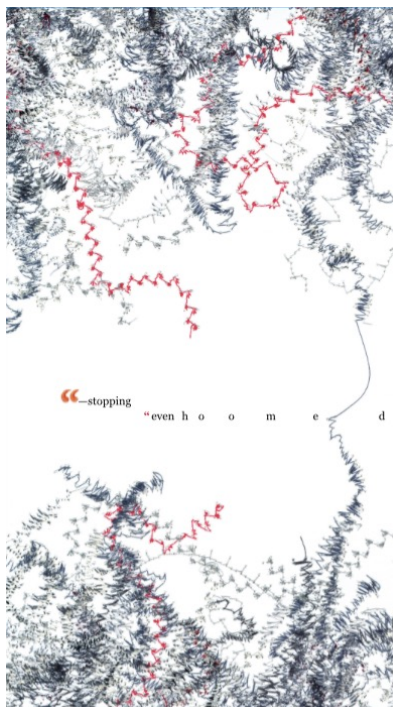


Figure V. 3.1.2.P.6  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
The iBook  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 106-107



of the forest where sounds cannot hold. The missing “m” may have fallen as the Story Teller pronounced it. The readers, who have just watched the spinning “n”s and “u”s turn into “o”s in front of their eyes in the last opening, will easily accept the replacement of “u” with “o”s in the word “hoomed.” To sum up, the word “hoomed” instead of “hummed” gives the readers an idea about the forest and the Story Teller’s peculiar whistle which left Chintana and the children puzzled. Additionally, this curious word prepares the readers for studying the words attentively specially where the illustrations and the text intersect and create new words.

*T50YS*’s concentration on words is too conspicuous to be ignored. So what purpose will such thorough study of words serve? At this point, I would like to raise the question about the sword and how the book’s scrupulous study of words is a key concept in understanding the nature of the sword, The Man With No Arms and Belinda’s impossible champagne birthday. The readers who notice the flexibility of the words

in this book, will soon find out that “sword” is an anagram for “words.” The most obvious clue appears on page 156 during the Story Teller’s first encounter with The Man With No Arms. The Story Teller’s response to The Man With No Arm’s statement that “*You have come for one of my swords*”

”<sup>534</sup> is cut by the thread from the illustrations. The answer reads “

‘And I again nodded | though / I

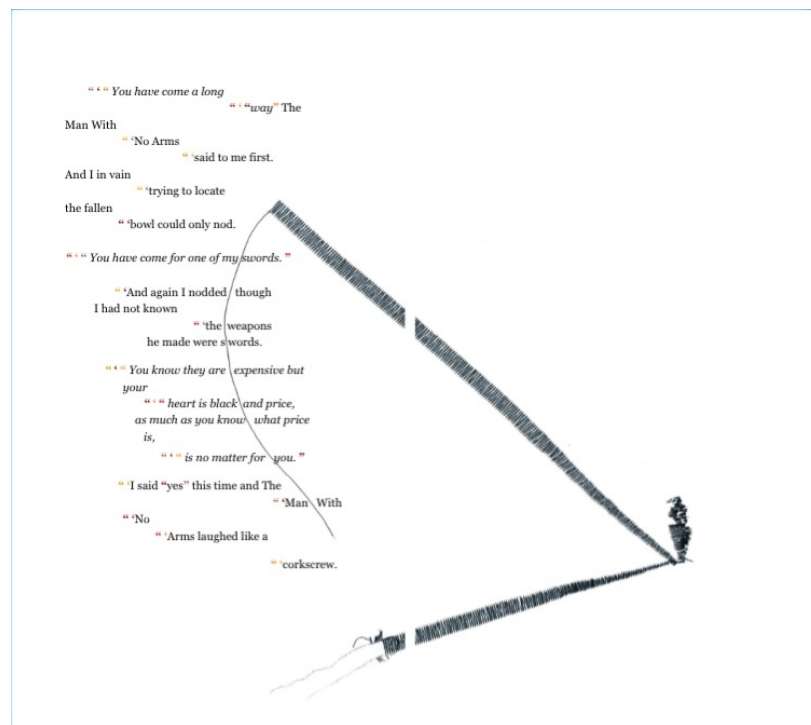


Figure V. 3.1.2.P.7  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp. 156-157

<sup>534</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, p.156

had not known / “ ‘ the | weapons /he made were s | words.”<sup>535</sup> This small detail, which may be overlooked easily on the first reading due to the expectations The Man With No Arms’ statement has raised, may justify some of the mysteries of the novella that would be labelled as supernatural otherwise.

Danielewski has provided his readers with many clues in The Man With No Arm’s speech and attributes to reach the conclusion that his swords are, in fact, words. The Man With No Arms is an amputee. The few times that the readers witness him carry out a task, he uses his long violet lashes — the color that is associated with the writer in certain readings of Danielewski’s works — as if the strokes animate things or magically fulfill his wishes. His God-like power to command things into being leaves no need for arms to forge weapons. His spoken word will suffice. His words make swords. He spreads his words among the people who, in turn, use them in various ways. Therefore, The Man With No Arms cannot really be held responsible for how the weapons he has made will be used. The danger of the weapons lies with the person who wields them, not with the maker. That may be the reason why the Story Teller calls him The Man With No Harms in his return journey.

The Story Teller describes the swords employing unusual similes: straight like the sea’s tide, thin like the breath of a June dew, waved like heat off an August noon.<sup>536</sup> He adds that the milky white blades were cold and glossy like a fog creeping low across a morning before a funeral.<sup>537</sup> The Man With No Arms Claims that his swords cut every time and explains why they are special: “*“This one took me three winters to make. / “ “ “It kills the taste / of salt. The one next to it kills the smell of “ “ “Wild / Lupine, “ “ “Blackburry Lily and lush Evening / “ “ “Primrose. There [...] “that one kills the color green.”*”<sup>538</sup> Such descriptions, alongside the invisibility of the blade that give the

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<sup>535</sup> The bold lines indicate the parts where the illustrations penetrate the words.

<sup>536</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 166.

<sup>537</sup> *Ibid*, 168

<sup>538</sup> *Ibid*, 172

swords a supernatural aspect on first reading, can be justified as the mystifying power of words. Extremely influential if used in the right context, words have the power to hurt, scar and even destroy lives, although the impact may not be immediately visible just as the sword blades made by The Man With No Arms cannot be seen. If “sword” is replaced with “word” in The Man With No Arm’s description of the weapons he manufactures, the quotation, which also appears on the dust jacket, will sum up this point: “One sword will kill / “ “ “a season. One will kill a country. One I’m making now / “ “ “will even kill an idea.” ”<sup>539</sup>

In addition to the far-fetched descriptions, the illustrations show the stitched sheaths for swords whose blades are cuts on paper, as if the whetted blades have assaulted the page. The Man With No Arms confesses that he could not guarantee that the swords would kill each time, but it would definitely cut deep and hurt, and he asserts that “ “*You can never / “ “ “see / “ “ “the / “ “ “blade.”* ”<sup>540</sup> The stitched swords and words are analogous in the sense that the letters and handles appear on paper, but the impact of both depends on the wielder, the speaker, the writer. The illustrations provide a visual simile. The handles, like the letters, run across the blank page, but the impact is like the cuts which mar the page to represent blades, irrefutable, yet invisible. However, The Man With No Arms confirms that the swords / words will not produce the desired impact unless wielded by the right person. According to him, seekers will finally find the weapon made for them. The Story Teller’s reaction

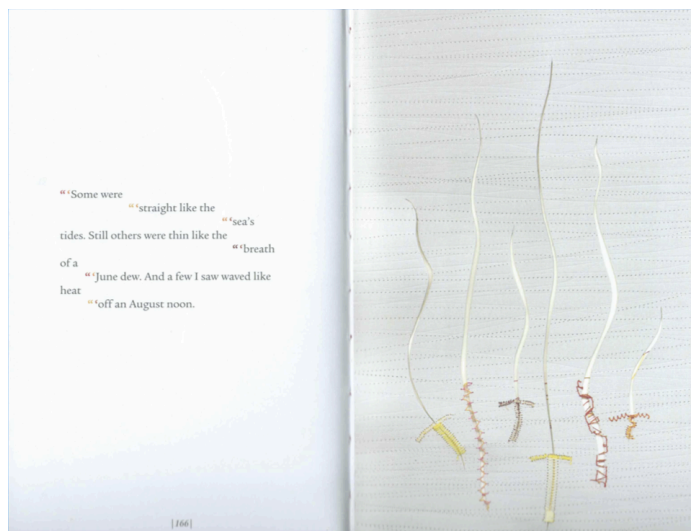


Figure V. 3.1.2.P.8  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp. 166-167

<sup>539</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 194

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid*, 182

when he holds his sword for the first time confirms The Man With No Arms' claim: " " "Your sword?" His violet lashes / twitched / " "slyly. / " " I could not object. I knew / " "when the handle melted beneath my fingers and the blade / shivered / " "familiarily along my arm and / into my / " "past."<sup>541</sup> The mention of "past" is interesting in the Story Teller's words since the urge to search for a weapon and inflict pain possibly finds its roots in a hurtful past experience. The Man With No Arms also warns the Story Teller about failure and the fact that he will vanish like the blade he wields should a wound ever fail.<sup>542</sup> When the Story Teller fails to strike the children and the sword falls into the hands of Belinda, he vanishes as The Man With No Arms has predicted. But this event raises one question: is it a coincidence that Belinda takes hold of the fifty year sword on her fiftieth birthday? Was the sword meant for her or the orphans?

Belinda's champagne birthday<sup>543</sup> is one of the significant events of the *T50YS*. While neither Chintana, nor the other guests have a high opinion of Belinda Kite, they are all invited to the joyous event which is to take place at the twelfth stroke of midnight outside of the house "because Belinda claimed to adore the snow."<sup>544</sup> Since the readers already know that the story takes place on a Halloween night, the references to Belinda's champagne birthday seem odd. Even if the date were not 31 October, it would be impossible to have a champagne birthday at fifty since none of the months have more than 31 days. It is noteworthy that the champagne birthday was mentioned by neither Belinda, nor the other characters, but it is the unidentified narrators who inform the readers of Belinda's birthday. This fact makes the readers wonder whether the champagne birthday is a reference to the usual ceremony or an allusion to another anniversary, her affair with Pravat or Chintana's divorce for example. More importantly, is there a connection between her fiftieth birthday and the fifty year sword?

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<sup>541</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 198

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid*, 198

<sup>543</sup> The event of reaching the age of one's birth day is usually referred to as champagne birthday. So the champagne birthday ranges from 1 to 31.

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid*, 262

Belinda's reputation as an arrogant home-wrecker aside, she is known to have “the sharpest tongue in East Texas.”<sup>545</sup> The narrators confide in the readers that she “could routinely / make anyone cry from Fort Worth to / Nacogdoches”<sup>546</sup> and she lashes out at Chintana the moment she arrives: “ “ ‘Well now if it isn’t Mzzz Lost and Let Down.’ ”<sup>547</sup> She shows no remorse for ruining Chintana’s marriage and just before she literally falls into pieces, she sneers at Chintana’s tear-stained face shamelessly. The constant references to her bitter tongue encourage the readers to compare her scathing words with piercing swords. Like the invisible blade of the fifty year sword, her derogatory remarks cut through flesh and leave invisible scars. So, is it an accident that she brings about her annihilation at her own hand? The Man With No Arms had also warned that the wielders of the swords made for other people pay with their lives before they touch the weapon.<sup>548</sup> But Belinda’s wounds appear at midnight after she has run the sword through her body. Is it possible that the sword was meant for her from the beginning? When alerting the Story Teller to the dangers of using the wrong sword, The Man With No Arms states that the swords were double-edged and could harm both parties at each receiving end.<sup>549</sup> Does the announcement imply that we pain ourselves through causing pain? And that there is no peace in infliction of pain as Chintana believes? Is this vicious circle the reason behind the reappearance of twelve violet lashes like the numbers on the clock face seconds before the striking of midnight?<sup>550</sup> Whatever the reason, it seems that years of hurting people by harsh words catch up with Belinda in the form of a sword. It is not a coincidence that she leaves not a single part of her body out when she starts stabbing into her own flesh. It is as if all the wounds she caused others through the years suddenly start to bleed, but on her own body. Moreover, the children’s presence seems to be a significant factor in the fulfilment of

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<sup>545</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 28

<sup>546</sup> *Ibid*, 30

<sup>547</sup> *Ibid*, 26

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid*, 194

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid*, 198

<sup>550</sup> *Ibid*, 266-267

Belinda's fate. It is noteworthy that the first and the last letter of the unusual names of the children who inadvertently cause Belinda's fatal injury spell "smite" and "fates."<sup>551</sup> Both words suggest a correlation between Belinda and the sword.

The presence of fates is not restricted to the children. The five unknown narrators who weave the tale are also significant in sealing Belinda's fate. Fates are often depicted as weavers of a tapestry which determines the destinies of humans. In this case, the story of the Story Teller's quest for the sword, on one hand, and *T50YS* told by five narrators, on the other hand, dictate Belinda's fate. The mention of the last stitch that may hold on page 282 may be a reference to snapping the thread of fate which leads to death. It is worth recalling that the embroidered Harvester butterfly is sewn as the story progresses. Since the butterfly has been associated with the soul in many cultures, the completion of the Harvester in the illustrations may suggest Belinda's death, the loss of the Story Teller's soul or the return of it in Chintana's case.

Although the previous discussion suggests that the association of swords with words foregrounds the destructive aspect of words, the experiments with the medium prove that the book supports the opposite idea. As shocking as the blood-stained cover and the detailed description of Belinda's mutilated body can be, *T50YS* is not Belinda's story, but Chintana's and her first step towards forgiveness and recovery. The Story Teller's fifty year sword or its story is what triggers Chintana's journey towards acceptance, understanding and possibly forgiveness and freedom of hatred. The Story Teller's sword cuts Belinda to pieces, but his words lead Chintana toward self-realization and help her connect to the people around her, even the ones who have wronged her. In other words, the Story Teller's tale restores Chintana's humanity. The Man With No Arms has already told us that the swords (words) are double-edged and have the ability to fulfill both

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<sup>551</sup> The children are called Tarff, Ezade, Iniedia, Sithis and Micit. Some readers believe that the names are anagrams or mispronunciation. The rearrangement of the first letters leads to "times" or "smite" and the last letters spell "fates" who weave our destiny in tapestry. The following phrases have been mentioned for each name: Sithis (See this!), India (Any idea?), Micit (Miss it?), and Ezade (Is it?)

<<http://forums.markzdanielewski.com/forum/the-fifty-year-sword/the-fifty-year-sword-aa/4143-five-voices-spoilers/page3>>

functions. It should not come as a surprise that the stitched locks of the sword's box look suspiciously like pencils. *The Fifty Year Sword* is a story, a word to be heard and spread.

Looking back, Danielewski has given us clear clues from the beginning. The first edition of *T50YS* came in a box with five latches implying the equivalence of the sword and the book. The first page of the book after the dedication decorated by the undone Harvester butterfly is adorned by a stitched handle. Turning the page over, the preface appears in the same form. While we may not realize it on first reading, we are marked by the invisible blade of the sword /words the moment we open the book. The unspoken word/ the invisible sword has passed on to the readers. The wielder will decide how to use the weapon.

*The Fifty Year Sword* exhibits its hypertextual features in a different way in comparison with its prominent predecessors. The book focuses on how non-linearity and medium-consciousness can stay dormant in a closed network until the right reader, who is able to find and use the concealed connections, comes along. The inherent non-linearity of the story has been exposed by simply using quotation marks that imply the shift among five different narrations. While the linear format of the book makes it difficult to consider *T50YS* a non-linear text, the colors and the succession of the quotation marks clearly state the fragmentary nature of the story at hand.

A comparison with the iBook shows how subtly the book manifests its medium-consciousness. While the medium in which the iBook appears enables the writer to add sound and kinetic effects in order to bring the story to life for the readers, the printed book achieves the same impact by using the basic elements of the medium of print: words, illustrations, colors, and

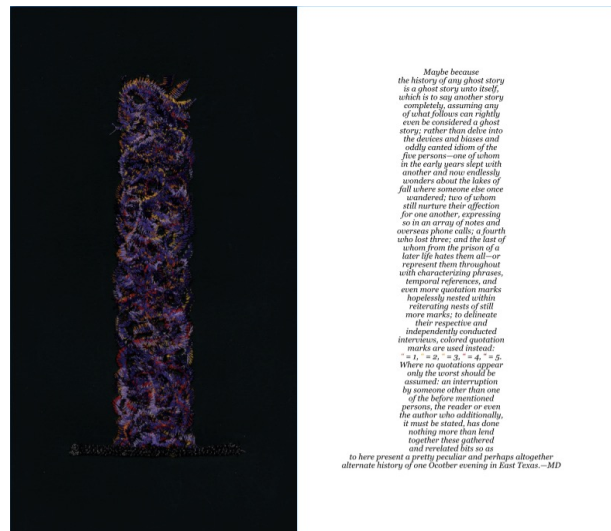


Figure V. 3.1.2.P.9  
*The Fifty Year Sword*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 9 and 10

typography. The book employs the illustrations in the development of its themes in the same way as a digital hypertext (*Patchwork Girl*) or even hypermedia (*Pieces of Herself*) treat their multimedia constituents. Moreover, the printed book finds ways to turn the words into creative centers of meaning. The tension created by the controversial orthography of a few words leads the audience towards possible assumptions and interpretations and results in the multiplication of the core text in the readers' minds. The presented readings which studied the significance of the Harvester butterfly and the sword are both examples of such processes. Thus, it is safe to say that what distinguishes *T50YS*, either the printed or the digital version, from the previous books and makes it an important example among closed hypertextual networks is its complete confidence in the readers, at the risk of the undetectability of some clues, themes and even events. This confidence in the readers, which is one of the requirements of a good hypertext, is manifested in its purest form in the last sentence of the book: "All I Take I Do All I Made I Lose All I Left I Let Another Take To Use ...."<sup>552</sup>

#### **V.4 Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*: the realization of hypertext fiction on paper**

Since its publication in 2000, Danielewski's debut novel has been praised by both the critics and the readers for its unconventional form and intriguing narrative. A true example of ergodic literature, *HoL* demonstrates how fiction may develop its themes and intensify the desired impact on the readers through the usage of layout and form. Natalie Aghoro suggests that "Danielewski's novel is as concerned with its own printed materiality as with the meditation of an uncanny plot."<sup>553</sup> The novel's obsession with the relation between the narrative and the medium is the reason why the book has been chosen to end the discussion about hypertexts on paper. Although *HoL* appears prior

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<sup>552</sup> *The Fifty Year Sword*, 286

<sup>553</sup> Aghoro, Natalie, "Textual Transformations: Experience, Mediation, and Reception in Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*." *Revolutionary Leaves: The Fiction of Mark Z. Danielewski*. Edited by Sascha Polmann. Cambridge Scholars Publishing. 2012. pp. 63-75.



to *Only Revolutions* (2006) and *The Fifty Year Sword* (exclusive edition in 2006, the world-wide edition in 2012) chronologically, the book challenges the medium of print to unveil the hidden potential of the familiar book to the point that it stands equal, if not superior, to its digital counterparts. While *OR* and *T50YS* each challenge the readers' opinion of books and the act of reading to some extent, *HoL* reconfigures almost every familiar aspect of books (even the good old title page) in order to create an epic hypertextual network for the readers to expand and explore. *HoL* benefits from the digital and the antecedent media as well as the readers' knowledge of them in order to create a book, which however controversial it might be, is highly faithful to its traditional medium. This section will study the hypertextual tendencies of *HoL* and focus on the creative usage of the familiar printed book to uncover non-linearity, medium-consciousness and user-centrality.

#### **V.4.1 Non-linearity in an otherwise linear format**

The successive appearance of words in a printed book can easily conceal non-linearity even if the content is presented in a discontinuous (Benjy's section in *The Sound and the Fury*) or digressive manner (Quentin Compson's section in the same book or Molly Bloom's Section in *Ulysses*). This quality, which can hardly be considered a flaw, has contributed to the illusion that printed fiction is mostly linear in comparison with digital hypertexts whose links expose the disturbance in the flow. The flux of the words may be responsible for the automatization of the process of reading and turn the readers into complete consumers. Paradoxically, this very quality catalyses the dissemination of the meaning since the appearance of the text hides the ruptures and increases the probability of interconnection and completion by trained readers. In brief, the very illusion of linearity enables the readers to connect and interpret as they wish. To this end, the readers need to find the cracks in the façade of the fiction to be able to make deductions.

Metafiction and hyperfiction both attempt to train the readers to find these points of discontinuity independently. Metafiction constantly interrupts the narrative and hypertext literally divides the text into pieces through links. *HoL* combines both methods to expose the non-linearity of the text visually while at the same time providing the readers with seemingly uninterrupted narrations. Similar to hypertexts, *HoL* visually ruptures the text using the familiar elements of the medium of print such as title page, layout, footnotes, font, etc. The visual indicators of discontinuity constantly draw attention to the text and underline the role of both readers and the medium in the creation of *HoL*. Following its metafictional predecessors, *HoL* presents a complicated combination of highly digressive, discontinuous and inconclusive narrations by utterly unreliable narrators. To intensify the impact, *HoL* weaves the elements of the medium of print into the story. This way, the medium becomes part of the story and *HoL* successfully maintains the familiar form of the book while exhibiting self-referential and hypertextual tendencies. Not only does the innovative usage of the components of the book train the readers, but it also permits them to choose which parts to read and consequently connect and form hypotheses.

*House of Leaves* is an intricate web of narrations, video and interview transcripts, journals, letters, critical analyses, lists, drawings and collages which each add to the story to some extent. Therefore, summarizing the book in a few lines is extremely reductive if not impossible. In brief, *HoL* presents two main narratives by Zampano and Johnny Truant. Johnny is a tattoo artist who finds a manuscript in the apartment he rents after the tenant's death. The manuscript, written by a blind man called Zampano, is a thorough academic study of a documentary film titled *The Navidson Record* about a house, which is bigger on the inside than the outside, and the impact of this discovery on the lives of the Navidson family and whoever gets involved in the exploration of the house. Johnny's unreliable and digressive account of the events, his autobiographical interjections, and the parallel stories of Johnny and Will Navidson, which are presented and analyzed by Zampano, underline the non-linearity of the narrative to some extent. *HoL* also relies on the

conventional elements of the book to reinforce the said non-linearity. The enrapturing employment of the same elements that have been used for long to conceal the non-linearity of the narrative in order to create the opposite impact is what makes *House of Leaves* a remarkable example of hypertext on paper. The book exhibits its hypertextual tendencies through the use of the familiar format of books. In reaching this goal, *HoL* reveals the immense and still unexplored potential of books.

In an attempt to put all the familiar elements of books into use, *HoL* begins the story on the front flap which claims that the book was first passed around as “a badly bundled heap of paper” among “an odd assortment of marginalized youth —musicians, tattoo artists, programmers, strippers, environmentalists and adrenalin junkies.”<sup>554</sup> This fictionalized history explains that *House of Leaves* finally attracted the attention of the older generation “who not only found themselves in those strangely arranged papers, but also discovered a way back into the lives of their estranged children” and claims that the book at hand is the first appearance of “this astonishing novel” in book form.<sup>555</sup> Moreover, the flap text confirms the authenticity of the story and the existence of Will Navidson. The title page that follows confirms the existence of an unofficial version of *HoL* by mentioning that the present book is a second edition. This little trivia finds great significance later in the novel when Johnny hears songs inspired by *House of Leaves* and Will Navidson himself takes a copy of the book into the labyrinthine hallway. What is more, the title page pushes Mark Z. Danielewski’s name to the left side of the opening to introduce Zampano as the writer of *House of Leaves*. The subtitles read “with introduction and notes by Johnny Truant.” The layout of the title page establishes Zampano as the writer and Johnny Truant as the editor or the first reader while at the same time the inscription of Danielewski’s name and the possessive “s” that follows it, confirm his authority and the fictionality of Zampano and Johnny. This arrangement seems confusing at

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<sup>554</sup> *House of Leaves*, the front flap

<sup>555</sup> *Ibid*

first, since the title page usually functions like the opening credits of a movie after which the fictitious world comes to life. However, the readers will soon find out that in *HoL*, reality and fiction intermingle to the point that Johnny's prophesy in the introduction will be fulfilled: "You will watch yourself dismantle every assurance you ever lived by"<sup>556</sup> including our knowledge of novels and books. The oscillation between reality and fiction in the title page sets the tone perfectly.

This playful treatment of the book continues into the copyright page, the table of content, foreword, the dedication page and the introduction which confirm and cancel the fictionality of *House of Leaves* and make the readers return to the previous pages and double check the data. The familiar editor's note on the copyright page, for example, questions the authenticity of the title page by emphasizing the fictionality of the people and the events. Then the "foreword" by "the editors" refers the readers back to the flap text and the title page by announcing that "the first edition of [House of Leaves](#) was privately distributed and did not contain Chapter 21, Appendix II, Appendix III or the Index." The editors even invite the readers to check the translated expressions and phrases and contact them in case the provided translations are not accurate.<sup>557</sup> While establishing what is real and what is fictional should not be of great significance in a book that bears "a novel" on the cover, it is the verisimilitude that causes immersion and in consequence, the illusion of linearity in the traditional novel. Metafiction shatters this illusion by constant interruptions and references to the process of fabrication. *HoL* benefits from the same approach, but instead of interrupting the narration by the intrusive fictionalized author, uses the medium to draw attention to the materiality of the book and the medium of print itself. The hesitation between reality and fiction causes an interrupted reading instead of an interrupted narrative. The raised doubts encourage returns, re-readings and revisions from the very beginning; the reading approach that becomes essential in making sense of *House of Leaves*.

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<sup>556</sup> *House of Leaves*, xxiii

<sup>557</sup> *Ibid*, Foreword

#### V.4.1.1 The introduction, an introductory conclusion

*HoL* establishes that the book contains fiction literally from cover to cover from the very beginning and demands the readers to be aware of the details, but the book follows the conventional format such as introduction, main text, footnotes and appendices. However, there is a small modification as the mentioned elements do not function as expected and are mainly incorporated into the narrative to develop the plot. Although it may take a couple of chapters (or even a second reading) for the readers to understand that everything in the book is part of the story and may be used to develop the plot, the readers will finally catch up with the book and realize that everything, even the iron-clad format of the book, is flexible and lends itself to rearrangements. True to the flap text, *HoL* is still “a badly bundled heap of paper” and can be read per request. Encouraging the readers to look for links and clues consciously in order to build a hypothesis, *HoL* calls upon the process that naturally takes place in readers’ minds which do not perceive a story in a linear fashion anyway. For instance, the opening of the introduction, “I still get nightmares,”<sup>558</sup> reinforces the puzzling impact of the dedication page which simply states “This is not for you.” Since the readers expect the introduction to be written by a real person whose comments encourage the readers to explore the book, they will find this petrifying description of the book, the repercussions of reading it and Johnny’s persistent pleas not to read the book quite strange and honestly intriguing. It seems that the main objective of this unconventional introduction is to warn and dissuade the readers from reading instead of introducing the writer or recommending the book. Johnny talks frantically about his useless pursuit of truth to the point that he has put his life in jeopardy. In a highly digressive confessional piece that approaches the stream of consciousness in some parts, Johnny holds the book responsible for his constant nightmares, his hallucinations and both the agoraphobia and claustrophobia that he has developed. He even implies that he may have committed a murder. He

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<sup>558</sup> *House of Leaves*. xi

explains how his obsession with Zampano's writing has changed his life for the worse and later predicts that the same will happen to the reader:

Slowly but surely, I grew more and more disoriented, increasingly more detached from the world, something sad and awful straining around the edge of my mouth, surfacing in my eyes. I stopped going out at night. I stopped going out. Nothing could distract me. I felt like I was losing control. Something terrible was going to happen. Eventually something terrible did happen.<sup>559</sup>

Deterring the reader from starting the book is not the only intention of this genre-defying introduction. Although Johnny manages to introduce the writer, the provided information does not shed any light on the subject. Johnny has never met Zampano himself, and it seems that his acquaintances do not know much about his life either. Thus, Zampano's life remains a mystery. No one even knows his real name. Moreover, Johnny does not abstain from telling the reader that to his knowledge, *The Navidson Record* does not even exist and the quoted commentaries by well-known experts are all bogus. He even quotes Zampano himself who advised his readers to "dismiss this enterprise at hand."<sup>560</sup> Nevertheless, Johnny arouses the readers' curiosity when he speaks of the allure of the book which would give them a glimpse into "the sight of darkness itself."<sup>561</sup> He knowingly informs us that we will soon realize how our perception of ourselves and everything around us has changed. We "might try scribbling in a journal, on a napkin, maybe even the margins of this book. That's when you'll discover you no longer trust the very walls you always took for granted."<sup>562</sup> We will be paranoid, frightened to go to sleep, always vigilant, and that "you'll watch yourself dismantle every assurance you ever lived by" to finally face what we have always dreaded: "the creature you truly are, the creature we all are, buried in the nameless black of a name."<sup>563</sup> In

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<sup>559</sup> *House of Leaves*, xviii

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid*, xix

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid*, xxi

<sup>562</sup> *Ibid*, xxiii

<sup>563</sup> *Ibid*, xxiii

brief, Johnny refers to the transformation and the self-realization which are the outcome of reading good literature.

Danielewski achieves two goals by having a character write the introduction. First, he once more establishes that everything in *House of Leaves* should be considered as part of the fiction. Secondly, the involvement of Johnny in the story, his distressed condition, restrained mention of most of the characters and the themes of the novel, along with his insistence on apprising the readers of the dangers of getting involved in this narrative function like a movie trailer. The intriguing introduction captivates the readers and gives them a taste of what will follow. To be able to include all the mentioned points, the introduction has been written in the form of a compilation of extracts the non-linearity of which not only reflects Johnny's state of mind, but also likens the text to the sequences of rapidly passing shots, to use film terminology one more time. While the extracts are undoubtedly related and impactful, they are not supposed to reveal the plot line. This effect would be difficult to avoid if the introduction were written in linear form.

While the disruption in the flow of the narrative is of great significance, what makes the introduction interesting for a study of formal non-linearity is how the novel reconstructs the concept. To open this discussion, it is important to know that Danielewski distinguishes various narrations using fonts and typefaces whose titles usually reveal something about either the narration or the narrator. *HoL* utilizes Times for Zampano's narration and Bookman for the editors' notes, for instance. Johnny's story appears in Courier, since he is supposedly the medium between the readers and Zampano. The variation of typefaces makes it possible for several narratives to be placed on the same page while avoiding confusion at the same time. The readers may follow the story of their choice when there is more than one narration per page. This method proves valuable in guiding the readers, as *HoL* is an amalgamation of various narratives. The font and typefaces find great significance in revealing that the introduction is in fact the end of Johnny's story and its placement may suggest a circular form.

Although the typeface does not change, Johnny's narration in "The Navidson Record" and the body of the book, appears in a smaller font in comparison to the introduction. The readers may dismiss this detail at first due to the fact that Johnny enters the story by commenting on Zampano's text and thus, his remarks first appear in the footnotes. As the story progresses, Zampano's writing triggers a reaction from Johnny whose story little by little takes over Zampano's and expands from mere notes, references and translations to Johnny's own life and his speculations. The footnotes expand to the point that it may take a few pages before the story returns to Zampano's story line. *HoL* keeps the font used for the footnotes consistent even when Johnny's story becomes the main narrative on the page. However, the font size considerably changes in chapter XXI, which was added in this edition according to the editors' note. This chapter consists of Johnny's notes solely, but the epigraph reminds the readers of Zampano's style.

Similar to the introduction, chapter XXI appears in fragments that seem to be part of a journal at first glance. The first extract was dated October 25, 1998 and the first few extracts appear chronologically. Then the dates go back and forth from October to May, July, September, October, November, August and end on October 31, 1998. The fact that the extracts have not been ordered chronologically hints at Johnny's confused mental status, but more importantly, forces the readers to find links among the fragments and re-order them. The book has even provided clues for the readers who may miss the point about the dates. Accustomed to reading journal entries, the readers may skip checking the dates and that is how *HoL* interrupts the automatic reading and sends its readers wandering not only through the extracts of chapter XXI, but the whole book to check if they remember what they have read correctly, or if the book is confusing them intentionally.

The first entry reads "Lude is dead."<sup>564</sup> This shocking declaration may find a confusing impact when a few pages later, Johnny wonders about Lude and if he is out of hospital.<sup>565</sup> Then, the

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<sup>564</sup> *House of Leaves*, 491

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid*, 509



first entry about Lude's death is repeated. Only this time, three dotted lines following the sentence imply lost pages. The readers may either take the repetition as a sign of Johnny's confusion and disorientation, or simply check the time stamp and find out that the entry bears the same date as the first one. These assumptions have led to two major interpretations. One claims that Zampano, the house and the whole tattoo parlor subplot are figments of Johnny's overactive imagination and justifies this reading by Johnny's constant references to his made-up stories. The other denies the existence of Zampano or Johnny and introduces Pelafina H. Lièvre, Johnny's institutionalized mother whose letters appear in Appendix II, E (and later in a separate volume titled *The Whalestoe Letters*) as the writer. This hypothesis is based on the similarities between Pelafina's style with both Johnny's and Zampano's, her mentions of Zampano despite the fact that Pelafina had died before Johnny got involved in Zampano's book and her family name, "lièvre," which means "hare" in French. Additionally, she signs her name P. which stands for page. The writer of the book, whoever she / he is, takes us to a wonderland the same way the white rabbit caused Alice's fall down the rabbit hole. Moreover, the Danielewski readers, who have been trained to find words within words, will find it fascinating that the word "lièvre" houses the word "livre" inside which means "book." The employment of the same font, Dante, for Pelafina's section and Mark Z. Danielewski's name on the cover also confirms the mentioned speculations to some extent.

The readers who will take the chronology into consideration may conclude that it is not Johnny who is repeating himself, but that the editors have misplaced the entries. The disorder in which the notes appear refers the readers back to the loose chapters of the allegedly first edition mentioned in the editor's note. What is more, the font size, the style of writing and the content remind the readers of the introduction. Having read the story, the readers get a clearer picture of death, murder, possession, nightmares, horror, mental instability, memory, Jamestown-Scotland Wharf Ferry, the house, *House of Leaves* and all the characters that Johnny had vaguely mentioned in the introduction. Returning to the entry, the readers will notice that the last entry of chapter XXI

and the introduction are dated October, 31, 1998. In other words, the introduction marks the beginning and the ending of Johnny's story. This circular movement may justify two ambiguities in *HoL*: the existence of a first edition prior to the publication of Johnny's edition on the internet and the fact that Navidson has a copy of *House of Leaves* with him in his last exploration.

After months of confining himself in his (or Zampano's) apartment, Johnny finally decides to leave the house before he gets evicted in chapter XVIII. He has stopped working in the tattoo shop to work on Zampano's manuscript; the very book that left him traumatized and paranoid and caused his panic attacks and endless nightmares. He has run out of money. The electricity and telephone have been cut and he has lost contact with the outside world. So it is surprising to both Johnny and the readers when he hears a song<sup>566</sup> about living at the end of a Five and a Half minute Hallway in a bar in Flagstaff, Arizona.<sup>567</sup> Upon his inquiry from the band, he is told the song was inspired by a book found on the internet. When the guitar player hands him "a big brick of tattered paper" and claims that "it'll change your life," Johnny with great astonishment, finds out that the title page says *House of Leaves* by Zampano, with introduction and notes by Johnny Truant. What is more, Johnny finds the band members avid readers of the book. They reveal that they had spent hours talking among themselves and with complete strangers about the book, the footnotes (even "the encoded appearance of Thamaris on page 387, something I'd transcribed without even detecting"<sup>568</sup>) and Johnny Truant's fate:

Apparently they wondered a lot about Johnny Truant. Had he made it to Virginia? Had he found the house? Did he ever get a good night's sleep? And most of all was he seeing anyone? Did he at long last find the woman who would love his ironies? Which shocked the

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<sup>566</sup> "5&½ Minute Hallway" is a song by Anne Danielewski, also known as Poe from her album *Haunted* which was written as a companion to her brother's *House of Leaves*. The album was mentioned on the back cover of the book.

<sup>567</sup> *House of Leaves*, 512.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid*, 514

hell out of me. I mean it takes some pretty impressive back-on-page-117 close-reading to catch that one.<sup>569</sup>

This limited mise en abyme raises questions about the first edition. How did the book find its way to the internet without Johnny's knowledge? Is he acknowledging his fictionality by holding a book in which he exists? The title of the "tattered paper" that Johnny receives from the band bears his name as the annotator. Furthermore, Zampano's writing, as appears in the table of content, is titled *The Navidson Record*. So *House of Leaves* must have been Johnny's choice. A study of the similarities between the introduction and chapter XXI may enable the readers to respond to the mentioned questions.

As priorly mentioned, both the introduction and the last chronological entry in chapter XXI are dated October 31, 1998. According to the editors' note, the chapter was added to the second edition — a minor detail that justifies why the musicians who had read *House of Leaves* wondered about Johnny's fate — and therefore, it can be considered as the last part of the book. In his last entry, Johnny mentions that he has just finished the introduction. This piece of information reveals that the introduction is neither a misplaced entry, nor the editors' choice. Johnny consciously wrote the introduction in the fragmentary style of chapter XXI and intended for his last entry to begin the book. Although Johnny has established himself as an extremely unreliable narrator multiple times, it is not coincidental that his last entry in the book cancels almost all the previous events. Johnny (or Danielewski to be exact) knows that the readers will most certainly finish the book before returning to the introduction. Thus, his last entry undermines the narrative in order to wipe the slate clean:

I just completed the intro when I heard them coming for me, a whole chorus, cursing my name, all those footfalls and then bang of their fists on my door.

I'm sure it's the clerk. I'm sure it's the police. I'm sure there are others. A host of others. Accusing me for what I have done.

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<sup>569</sup> *House of Leaves*, 514

The loaded guns lie on my bed.

What will I do?

There are no more guns. There are no more voices.

There is no one at my door.

There's not even a door anymore.

Like a child, I gather up the finished book in my arms and climb out the window

Memories soon follow.<sup>570</sup>

Memories will follow not only on Johnny's part, but also that of the readers whose perception of Johnny's story, the almost linear one in *HoL*, is being overturned rigorously. In the next five pages that mark the end of Johnny's narrative, he confirms the story about the doctors who cured him with a yellow pill although he had scolded the readers who believed that story a few pages before.<sup>571</sup> He confesses to the murder of the Gdansk man. Then remembers that Kyrie took him away in the Gdansk man's car, says that he has burned the book, states that his mother never tried to strangle him, and even questions his reading of Zampano's notes implying that he has projected his own fears and anxiety on to his understanding of the story:

There is something stronger here. Beyond my imagination. It terrifies me. But what is it? and why has it retained me? Wasn't darkness nothingness? Wasn't that Navidson's discovery? Wasn't it Zampano's? Or have I misconstrued it all? Missed the obvious, something still undiscovered waiting there deep within me, outside of me, powerful and extremely patient, unafraid to remain, even though it is and always has been free.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> *House of Leaves*, 515-516

<sup>571</sup> Johnny claims that he has met an old friend, a pediatrician, in Seattle (entry September 2, 1998). The said friend and his wife, who is a doctor too, take care of him. He claims to have improved physically and mentally in his entry of September 20. However, he rebukes the readers in the last entry of September for ignoring the details and believing him:

Are you fucking kidding me? Did you really think any of that was true? September 2 through September 28? I just made that all up. Right out of thin air. Wrote it in two hours. I don't have any friends who are doctors, let alone two friends who are doctors. You must have guessed that. At least the lack of expletives should have clued you in. A sure sign that something was amiss. (*House of Leaves*, 509)

<sup>572</sup> *House of Leaves*, 516

The readers who have found the similarities between the last entry of chapter XXI and the introduction may return to the introduction after reading this confusing summary and negation of the story and notice that the introduction is both the beginning and the ending of Johnny's narration. That is the reason why the introduction is a combination of all the events that will happen in *House of Leaves* because, paradoxically, they have already happened. Johnny forgets or at least doubts what has happened to him in chapter XXI so that he can end and start over in the introduction. Upon the second reading, the readers may recognize Johnny's extraordinary ability to recover most of the burned parts of Zampano's manuscript. Not only had he already read them, but he may have been the one who had burned them in parts. He wondered how the disfigurement happened in chapter XIII, the Holloway section:

Unfortunately I have no idea what stuff did the actual charring. It's way too copious for the cigarette tappings, and anyway Zampano didn't smoke. Another small mystery to muse over, if you like, or just forget, which I recommend. Though even I'm unable to follow my own advice, imagining instead grey ash floating down like snow everywhere, after the blast but still hours before that fabled avalanche of heat, the pyroclastic roar that will incinerate everything, even if for the time being—and there still is time . . . —it's just small flakes leisurely kissing away tiny bits of meaning, while high above, the eruption continues to black out the sun.

There's only one choice and the brave make it.

Fly from the path.<sup>573</sup>

Johnny may have not imagined the burning of the book, since his oxymoronic descriptions of an “avalanche of heat” and the snowflakes of ash that kiss “away tiny bits of meaning” and “black out the sun” bear a strange resemblance to his description of the burning book in his entry of October 31 in chapter XXI:

The book is burning. At last. A strange light scans each page, memorizing all of it even as each character twists into ash. At least the fire is warm, warming my hands, warming my face, parting the darkest waters of the deepest eye, even if at the same time it

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<sup>573</sup> *House of Leaves*, 323

cast long shadows on the world, the cost of any pyre, finally heated beyond recovery, shattered into specters of dust, stolen by the sky, flung to the sea and sand.

Had I meant to say memorializing?<sup>574</sup>

The image of “specters of ash, stolen by the sky” reminds the readers of “grey ash floating down like snow everywhere.” Johnny also refers to the darkness that covers the sun in both extracts. However, similar to the previous example, it seems that the images reflect each other in an odd mirror effect. In his vision of the burning book, the eruption of a “fabled avalanche of heat, the pyroclastic roar” that “black(s) out the sun” while the light emitted from the book in the second extract warms his body, but casts “shadows on the world.” Aside from the binary opposition of water and fire and the light that paradoxically leads to the darkening of the world in the second extract, the word “pyre” draws the readers’ attention. The choice of ash, pyre and specter implies a funeral. If we take “character” not only as the written symbols, but also as personages, the fire that warns Johnny’s hands and face also causes his death as “each character twists into ash.” If that is what he means when he states “there’s only one choice and the brave make it,” he may be discretely acknowledging his fictionality and his own annihilation at the end of the book. Moreover, the readings that introduce Johnny as the writer and Zampano as a figment of his overactive imagination comply with the mentioned interpretation and rationalize the existence of a copy of *HoL* in Navidson’s bag in the labyrinth section.

Navidson’s literal and figurative descent into darkness and the exploration of the labyrinth result in a dead-end. The architectural structures around him disappear and he finds himself surrounded by darkness: “he turns to go back, then finds the window has vanished along with the room. All that remains is the ashblack slab upon which he is standing, now apparently supported by nothing: darkness, below, above and of course darkness beyond.”<sup>575</sup> Navidson soon runs out of

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<sup>574</sup> *House of Leaves*, 518

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid*, 464

battery and is left with nothing but “the grotesque vision of absence.”<sup>576</sup> Time and space lose significance as reflected through the layout of this opening and Navidson attempts to divert his attention from the drastic situation with which he is dealing by taking refuge in reading. “[H]e turns his attention to the last possible activity, the only book in his possession: *House of Leaves*.” The emergence of the book that is seemingly being written, in the hands of the person the book is about strangely confirms the editors’ claim that the book had been uploaded on the internet and justifies the band’s awareness of *House of Leaves* when Johnny meets them. However, how is it chronologically possible for Navidson to read a book that is going to be written about him in the future? And more importantly, how was *House of Leaves* published with notes from Johnny when the original manuscript in his possession had not been even finished yet? The response to these questions proves the theory that considers the possibility of Johnny (or Pelafina) to be the real writer of *House of Leaves*.

Johnny has frequently demonstrated his talent for storytelling in his encounters with other characters.<sup>577</sup> In his confessional notes to the readers that find their way to Johnny’s story, he honestly states that he enjoys the intoxicating feeling of amusing an audience and walking the thin line between reality and fiction: “By now even Lude was hooked. They all were. The girls all engrossed and smiling and still shifting closer, as if maybe by touching me, they could find out for sure if I was for real. Lude knew it was pure crap but he had no clue where I was heading. To tell you the truth neither did I.”<sup>578</sup> Johnny later reveals that making up stories roots in his difficult time as a young boy in foster care and helped him deal with his mother’s mental illness, his father’s death, his hostile classmates and his violent foster parent.<sup>579</sup> Thus, it is plausible to assume Johnny

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<sup>576</sup> *House of Leaves*, 464

<sup>577</sup> Johnny and Lude’s attempt to impress the girls they meet in Pico is the first example of Johnny’s elaborate fictitious adventures. Completely aware of Johnny’s ability to arouse the audience’s attention, Lude usually challenges him and leaves him to run with the prompt and create an incredible story. (pp. 13-15)

<sup>578</sup> *House of Leaves*, 14

<sup>579</sup> *Ibid*, 324-327

may have beguiled us all. This point of view demotes Zampano's, and in consequence, Navidson's story to a diegetic level. If Navidson and Zampano were invented by Johnny, it would be logically possible for Navidson to read the book Johnny is writing about him. It is notable that *HoL* is essentially a novel about compiling and editing the notes about a fake movie. Therefore, the *mise en abyme*, the emphasis on the fictionality of the novel and the reference to the process of production all have a familiar ring. Such techniques are common in metafiction. The simple explanation of burning the book in Navidson's story may be Johnny's projection of his own thoughts and actions onto the story. However, considering the circular form of Johnny's narrative resulted from the integration of the introduction in the story and how the circle is completed in the introduction may lead to other interpretations.

As briefly mentioned, the layout of *HoL* has been designed to help the reader undergo the same experience as the characters. The text, as if alive, lengthens, leaps, crawls and contorts. The labyrinth that Navidson explores in chapter XX is created by words on the narrative level as well as the position of the words on the page. The readers feel the fallings, the floatings, the ascents and descents and the loss of direction that Navidson experiences. Thus, the sudden mention of the book in this section seems strange and if I dare say, out of place. In addition to this confusing detail, the readers will soon reach chapter XXI where Johnny also burns the manuscript. As previously stated, the second burning can be easily justified by the circular form of Johnny's story. Remembering Danielewski's fascination with words, their potential, their function and their symbolic significance makes it possible to respond to this new challenge *HoL* throws the readers' way. The readers cannot help noticing the similarities between their situation and Navidson's: both lost and disoriented in a labyrinth. The *mise en abyme* of the protagonist reading the book in which he appears and the fact that the readers are reading *House of Leaves* makes the readers pause and reflect on the situation. Unlike most metafiction in which the writer interrupts to remind the readers of the fictionality of the book, Danielewski draws attention to the book as a fictional and fabricated narrative by playfully



stating that Navidson's matches would not suffice to read the 736-page book. The exact calculations that each match burns in 12.1 seconds and if Navidson reads a page per minute, he would still come up 704 pages short. He goes on to mention that there is another reason for Navidson's slow progress: "As Navidson reports, he soon begins falling behind. Perhaps his reading slows or the paper burns unevenly or he has bungled the lightening of the next page. Or maybe the words in the book have been arranged in such a way as to make them practically impossible to read."<sup>580</sup> The burning pages of the book shed light on Navidson's last moments both literally and figuratively. On the one hand, Navidson's symbolic struggle to read a book with no hope to escape the labyrinth calms down his nerves and the burning pages brighten his gloomy surroundings. On the other hand, by burning the book in which he appears, he is accelerating his own end. Danielewski takes advantage of these two contrasting ideas and the impossibility of a smooth and soothing reading due to the challenging text (the mentioned quotation) to draw a comparison between the readers and Navidson. He underlines the similarities between the act of reading and burning the book:

Here then is one end: a final act of reading, a final act of consumption. And as the fire rapidly devours the paper, Navidson's eyes frantically sweep down over the text, keeping just ahead of the necessary immolation, until as he reaches the last few words, flames lick around his hands, ash peels off onto the surrounding emptiness, and then as the fire retreats, dimming, its light suddenly spent, the book is gone leaving nothing behind but invisible traces already dismantled in the dark.<sup>581</sup>

The parallel between two acts of burnings subtly connect Navidson and Johnny as readers. Indeed, the first time readers, who have not yet developed strange theories about Johnny or Pelafina as the writers of the book, identify with Johnny as the first reader of Zampano's manuscript. The comparison between Navidson and Johnny and their approach towards reading distinguishes between two types of readers: the ones who consume and the ones who consume and create. In the mentioned section, Navidson always falls behind and although it is the absurdity of the situation

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<sup>580</sup> *House of Leaves*, 467

<sup>581</sup> *Ibid*, 467

that determines his reactions, the book burns before Navidson gets to make sense of it. Johnny, on the other hand, keeps up with the book, fills the burned gaps, takes notes that finally composes a parallel narrative for the book and lets the book overturn his life. He burns the book and then resurrects the words. That may be the reason why Johnny's story was designed to be circular in contrast to Will Navidson's. Johnny represents the reader who re-reads, reconsiders his stance on different aspects of the book, dares to develop new theories and in Johnny's case, devotes his life to deciphering the secrets of the words. He adopts the roles of reader, critic, and finally co-writer. Johnny Truant consumes the book and is consumed by it and as a result, this ideal reader was given the honor to put his name on the title page. *House of Leaves* demands such erratic and creative readings and attempts to train such readers. A simple trick such as changing the function of the introduction from a simple preface to the beginning and the ending of the fiction would suffice for the readers who are willing to engage in this painfully pleasurable play with all the established concepts of reading. "And then the nightmare will begin."<sup>582</sup>

#### **V.4.1.2 The footnotes**

The footnotes in *HoL* find a new significance other than providing information on the main text. As with the introduction, *HoL* incorporates the footnotes in the story and reconfigures their role from the little notes at the bottom of the page to a new platform for the narrative. Moreover, Danielewski's usage of footnotes enables him to point out the inherent non-linearity of the text that would remain hidden otherwise. He accurately demonstrates that the act of reading involves the shift between the main text and the footnotes. The readers may prefer to follow the main text uninterrupted or pause to read the extra information provided by the footnotes and then return to the text. The movement between chunks of texts bears undeniable similarities with reading a

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<sup>582</sup> *House of Leaves*, xxiii

hypertext. Danielewski subtly benefits from this similarity to draw attention to the non-linearity of the narrative as well as displaying the potential of the footnotes in developing the plot.

The footnotes of *HoL* can be classified under three categories: footnotes written by Zampano, footnotes written by Johnny and footnotes written by the editors. The first and the third category will be studied briefly as they do not really contribute to the objective of this study. Johnny's footnotes, on the other hand, not only contribute to the discussion on non-linearity, but also add a new layer to the main story. The editor's footnotes provide the readers with the most generic function of footnotes. They either refer the readers to the appendices (footnotes 175 and 176) or provide information from the diegetic level. Footnote 174, for instance, explains that "for reasons entirely his own, Mr. Truant de-strike the last lines in footnote 176."<sup>583</sup> The editors' footnotes usually serve as a reminder to the readers that the book at hand is Johnny's compilation of Zampano's writing and may not be completely accurate. The fact that the editors, Johnny and Zampano each have their assigned fonts — unsurprisingly the editors' notes appear in Bookman — makes it easier for the readers to distinguish among the voices and shift among the narrations.

If we consider Zampano's academic study of *The Navidson's Record* as the main text of *HoL*, the footnotes written by Zampano himself can be considered as original footnotes. These footnotes rarely go beyond the common function of footnotes and usually provide extra information about the text. Some provide references for the quoted material and some elaborate on the points put forth in the argument (Zampano's explanation of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, p. 138). Some seem to be Zampano's notes to himself either for the material to be included or explained later or for the finalized draft to be published and some are the blank footnotes that he has forgotten to add (footnote 142). Most of these footnotes, such as Zampano's ideas on the myth of King Minos in footnote 123<sup>584</sup> and his note on "Documentary Detectives" in footnote 187,<sup>585</sup> have been struck

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<sup>583</sup> *House of Leaves*, 137.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid*, 110

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid*, 144

through and later included in the book by Johnny Truant who confesses that “struck passages indicate what Zampano tried to get rid of, but which I with a little bit of turpentine and a good old magnifying glass managed to resurrect.”<sup>586</sup> The turpentine passages, which may be responsible for the burned sections, do not come as a surprise to the reader since *HoL* can be considered a satirical piece on academic writing to some extent. Johnny as the scholar, reader, critic or editor attempts to resurrect the original manuscript, the ethereal core text, even at the cost of committing an intentional fallacy. His tendency to incorporate all Zampano’s notes and jottings into the text helps us study the strange layout of Zampano’s footnotes, the ones that appear from page 118 through page 148 in particular.

The layout of Zampano’s footnotes form some of the most dynamic texts of the novel where the writer’s intentions and the reader / editor / critic’s interpretations overlap and demonstrate how the final understanding of the text is formed. While the peculiar placement of Zampano’s text and footnotes may seem strange at first glance, the contribution of these bits and pieces exposes the non-linearity of the otherwise linear text and basically transforms it into a hypertext.

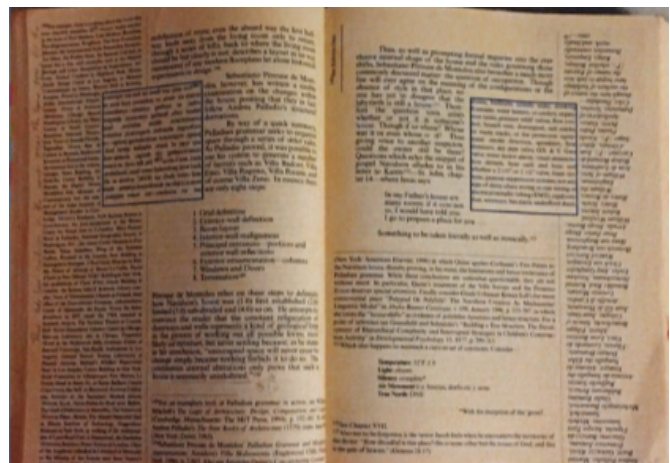


Figure V.4.1.2. P.1  
*House of Leaves*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp. 120-121

There are different explanations for the unusual layout other than parodying the academic writing.

The footnotes of the mentioned pages follow strange patterns. They are liable to appear anywhere on the page, at the bottom, at the top, on the sides, in the middle, in reverse or horizontal columns and in some instances, even upside down. Giving information is not the main objective of these footnotes. As readers soon realize, the provided information is correct, yet

<sup>586</sup> *House of Leaves*, 111

useless. Footnote 146 appears in the form of a column on the left side of the page 120 and runs on eight pages before abruptly ending in an em dash which is marked by an upside down 147. This footnote begins on the right side of the opening (page 135), runs backwards to page 120 and ends in footnote 148 which refers the readers to Exhibit One, a reminder to add the very same information to the text. However, footnote 146 contains nothing but a long list of architectural styles and footnote 147 offers an equally long list of buildings and architectural structures. In the mentioned span, a window appears which houses footnote 144 on page 119 and lists all possible building elements over 24 pages. To make it even more confusing, this window is transparent and the text, which appears on one side of the page, is demonstrated in reverse on the back, as if the readers are looking at it through a real window. The last sentence in this long footnote reads “Picture that. In your dreams”<sup>587</sup> and then the window goes blank on page 143 and black on page 144.

The unconventional footnotes, which ironically defy the definition reflected in their title, seem pointless. The readers will soon realize, these footnotes do not really contribute to the story. However, they follow two main goals: first, to create a labyrinth and second, to engage the readers. These footnotes appear in chapter IX whose epigraphs read “Here is the toil of the house, and the inextricable wandering,” “The house of difficult exit” and “difficult to enter.”<sup>588</sup> Zampano’s text begins with a strikethrough reference to the Minotaur and then follows the expedition led by Holloway Roberts, Jed Leeder and Wax Hook in Exploration #4 with the aim of finding answers for the following questions:

[...] the purpose of the vast space still continues to elude them. Is it merely an aberration of physics? Some kind of warp in space? Or just a topiary labyrinth on a much grander scale? Perhaps it serves a funereal purpose? Conceals a secret? Protects something? Imprisons or hides some kind of monster? Or, for the matter imprisons or hides an innocent? As the Holloway team soon discovers, answers to these questions are not exactly forthcoming.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>587</sup> *House of Leaves*, 141

<sup>588</sup> *Ibid*, 107

<sup>589</sup> *Ibid*, 111

As is the case in most hypertexts, the text usually benefits from the medium to create the same experience for the readers. The mentioned chapter is about the nature of the labyrinth and the fate of the explorers. Danielewski wants the readers to feel the confusion and the disorientation Holloway and his team experience during their descent into the profound darkness. The columns, rows and windows of words reflect the structure of the house and are, in fact, the elements of this complicated artifact. The uncommon layout of the footnotes creates an eerie labyrinth for the

readers. The circular movements that footnotes 146 and 147 impose reflect the futile attempt of the exploration team to find their way out. The window that opens into black blanks gives a literal understanding of what Holloway and his men face. The mobility of the text and the layout cause constant movements on the part of the readers and result in disorientation and loss of direction. As a

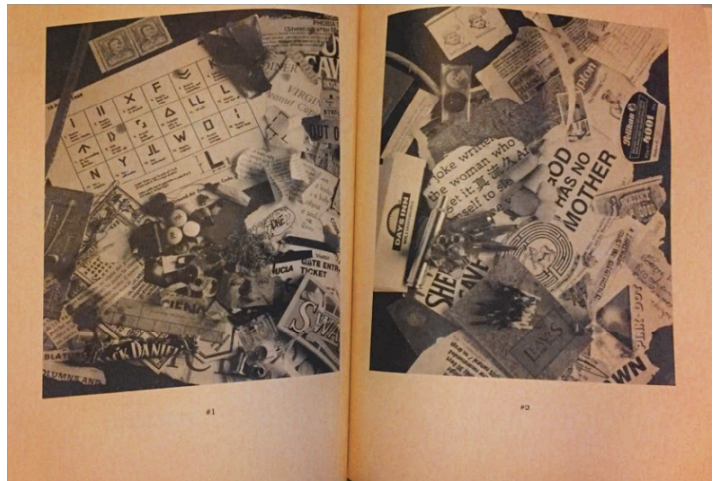


Figure V.4.1.2.P. 2  
*House of Leaves*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 582-583

consequence, the readers need to pay close attention not only to the content, but also to the formal irregularities in order to make sense of the text. Moreover, on the fictional level, we are never sure if the strange layout is the result of Zampano's careless writing, or whether Johnny has arranged the bits and pieces the way we see them, and the editors have respected his choice. The pictures in exhibit C, which reveal the state of Zampano's writing when Johnny received the manuscript, confirm that Johnny should take credit for the book at hand. Thus, what we receive as *House of Leaves* is Johnny's / the reader's understanding of pieces of the core text he has literally put together. It is Johnny's arrangement of the bits that shapes the book for him, his "house of leaves." The piece by piece rearrangement of the text is a common feature of reading.

Furthermore, the movement among different layers of the text ceaselessly interrupts the reading and sends the readers back and forth in the text. The incised pieces, which require an acute eye for detail to be deciphered and connected, constantly remind the reader of spinning the tale that makes their head spin. The fiction is quite literally building a “house of leaves” for the readers to explore, a labyrinthine structure which makes the readers wonder about the secrets the book conceals. Holloway’s team raises legitimate questions about the house. It is up to the readers to respond to them when wandering in this complicated network of texts.

The third and probably the most important function of footnotes in *HoL* is illustrated in Johnny’s remarks which radically alter the familiar function of footnotes. As mentioned before, *HoL* develops its story in two narratives: Zampano’s reading of *The Navidson’s record* and Johnny Truant’s reading of Zampano’s writing. While it seems at first that Johnny has adopted the role of the critic, Johnny’s designated space at the bottom of the page soon invades the main text as his story expands. Johnny does not limit his comments to Zampano’s writing, but he adds his own story. As early as page 12, the readers face a second parallel narrative on each page which soon expands and sometimes runs for pages before letting the alleged main narrative carry on with the story.

Johnny’s designated space at the bottom of the page defies the common function of footnotes. Johnny’s footnotes create a fictional dimension for the main text instead of providing facts and accurate informations. Sometimes a word from the main text triggers a memory or draws a reaction from Johnny in the footnotes which finally take over the text. The shift between the two narratives, although facilitated by the change of font, causes an interrupted reading through which the readers have to constantly move backwards and forwards in the text, and re-read to pick up where they have left. When both narratives appear on the same page, the readers have to choose which one to read first. The action is not that different from clicking on a link and changing the direction of the reading.

In addition to using footnotes as a carrier for fiction and commenting on Zampano's work, Johnny has also added his own infographic system to Zampano's text, for example, chapter VIII which is mainly about asking for help. The parts of this chapter are punctuated with the stress signal in international Morse code. This chapter is probably the inspiration behind Johnny's usage of the ground-to-air emergency codes that appear from chapter IX onwards.<sup>590</sup> The signs may seem strange and pointless to the readers with no knowledge of this system. However, each sign bears a specific message and the reason behind Johnny's choice for each footnote adds a new layer of meaning to his comments. These signs also wordlessly comment on Zampano's notes. The "x" that marks the footnote on the difficulty of entrance means "unable to proceed"<sup>591</sup> and "JL," which means "not understood," accompanies Johnny's brief note, "so sorry," when he fails to find the translation of a phrase.<sup>592</sup>

The signs seem to be difficult to understand for common readers at first, but a closer reading shows that both the first page of the book and the first picture in C. Collages (**Figure V.4.1.2.P. 2**) clearly hint at the mentioned symbols and ideograms. The readers who are curious enough to look for the strange signs will be undoubtedly rewarded with these tiny stitches that join pieces of text. Johnny's footnotes once more emphasize that all elements of the book can be used to serve the purpose of fiction and undermine the assumed linearity of the narrative. The readers' minds and consequently, their reading strategies, do not usually follow a linear path anyway. Furthermore, Danielewski sometimes combines all three categories of footnotes to expose the non-linearity of the text and lead the readers towards his desired interpretations. The following example demonstrates how *HoL* benefits from the generic editor's footnote to suggest certain reading paths the same way a hypertext does through links.

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<sup>590</sup> Liungman, Carl G. *Symbols: Encyclopedia of Western Signs and Ideograms*. Stockholm: HME Publication, 2004.

<sup>591</sup> *House of Leaves*, 107

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid*, 109



*HoL* promotes the usage of footnotes for footnotes, so the characters can comment on their own or each other's writing. In chapter XVII, Zampano himself translates the Latin epigraph given in *The Bister-Freiden-Josephson Criteria* in his reading of Navidson's letter in footnote 364. The Latin text reads "Noli me tangere. Noli me legere. Noli me videre. Noli me —364"<sup>593</sup> Zampano's footnote refers to the Talbot Darden translation "Do not touch me. Do not read me. Do not see me. Do not me." While the quotation has been left open for the readers to fill the blank with the missing infinitive, Zampano (or Darden) strangely chooses to add a full-stop and finalize the meaning. Moreover, his comment is about the third sentence of the quotation, "Noli me viderer" and since the subsequent paragraph opens with a reference to this very line, the text seems unclear without the translation of his comment on the third sentence, "Non enim videbit me homo et vivet," which appears inside the text under an asterisk. For some strange reason, Zampano did not feel the need to translate his comment. Johnny reacts to the Latin sentence in footnote 365 : "Sorry. No Clue" which ends in footnote 366 by the editors who give the translation of the Latin sentence: "Maurice Blachot translates this as "whoever sees God dies." — Ed."<sup>594</sup>

The three layers of footnotes follow two goals aside from the meaning: first, the succession of footnotes hinders the usual immersion and reminds the reader of the fictional world of the novel. Moreover, the footnotes basically mirror the reaction of a digital hypertext reader when facing difficulties in text. Johnny's footnote demonstrates the primary reaction. The readers of digital hypertexts may click on explanatory links if provided, or search for the information online before returning to the text. In both cases, the reading is interrupted and a new path should be taken. The footnotes on page 388 display the same procedure. Secondly, the detour the readers need to take to get back to the text prepares them for Zampano's otherwise vague statement after the quotation that seems to have nothing to do with the translated epigraph: "Thus emphasizing the potentially mortal

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<sup>593</sup> *House of Leaves*, 388

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid*, 388

price beholding what must lie forever lost in those inky folds.”<sup>595</sup> There is still potential for more. The readers with basic Latin knowledge may notice that the given translation does not have the same structure as the Latin sentence and the reader with basic Biblical knowledge may recognize the reference to Exodus XXIII: 20 where God tells Moses “you cannot see my face, for no man shall see me and live.”<sup>596</sup> Putting Zampano’s comment in its proper context, Navidson’s letter to Karen that follows makes sense. First, the reason why Navidson refers to the house as God becomes clear. The exploration of the unknown for Navidson is to stare in the face of God. He insists in his letter:

I need go back to that place one more time. I know something now and I just have to confirm it. Slowly the pieces have been coming together. I’m starting to see that place for what it is and it’s not for cable shows of National Geographic.

Do you believe in God? I don’t think I ever asked you that one. Well I do now. But my God isn’t your Catholic varietal or your Judaic or Mormon or Baptist or Seventh Day Adventist or whatever/whoever. No burning bush, no angels, no cross. God’s a [house](#). Which is not to say that our house is God’s [house](#) or even a [house](#) of God. What I mean to say is that our [house](#) is God.

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XX  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Think I’ve lost my mind? Maybe, maybe, maybe Maybe just literally drunk. Pretty crazy you have to admit. I just made God a street address. Forget all the last part. just forget it.<sup>597</sup>

In this letter, Navidson clearly confesses why he needs to explore the house at any price. To him, facing the darkness and the exploration of danger is like a religious experience. He will either die or come back with a new understanding of life, his very own ten commandments.

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<sup>595</sup> *House of Leaves*, 388

<sup>596</sup> *Sainte Bible: en Latin et en Français*. 4th ed. vol 1, Paris: 1838, p. 330

<sup>597</sup> *Ibid*, 390

The second point that putting Zampano's comment in its religious context elucidates is the reason why Navidson survives each exploration, but the last one almost costs him his life. When his objective is to rescue Holloway and his team, or simply returning home, he is able to exit the labyrinth. However, when his sole purpose is to explore the house, he nearly dies there. From this point of view, it is not surprising that Navidson refers to the house as God. For no man shall see it and live indeed.

#### **V.4.2 Medium-consciousness**

The previous section has already argued that the non-linearity of *HoL* is to some extent the result of its medium-consciousness. The novel's experiments with the different parts of the book, the medium of print and the typography are highly responsible not only for non-linearity, but also for reader-centrality which will be discussed in a separate section. *HoL* surpasses the self-referentiality of metafiction and approaches the medium-consciousness of hyperfiction due to the following points. First, the focus on the process of writing is not merely to bare the device as it is customary with metafiction, but to develop the plot. The peculiarity of the layout in Pelafina's letters, for instance, reflects the unstable mind of their temperamental writer whose writing becomes the main source of information about Johnny's background and his formative years for the readers. Although this is not a novel technique and similar examples such as B. S. Johnson's *House Mother Normal* have already been discussed in this project, the interconnectivity of the medium and content is a hypertextual characteristic. Using the medium in plot development, as already discussed in hyperfictions such as Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*, has a significant weight in *HoL*, a book about writing books, the expandable rooms which house infinity on the inside.

Secondly, *HoL* benefits from its component media, including the language and the printed book, to create for its readers the same experience as for the characters. This quality, which has been discussed at length in the part on *Memento* and its ability to put the viewer through a short-

term memory loss experience, is another hypertextual quality. The readers of *HoL* will experience the disorientation and horror of being lost in a labyrinthine structure in pages 425 to 490. The layout makes the readers run, crawl, gasp, climb, fall and float like the characters. Not surprisingly, a considerable number of readers report breathlessness, panic and claustrophobia while reading *HoL* on MZD discussion forums.

The third point that confirms the consanguinity of *HoL* and hyperfiction is the awareness of multimedia features. Not only does *HoL* combine language and print, as do all books, it includes movie clips, photos, and music in the narrative. Tom's and Karen's videos appear in transcript (consecutively pp. 253-261 and 354-365). Navidson's silence and whistle have been recorded in the form of notes (pp.478-479). A Braille letter opens chapter XX and the photo before the title page accumulates a number of concealed clues. Moreover, the book defies classification by including as many genres as possible. Horror fiction, diary, documentary, epistolary novel, essay, home video, romance, thriller, critical theory, fable, mythology, mystery, metafiction, memoir, travelogue, academic literature and many more make an appearance. As discussed in the section on *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog*, such amalgamation of genres facilitates the re-appearance and / or transference of the core text across the media, possibly in the medium best known for each genre. This quality catalyses the expansion of the core text which brings us to the fourth point.

*HoL* welcomes branching texts and intentionally creates the potential for expansion across media. The book itself includes alleged fan art in Appendix III, for example. "The Three Attic Whalestoe Institute Letters" was later published in a separate volume titled *The Whalestoe Letters*. "HAUNTED," a music album by Poe (Anne Decatur Danielewski, Mark Z. Danielewski's sister), was inspired by the book and released at the same time. The album, although personal in nature as it uses the Danielewskis' departed father's narrations to link the songs, adds a new layer of meaning to the novel, specially in regard to ambiguities concerning the Navidson children, Chad and Daisy. Needless to say, countless attempts at (re-)making The Navidson Record on YouTube and

responding to the difficulties of the book in MZD forums confirm the potential of the text to be deconstructed and reconstructed, and demonstrate that constant expansion of the text.

To conclude, the aforementioned points leave no doubt about the acute medium-consciousness of *HoL*. Further explanation would be unnecessary, if the question whether the book is capable of competing with its digital rivals did not remain. In other words, the question is whether it is possible for the printed book to create the same impact as digital hyperfictions with the possibility to include audiovisual and kinetic bits? This section will attempt to respond to this question by drawing a comparison between Chris Joseph's *Tube Lines*,<sup>598</sup> a hyperfiction created in Flash, and *House of Leaves*.

The explanatory note to *Tube Lines* defines the hyperfiction as “a set of overlapping narratives — personal and historical, passengers and staff —revealed through reworking of the central London underground map.” The text suggests three different ways of reading: 1) Linear, 2) Random, and 3) Golden Ticket to follow the fiction in at least 78 stops. The linear format starts at Mile End Station and although the readers are allowed to stop the story and choose the direction of the tube by clicking on the stations, the story progresses in a more or less linear fashion. The second option, Random, gives the readers a random starting point (station) on the London map. The Golden ticket option presents the readers with a map of the London Tube and allows them to start at any station they wish or “access everything immediately” in other words. Clicking on each option will direct the readers to a map of London showing the stop they have chosen. Each stop presents four simultaneous narratives. The love story appears at the top of the page in a red box. The conversations among other passengers appear in a black text box. The grey box includes the announcements that we usually hear on the train. Unlike the love story that stops running when the segment is finished, the new passengers' conversation and the announcements keep popping up on the screen to signify the movement of the train. It is noteworthy that the soundtrack does not include

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<sup>598</sup> <http://tubelines.org>

the recorded version of the announcements and sometimes adds a new layer to the narrative texture. So does the side bar that includes the history gutter and explains in detail the history of the tube and each station. The taskbar at the bottom of the page enables the readers to set the volume or mute the soundtrack altogether. The taskbar also provides the readers with the option to omit one or several narrations in order to focus on one, or just on the video. The second, third, fourth and fifth icons from the left control in that order the main narrative, the history gutter, the announcements and the passenger conversations. The Tube sign on the far left of the taskbar is used to go back to the map, supervise the progress of the journey and change trains. However, pausing the video and the narrations is not supported by the system. The train of the narratives will move whether the readers peruse the narratives or resign. In short, *Tube Lines* benefits from the audiovisual tools the medium offers in order to simulate the experience of riding on the tube for the



Figure V.4.2.P.1  
*Tube Lines*  
Chris Joseph

readers. The dominant presence of audiovisual and kinetic clips in *Tube Lines* in comparison to the static status of narrative in printed books is significant in the discussion on medium-consciousness. At first glance, it seems that the restraints of print make it extremely difficult if not impossible for

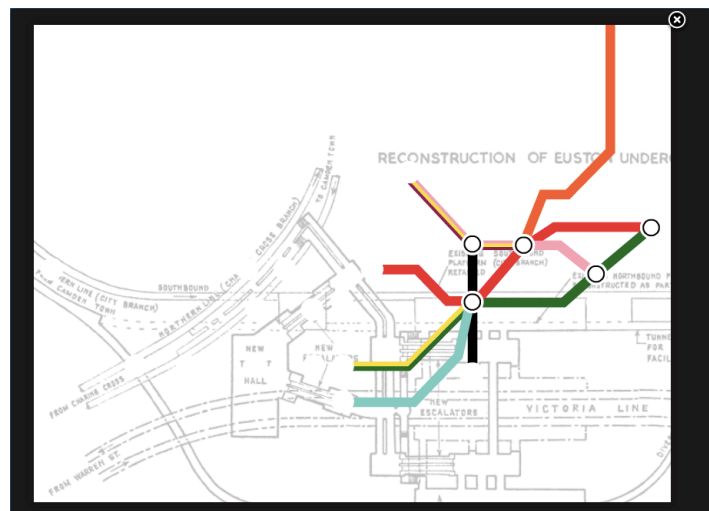


Figure V.4.2.P.2  
*Tube Lines*  
Chris Joseph  
The map

readers. The dominant presence of audiovisual and kinetic clips in *Tube Lines* in comparison to the static status of narrative in printed books is significant in the discussion on medium-consciousness. At first glance, it seems that the restraints of print make it extremely difficult if not impossible for

books to compete with their digital rivals. Printed books are unable to include sound effects, music clips or visual aides. Nor are they able to make the words move on paper. It seems that books have already lost the battle. Or have they?

#### **V.4.2.1 Creating an experience through the medium**

##### **V.4.2.1.1 *Tube Lines*, an authentic experience of riding on the Tube through reading**

The digital medium enables the author to vivify the experience of reading by adding sounds, pictures, video clips and kinetic material to the point that the readers feel they have undergone the same experience as the characters. The authors of printed books have to seek other ways to create the same impact. Their tool box contains nothing but words on paper and books have used these tools to “build that sunny pleasure-dome in air”<sup>599</sup> for a long time. Books solely rely on the power of words and the readers’ imagination. While imagery, be it visual, auditory or tactile, alongside other figurative devices, has been used to intensify the experience ever since language came to existence, the final image relies on the readers’ active imagination and acute mind. Additionally, unlike digital words, printed words do not move. The use of kinetic parallel narratives alongside audiovisual material simulates the real Tube experience in *Tube Lines*. How can books compete with such potent opponents whose medium equips them to fully appeal to readers’ senses? To rise up to the challenge, *House of Leaves* explores the potentials of the familiar medium of print. Although still relying on the readers and their visual literacy, the book introduces a new variable into the equation and combines the magic of the written word with a versatile typography. Thus the question is to what extent is it possible to induce the feelings of fear, confusion and entrapment intentionally using only words and their arrangement on the page? This section will react to this question by focusing on how *Tube Line*, a digital hyperfiction, and *House of Leaves*, a printed hyperfiction, create a lifelike experience for their audience by engaging their respective media.

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<sup>599</sup> “Kubla Khan” by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

The medium grants *Tube Lines* the opportunity to run several narratives on the same page. The vertical, horizontal and random movement of the layers of narrative is a visual reminder of the journey along the Tube lines. The constantly moving texts that randomly appear (passengers' conversations and driver's announcements) create the atmosphere of a busy London Tube. The familiarity of the voices that intermingle and the cautionary announcements such as "Please mind the Gap between the train and the platform" draw on the readers' past experience on the Tube or any other public transportation vehicle for that matter. The readers may not even need to use the taskbar the software provides. Instead, they may block the surrounding conversations and announcements automatically as we usually do when commuting. This way, the readers are able to focus thoroughly on the story. Similar to the voices on the train, the narratives overlap, fade, and cover each other, and the readers have to decide which narrative to follow. While the main narrative, which appears in a red text box, seems to be the dominant one, the readers cannot help following the random conversations they find interesting. They may lose track of the narrative they were pursuing, but the passengers of public transportation go through the same experience during each commute. Drawing on the readers' previous experience of commuting on the Tube, the history gutter and the visual material remind the readers of the architecture of the stations and help them visualize the scene and imagine the setting of the stories. The parallel narratives of *Tube Lines* in addition to the video and sound effects successfully simulate the poly-vocality of the London Tube, the random conversations, the selective hearing and comprehension and the difficulty of concentration. The experience is not unlike reading James Joyce's *Ulysses*.

The virtual experience of the Tube is undoubtedly lifelike. But does it serve any purpose other than creating the atmosphere? It has repeatedly been discussed in this project that good hypertextual networks such as *Patchwork Girl* employ the medium to develop the themes. The content intertwines with the medium of presentation to the extent that any adaptation or branching out in a new medium leads to fundamental changes in the story. *Patchwork Girl* will lose impact if



the themes of shattered identity and miscellaneous sense of self are translated to conventional book format. *Memento* is another example of the unification of the medium and the content. The possibility of the fast-paced flashbacks in backward motion, the controlled speed and distribution of information with which cinema endows this text cannot be re-created in another medium without modifications in the content. It is noteworthy that *Memento* is an adaptation of a short story titled “Memento Mori” in conventional format which does not have quite the same impact in comparison. Now the question is whether the realistic experience of the Tube is an integral part of the process of comprehension. In other words, to what extent is this realistic representation necessary in understanding *Tube Lines*?

The vividness of the experience aside, the merits of the medium in creating a lifelike experience cause trouble in comprehending the fiction. The four narratives in motion make it impossible to focus and fully comprehend one. The fact that the narratives can be omitted on request gives the readers the choice to focus on the one they find fascinating and at the same time sends the message that the narratives are not interlinked and can be read separately. This is more or less true. It is impossible to read four narratives at the same time, so the readers need to decide which narrative to privilege over the others or in what order to read them. Which one is the main story? Which ones contribute to the main plot? And which one was added only to intensify the experience? The position of the texts on the screen and their length suggest that readers should assign more significance to the red boxes (the love story); then put them in the historical context (the history sidebar) and place the shorter flickering black (the conversations) and grey boxes (the announcements) aside for re-readings. You can always get back to those short texts that may contain clues about the plot. If not, why were they included? The readers who make this choice should be ready to deal with their frustrated expectations.

Upon closer examination, the readers will find out that the conversations among the passengers on board and the announcements appear at random while the history gutter and the love

story are related to each station. Further re-readings show that there are connections between the story and the station in which it happens. The events that took place at White Chapel station will always appear in the same node. Moreover, two of the narratives are constantly renewed while two stop or repeat themselves. When the block text that contains the love story runs its course, it does not disappear like the announcements and the conversation, but stays motionless on the screen, as if frozen in time. The contents of the history gutter will not change either, as it gives background information on the station. But when the text reaches its course, it starts over. It is always the same text and a painful reminder that history repeats itself.

The passengers' conversations and the announcements, on the other hand, pop up at random and prompt various speculations. Some of these overheard conversations are really intriguing and initiate a chain of assumptions in the mind of the tempted readers who wish to know more about the speakers. Here are some examples:

"My head keeps falling off."

"If you touch me again I am calling your mother."

"He's dead I'm telling you. He's fat, unshaven and dead."

"Remember: bombs don't discriminate."

"Nous allons a Highbury... c'est le match contre Southampton."

"There were these three guys calling each other niggers, but they were all white."

"Richard Madeley is David Ice waiting to happen."

"I woke up to find a dead bird in the gutter."

"Fame has changed you."

Alas, there appears to be no real connection among these (usually) single-sentence utterances. As interesting as they are, they only seem to serve the purpose of distracting the readers. The rapid movement of the black box of conversations on the screen diverts the readers' eyes from two seemingly stationary texts. They sometimes literally block the love story or other texts to re-create the experience of being distracted, misheard or silenced by other voices on the train. As it is in real life, the chit-chat that surrounds us in public transportation vehicles is annoying, intruding and yet

sometimes too tempting not to eavesdrop. However, these little bits of enthralling storylines evaporate as soon as the speaker gets off the train. There cannot be any connection between these random conversations and the main plot as there is no real connection between the passengers in the same wagon.

The announcements are expected to be the most generic sentences on the computer screen, so that the readers can block them in favor of the other narratives. However, the readers will soon understand that multiple story threads run in the alleged generic announcements. Some of the announcements are really the clichéd phrases and sentences such as “There are currently minor delays on Piccadilly Line” or “Let passengers off the train first please” that you hear everyday on the train. But the readers will soon find out about the witty driver who modifies the generic lines and even manages to recount details of his personal life and as a result, turns the announcements into the most fascinating narrative of *Tube Lines*. The readers may first notice slightly modified announcements whose ending display the driver’s amusing take on the regulations and his comments on the Tube and its passengers:

“Hello, this is the driver speaking, I am the captain of your train, and we will be departing shortly, we will be cruising at an altitude of approximately zero feet, and our scheduled arrival time is in 5 minutes time. The temperature at our destination is approximately 15 degrees celsius and there will be no need to adjust your watches.

“Ladies and gentlemen this train has 22 doors on each side, please feel free to use all of them not just the two in the middle.”

“Ladies and gentlemen, upon departing the train may I remind you to take your rubbish with you. Despite the fact that you are in something that is metal, fairly round, filthy and smells, this is a tube train and not a bin on wheels.”

“May I remind all the passengers that there is strictly no smoking allowed on any part of the underground. However, if you are smoking a joint it is only fair that you pass it round the rest of the carriage.”

The announcements seem to be the driver’s only way to unleash his frustration with the system, his anger at unruly passengers and his dissatisfaction with his personal life and failed marriage. With no further information than the usual one-liners, the driver’s customized announcements portray the character, his state of mind, his personal traits and even his family life. He sometimes takes his exasperation and lashes out on the passengers in a sarcastic announcement:

“Your delay this evening is caused by the line controller suffering from elbow and backside syndrome, not knowing his elbow from his backside. I’ll let you know any further information as soon as I’m given any.”

“Ladies and gentlemen we’ll have to wait here for a bit, I’ve been told a computer has fallen off a table somewhere and all the signals have gone wrong, so we’re stuck.”

“This train is completely broken. It isn’t going anywhere.”

“Let the passengers off the train FIRST. Oh go on then, stuff yourselves like sardines, see if I care. I am going home.”

Later, another announcement reveals that the driver has in fact left and promises that another driver will soon replace him. Although the driver’s storyline is quite interesting and sometimes corresponds to the events the main story narrates, the narratives do not quite connect. The timeline is not really clear and the events have not been described in detail. The delay that the main narrative mentions can be caused by the driver, or can be a simple everyday happenstance on the Tube. As witty and refreshing as the comments and the storyline of the driver are, this narrative does not seem to have been planned to help develop the themes in the main storyline.

In contrast to the announcements and the conversations, the main story follows a plot. It is narrated by a man who meets a woman on the Tube everyday. One day, when they both find seats,

and he is coming from a party a little drunk, he finally asks her out by throwing a scrap of paper on her book “following a tested formula that has once worked for a friend: Would you like to go for a coffee with me? [ ] Yes [ ] Maybe [ ] No.” To his surprise, he gets the paper back with “a tick in the left box, a telephone number and a name” that the readers will never learn. They start dating, spend some time together, visit different places, make memories at each stop, the man moves to London to be closer to the woman. Then one day, each one confesses something to the other. The narrator mentions a big revelation. Soon, they notice there is nothing left to be said (possibly at a carnival) and they break up. Now the man rides on the Tube alone, futilely trying not to remember the past memories when he passes each stop.

The Tube has been the couple’s main transportation means, so each stop presents the readers with a piece of the story. The events or the fragments of the story take place over 26 stops. Only the nodes present a piece of the story. The lines, if clicked on, only lead to videos and/ or pictures which may include announcements, conversations and sometimes captions but do not offer the history gutter or the red-box story. These pieces provide the readers with an incomplete, yet familiar portrayal of a relationship. While it is never made clear why the relationship did not work out, the decline of the initial excitement, the distant behavior and the final “revelation” are portrayed stop by stop. The man explains that “we thought closeness was a function of geography to be measured in moments and memory, times and touch,” but the last time they go to the carnival together, he notices that although they are holding hands, their different desires and wishes create an irreconcilable distance between them. The fact that the woman talks to the drunken man she met five minutes ago

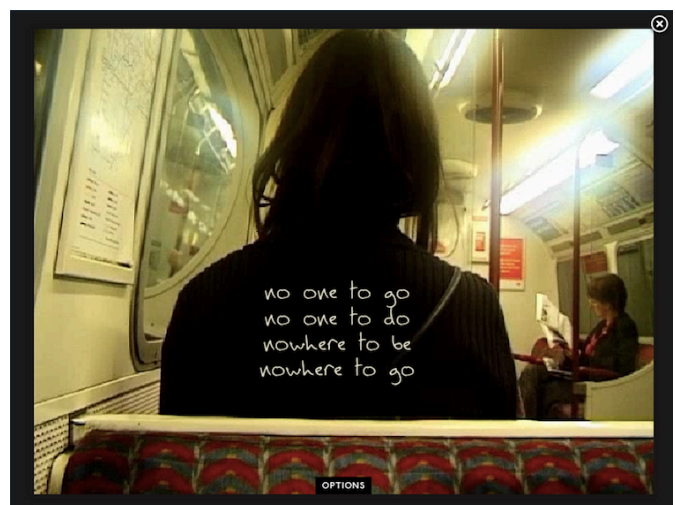


Figure V.4.2.1.1.P.1  
*Tube Lines*  
Chris Joseph

more than to her partner confirms the end of the relationship:

This was the end of our line.

For a long time we admired the glass canopies and watched people being endlessly swallowed by the trains. How could we say our goodbyes?

Finally you reached into your bag and pulled out your purse and from your purse handed me a tatty piece of foiled paper.

I recognized it immediately. I hadn't realized you had kept it all this time and I almost cried at the memory, but instead I looked at you and nodded.

While it seems that ending the relationship is a mutual decision, the resentful residual feelings cannot be avoided. The man confesses that "the good memories are quickly soiled by separation, and every absence fashioned by bitterness into ugly moulds of paranoia and doubt." He goes through a period of mourning and reflection. While we do not hear from the woman, the pictures of lonely passengers here and there give us an idea of how she might feel. The man's words about his figurative and literal disorientation and estrangement, wandering among the Tube lines and wondering about his whereabouts summarize everything:

How had I ended up here? I didn't even remember getting on the train but it had carried me until I opened my eyes and tried to focus on the unfamiliar scenery that was flashing past. The window was appropriately dirty and marked with stains of illegal graffiti, and I couldn't read the station sign. I got out anyway, wandering around in a trance, hoping for something, anything, that would explain to me — how I had ended up here?

Unlike the other narratives, the love story follows an almost linear path or at least the readers can easily order the events and develop the plot. The fact that the story has a fixed beginning and ending also helps create this illusion of linearity. The readers may decide which Tube line to take, which station to stop in and literally determine the direction the relationship takes, but the relationship starts at Mile End Station and ends at Canary Wharf station. The events in between may be re-

arranged. The unchangeability of the beginning and the ending creates a sense of fatality for this story line. The readers may rearrange the events and change trains, but they will finally head towards Canary Wharf station on the breakup train. The fact that Mile End and Canary Wharf seem to be parallel on the map is quite ironic

and suggests a return to the beginning point. The characters go through the journey and experience love, passion and heartbreak, but they end up at approximately where they began. Life in this story is a lonely journey and an experienced passenger learns to travel safe by creating his own bubble and isolating himself. This comes at the cost of his livelihood, but at least he does not

get hurt again: “I hadn’t taken our train since that day, but now I boarded cautiously, having chosen a new safe carriage in which to lose myself on the way to work. I congratulated myself for not looking for you, and instead closed my eyes, listened to music and counted stops.”

Employing four parallel narratives in a background of gloomy videos of the Tube, *Tube Lines* successfully creates an atmosphere of loneliness, lack of communication and emotional void that is familiar to whoever has even only once ridden on gloomy undergrounds. Four parallel narratives that run ceaselessly and seemingly without correlation underline the hollowness of such collective commutes through which no abiding bonds or lasting connections are made. There is neither a meaningful stop, nor a definite direction in this journey and the passengers are doomed to spend their lives wandering along the lines, among the nodes and never heading towards a distinctive destination.

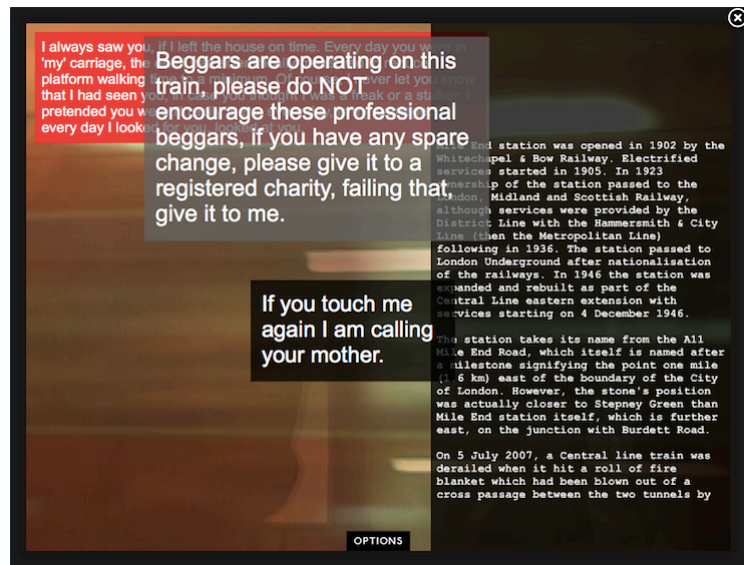


Figure V.4.2.1.1.P.2  
*Tube Lines*  
 Chris Joseph

The successful simulation of riding on the Tube is the strength and the weakness of *Tube Lines*. While this hypertext re-creates an impactful experience for the readers, its concentration on the experience affects the development of the plot and the reading experience.

First, although the inclusion of three distinctive narratives in the context of the history in motion helps make a point, the narratives have so little in common that the readers may rightfully question the reasons for their integration in the same hypertext. In *Only Revolutions*, an already-discussed printed book that includes four narratives on the same page, the interconnections among the narratives make it impossible for the readers to favor one over the others. All are equally important and need to be read in connection with the others to develop the plot. *Tube Lines*, on the other hand, takes it too far to the extent that the narratives can be read as several stories which happen to have the same setting. Hypertexts usually train their readers how to read them and persistent readers of *Tube Lines* after several clicks will realize that the best way to follow the story is to read each one separately as there seems to be little or no interconnections.

Second, the layout of the narratives clearly shows that even though there are some overlaps, the narratives are not interlinked. The characters (the man and woman of the love story, the passengers of the Tube and the driver(s)) simply pass each other by and the layout is the visual demonstration of the running *Tube Lines* or its passengers who interact and cross paths without collision or real connection. However, this successful visual trick loses its impact and even irritates the readers as they realize it is physically impossible to keep up with the four running narratives. The fact that the system allows the omission of the conversations does not decrease the feeling of frustration and deception. The readers may feel that they are missing out on the clues the other narratives may be offering and wonder whether a certain announcement or utterance were the key to the story and they missed it. And indeed, why was a certain conversation included if it were not necessary to the plot? Should the rifle which has been hanging on the wall not go off at some point



in the story?<sup>600</sup> If the possibility of stopping the narratives instead of omitting them had been predicted, the readers would have been able to analyze each narrative in relation to the others. Finding interconnections, however little and insignificant, would have led to a plenitude of hypotheses on the part of the readers and would have eventually resulted in a longer afterlife for the story. In short, *Tube Lines* is a sensational sensory experience that successfully induces awareness of ever-growing indifference, the loss of humanity and lack of communication. However, reading *Tube Lines* is a hollow experience in comparison to watching it. The readers will identify with the nameless narrator at the end: “There were no words for a long time, until the flashed red anger became a black sadness, and I began to pity what had become of us.”

Favoring experience over fiction, *Tube Lines* focuses on the digital medium and its potential to create an outstanding experience, but underestimates the power of words. Ironically, the problem is similar to the main characters’ relationship problems. Thoughts remain unvoiced, feelings remain concealed and points remain underdeveloped. In other words, *Tube Lines* does not use the medium to tell the story, but uses the words to promote the medium. *House of Leaves* adopts the opposite approach.

#### **V.4.2.1.2 *House of Leaves*: reconfiguring the medium of print**

Unlike *Tube Lines*, the medium of *House of Leaves* does not support images, sounds or movement as effortlessly as a digital text. The taskbar of the printed book only displays one tool: words. On the page, sound, image and movement lie dormant until activated again by the reader. Danielewski is fully aware of these so-called shortcomings as he symbolically portrays them in *The Fifty Year Sword*: the obliqueness of image and the impossibility of erasing the trace of the printed word in *The Valley of Salt*, the loss of sound, yet the possibility of movement in *The Forest of*

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<sup>600</sup> “Remove everything that has no relevance to the story. If you say in the first chapter that there is a rifle hanging on the wall, in the second or third chapter it absolutely must go off. If it's not going to be fired, it shouldn't be hanging there.” Valentine T. Bill. *Chekhov: The Silent Voice of Freedom*, India: Allied Books Ltd, 1987.

Falling Notes, and the likelihood of reaching the same destination by taking alternative routes in *The Mountain of Manyone Paths*. The printed books are the domain of words. The addition of visual, audio or kinetic effect can only be designed through the words. *House of Leaves* accepts and victoriously completes the challenge.

*House of Leaves* (2000) turns the established shortcomings of the medium, lack of motility of the printed words, for instance, into one of the strengths of the book by focusing on a less explored aspect of the words, their shape and position on paper. The book challenges the homogenized facade of conventional books and experiments with typography in order to create a visual vessel for thematic explorations. In short, not only do the words carry the meaning, but they also communicate the subject matter visually. *HoL* employs the medium of print to display a labyrinthine space that expands (the book, the real house of leaves), and also to add audio, visual and kinetic effects, which are presumably impossible to achieve in this medium. Intentionally engaging the medium in the developments of the themes, *HoL* attempts to employ the familiar elements of books to carry out new functions. While the main focus of the book is on words and their hidden potential, it does not disregard the typographic surface of the page, the front and back covers, the turn-in, the title page, the preface, the appendix, etc. Since looking into all the innovations of the book is beyond this discussion, the following part will study how *HoL* reconfigures the familiar functions of the elements of print when Will Navidson enters the labyrinth: first, to rescue Holloway's team (pp. 153-245 and pp. 275-312) and second, to explore the intrusive building once and for all and quench his thirst for facing the "darkness"<sup>601</sup> (pp. 423-490).

*House of Leaves* employs two main techniques when visualizing the story through words: a) it concretizes an idea through the arrangement of the words into shapes or patterns. These shaped words, which follow the tradition of concrete poetry, create an impressive impact when visualizing the events in the labyrinth, b) The speed of reading is usually controlled through placement and

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<sup>601</sup> *House of Leaves*, xxi

visual modification of the words. In this way, the book puts the readers through the same experience as the characters and induces tension, frustration, and fear.

#### V.4.2.1.2.1 *House of Leaves*, a concrete novel

The readers' first serious encounter with the visual aspect of the words in *HoL* is probably during Exploration #4 and the descent of Holloway's team into the inviting darkness at the foot of the stairway. The team's journey is accompanied by Zampano's comments on the myth of the Minotaur following a frustratingly detailed explanation of houses, their components and architecture. The addition of Johnny's comments and Zampano's references in the footnotes, which can appear anywhere on the page, to the existing narratives divides the page into four and the opening into eight sections (Figure V.4.2.1.2.1.P.1).

The columns that run upside down, the windows that contain the text in reverse and the footnotes that follow each other instead of appearing in the form of a list make for a confusing reading at the beginning. But the readers will soon find out that the arrangement of the narratives corresponds to the architectural structures Holloway and his team explore. The layout turns the page into an architectural plan to portray "the ever elusive internal shape of the house."<sup>602</sup> The book presents the readers with what Holloway's team faces. The only difference is that the walls, the stairway and the columns the readers see are made of words.

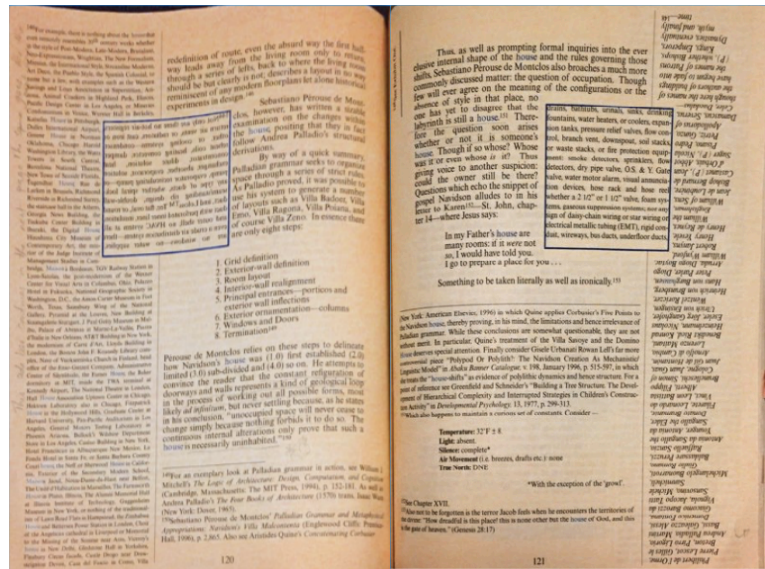


Figure V.4.2.1.2.1.P.1  
*House of Leaves*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 120-121

<sup>602</sup> *House of Leaves*, 121

The discussed section prepares the readers to face the unknown when Navidson, his brother Tom and Reston set out to rescue Holloway and his team. Additionally, the rescue mission is a reflection on our conception of space or, as the book quotes Dagobert Frey in the epigraph to chapter X,

Every house is an architecturally structured “path”: the specific possibilities of movement and the drive towards movement as one proceeds from the entrance through the sequence of spatial entities have been pre-determined by architectural structuring of the space and one experiences the space accordingly. But at the same time, in its relation to the surrounding space, it is a “goal” and we either advance towards this goal or depart from it.<sup>603</sup>

The flexibility of the layout helps create the same atmosphere of thrill and terror for the readers and lets them experience the space the same way the characters do. The vast blank spaces among paragraphs represent the undiscovered structures of the house and the threat of the unidentified danger. The arrangement of the black lines surrounded by blank space suggests the position of the characters as well as the peculiar perils that awaits them (**Figure V.4.2.1.2.1.P.2**). As the characters progress inside the structure, the blankness of the page expands to the point that the look of the familiar white page agitates the readers who watch the characters being ensnared in vast white space, which contains the unrevealed secret of the house. The confinement of the words on these blank pages visually indicates that the characters are entrapped and approaching danger. Moreover, this section also indicates the distance and lack of communication among characters. Karen and Navidson do not communicate their feelings

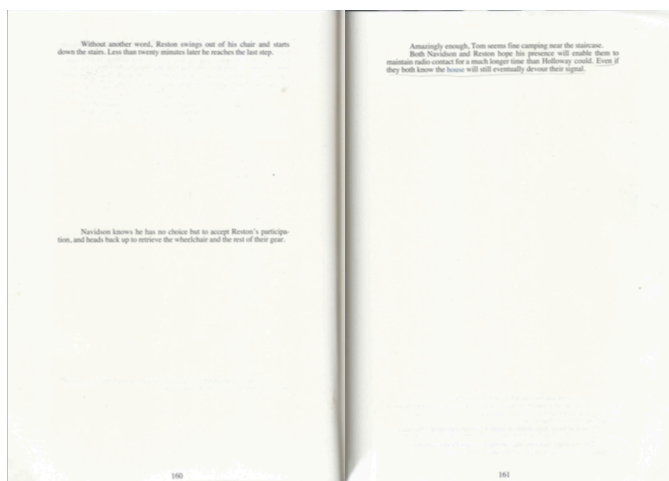


Figure V.4.2.1.2.1.P.2  
*House of Leaves*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 160-161

<sup>603</sup> *House of Leaves*, 153

for each other. Tom does not reveal his fear and love for his brother. Holloway is unable to tell the rest of the group what he has experienced. Navidson holds back on his feelings regarding Delial and his war experiences, and on a larger scale, the house avoids revealing its secret to its occupants.

The weight of the things left unsaid is also emphasized by the illusory effect of the words printed on the back of the sheet on the blank space; an effect that Danielewski later perfected in *The Fifty Year Sword* and its symbolic Valley of Salt where shadows leave traces on the blank environment of the valley. The illegible shadows of the words foreground the secrets the house does not reveal and encourage the readers to seek out answers among these extensive blank pages. To conclude, the expanding blank space, this literal absence of words, originates from the deafening silence.

The placement of selected words and sentences in *HoL* presents the readers with a cinematic view of what the story unfolds. When Navidson and Reston find Jed, Holloway suddenly materializes out of nowhere and shoots at them. The sudden appearance of Holloway and the trajectory and the speed of the bullet that injures Jed create a cinematic impact. This section starts with an unfinished sentence on page 193. Reston and Navidson have just found Jed behind a door among fifty doors that surround them. The text prepares the readers to read (watch) the scene from two points of view, as this sequence is a “pretty ratty collection of cuts alternating between Jed’s Hi 8 and an equally poor view from the 16mm camera and Navidson and Reston’s Hi8s.”<sup>604</sup> Zampano’s writing gives a verbose explanation of how critics later analyzed the next scene in which a bullet “pierced [Jed’s] upper lip, blasted through the maxillary bone, dislodged even fragment[ed] the central teeth.”<sup>605</sup> To heighten the suspense, an incomplete sentence, “Here then —” takes the readers to the following pages where one word on each page illustrates the shot, its speed and trajectory. As if in slow motion, the one-word pages lead to pages with two, three and five words. The readers

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<sup>604</sup> *House of Leaves*, 192

<sup>605</sup> *Ibid*, 193

naturally turn over the pages faster. Each word is punctuated by long spaces and the whole section forms a dotted line and simulates the speed of the bullet. The dotted line that contains thirty words: “[Here then —] the aftermath of meaning. A lifetime finished between the space of two frames. The dark line where the eye persists in seeing something that was never there To begin with” is spread over twelve pages.<sup>606</sup> This sentence prepares the readers to see Holloway and the muzzle of his gun shortly. But to create suspense, Zampano’s text obstructs the bullet to quote Ken Burns and it seems the close-up of the bullet is cut to a medium shot.

The following page does not disappoint. It presents a wounded Jed lying in “a black pool of blood.” The quick shift between the texts reminds the readers of editing a video. Keeping in mind that *The Navidson Record* is a home video shot by a professional photographer confirms the similarities between the mentioned scene and a documentary. Each page equals a movie frame. After showing the main event, a connoisseur sheds some light on the matter or provides the audience with some information.

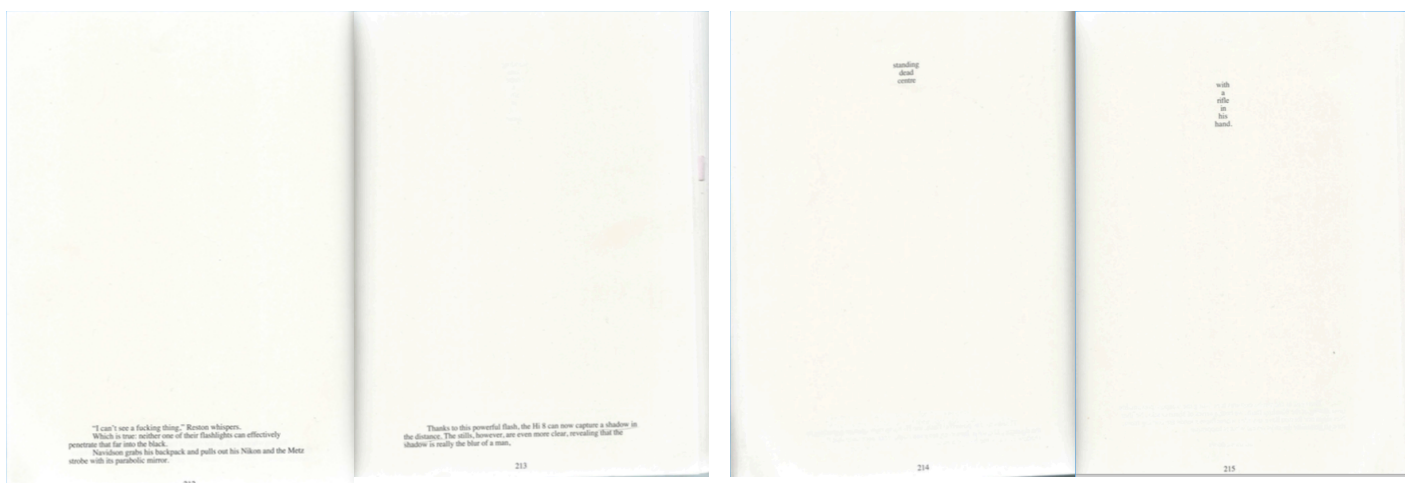


Figure V.4.2.1.2.1.P.3  
*House of Leaves*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp. 212-215

<sup>606</sup> *House of Leaves*, 193-205 The capital T and the absence of full stop appear in the original text. Johnny explains in footnote 215: “Typo. “T” should read “t” with a period following “with.” (p. 205)

Establishing that each page may be considered as a movie frame, *HoL* assigns great significance to the placement of the words and paragraphs in the following pages. The seven subsequent pages contain short paragraphs at the bottom of the page which indicate Jed's lying position and Reston and Navidson's crouching position to protect themselves against the shots and also to "drag Wax and Jed out of harm's way."<sup>607</sup> Moreover, by having the characters gather at the bottom of the page, the book helps the readers look back from the characters' point of view and expect the emergence of someone or something in that dominant expanse of white. The readers will concur with Reston who in response to Navidson's question "Since when did you bring a gun?" answers "Are you kidding me? This place is *scary*."<sup>608</sup>

The suspense will not take long when Holloway finally appears on the characters' camera and the top part of the page. The change from Navidson, Reston, Wax and Jed's position from the bottom of the page to Holloway's on top of the following page indicates a shift in the point of view as well as the distance between the two sides. The isolation of the words on top of the page from Holloway's point of view in contrast to the paragraphs at the bottom, which display the group's position against him, underlines his dominance and creates a threatening impact. To visualize the text's explanation on how the group witnesses Holloway's approach from a distance, the words have been shaped into a circle that turns into a short vertical line in the following page in order to create a long shot-to-medium shot effect as the dot in the distance turns into "the blur of a man."<sup>609</sup>

*HoL* employs another typographical device to help the readers imagine the sound effect in this section. The setting of this scene is a hallway with fifty doors. Holloway appears at the end of the hallway and the text explains that the characters hear "a series of sharp cracks."<sup>610</sup> At first, they have no idea where the sounds are coming from. Later, they notice that the doors behind Holloway

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<sup>607</sup> *House of Leaves*, 208

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid*, 209

<sup>609</sup> *Ibid*, 213

<sup>610</sup> *Ibid*, 216

“are slamming shut one after another after another.”<sup>611</sup> Each word appears on one page and in a different position to indicate the place and the forceful shutting of each door. It is noteworthy that the one-word pages accelerate the speed of reading. Flipping over the pages not only creates a sharp sound, but the action also resembles closing a door. As the mentioned sentence progresses, the position of the words changes from the top to the middle of the page. The danger is getting closer to the characters.

The shooting does not stop while the doors are closing. So the solitary presence of each word on the page can also visually represent the bullets being shot at the group who is situated at the bottom of the page. When the last bullet, the word “another” reaches the paragraph at the bottom, we read “[the slamming doors] does not prevent the figure from firing” and notice the five words that resided on the past five pages stand for gun shots at the characters. The constantly lowering of the words on the blank pages creates the illusion of movement like a flip book, especially if the readers flip the pages fast enough to notice the effect. Moreover, the phrase “are

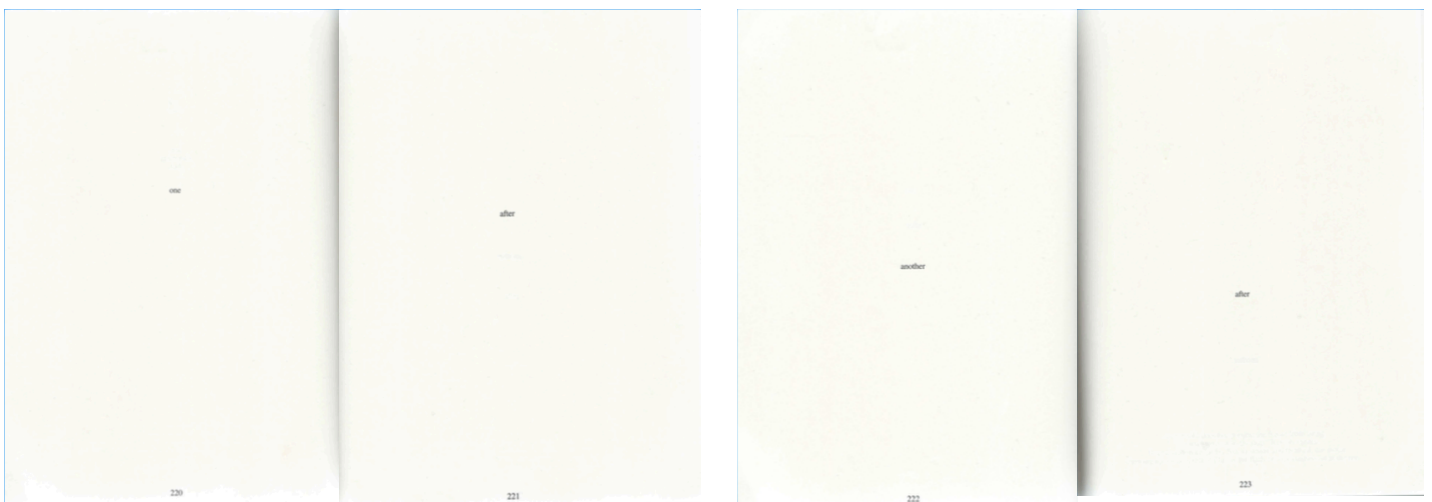


Figure V.4.2.1.2.1.P.4  
*House of Leaves*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 220-223

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<sup>611</sup> *House of Leaves*, pp. 219 - 224



slamming shut” (page 219) forms a circle, the muzzle of Holloway’s gun. The visual representation of the shooting is as effective in creating the atmosphere as the F alliteration in “figure from firing.”

The point of view changes one more time from the characters at the bottom to Holloway on the top as “Navidson keeps his Nikon steady and focussed, the motor chewing up a whole roll of film as the flash angrily slashes out at the pre - (p.225) vailing darkness, ultimately capturing (p. 226) this dark form (p. 227) vanishing (p. 228) behind a closing (p. 229) door (p. 230). The complete version of the mentioned quotation, which has been spread across fourteen pages, provides us with another example of integrating typography in the creation of atmosphere and audiovisual representation of the events.

The position of the words helps the readers visualize several events. While the doors are slamming shut, Holloway disappears behind one of them, but still shoots through the muntin. The bullet creates a hole in the first door, hits a second door and splinters a panel. Before the characters register the sound of the gunshot among shutting doors, the last one shuts and leaves the room “saturated in silence.”<sup>612</sup>

The description of the scene aside, the words are formed into shapes that help the readers visualize the events. The position and the continuation of the words also suggest action and movement. In short, the shape and the position of the words turn reading pages 225 to 238 (**Figure V.4.2.1.2.1.P.5**) into a cinematic experience. The direction of the words on page 226 shows that Navidson’s camera pans from left to right until it finds “this dark form” on page 227. The man disappears in a fraction of a second, portrayed with the solitary words of “vanishing” on page 228, “behind a closing” (page 229) “door” (page 230). The direction and position of sentences and phrases that appear on pages 226 to 229 show that Navidson’s camera finds Holloway in a long shot and follows him into a close-up, as he runs towards and hides behind a door on the right. The phrases “this dark form” shaped into the silhouette of a man on page 227, and “behind a closing,”

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<sup>612</sup> *House of Leaves* 238

shaped into a door on page 229 reinforce the visual impact. Once more, the one-word pages and the lack of punctuation make the readers pick up pace while punctuating each word or phrase by turning over the pages in order to feel the speed of the events. The isolation of the word “door” at the bottom of page 230 brings this action-packed sequence to a halt as if the door shuts in the reader’s face. The comma makes the readers pause before starting the subsequent section in which Holloway shoots through the muntin. Using cinematic terminology again, the medium shot of the door on page 230 is cut to a close-up of the hole Holloway makes by punching through the muntin in order to make way for his gun, the close-up of which appears on the following page. The punch is depicted by the following sentence shaped as a hole: “even though a hole the size of a fist punches through the muntin.” The shape of the continuation of the sentence, “the round powerful enough to propel the bullet into the second door,” displays a close-up of the muzzle of Holloway’s gun (page 232). The position of the words on page 233 records the exact moment when the bullet hits and splinters a panel. Each word represents a bit, a piece, a sliver and a chip. The sound of the shutting doors, the bullet and the explosion of the panel is recorded in the successive appearance of the words in the next two pages. The space among the words makes the readers read each word emphatically and pause before reading the following one, as if the words echoed the continuous sounds of slamming doors and flying bullets. The words form a straight line in the next two pages to indicate where the “roar” comes from without any description (page 237). The visual contrast of the three full lines of words from page 234 to page 236 with the sparseness of the words on pages 237 and 238 intensifies the impact of what is happening in the story. Before anyone even notices the gunshot among the rumbling sound of the closing doors, the last door is shut and the room is “saturated in silence.” The expanded whiteness of pages 237 and 238 visualizes silence as scarcity of words.

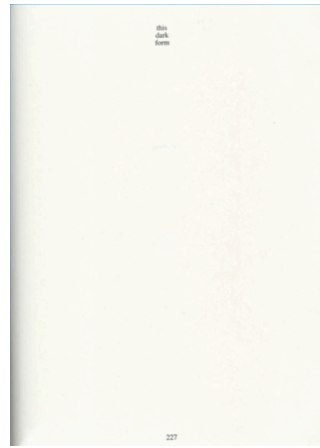
The mentioned examples are a few among many innovative usage of the medium of print to add audiovisual effects to the conventional book. *HoL* uses the words in a rather unusual way. Not



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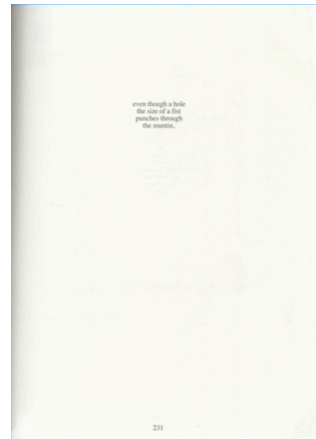
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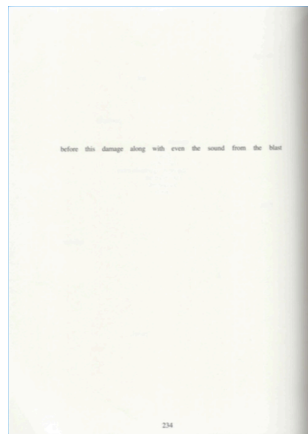
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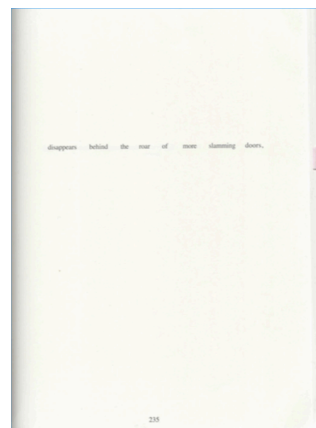
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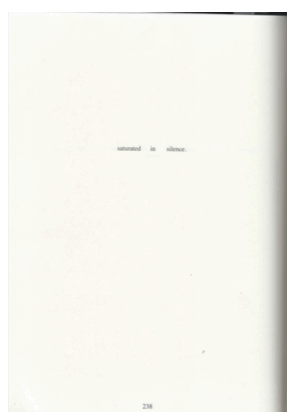
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Figure V.4.2.1.2.1.P5  
*House of Leaves*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 225-238

only does the novel benefit from figurative language to create images, but it also uses the shape of the words, their position on the page and generally the layout of the book to intensify the experience. Concretizing the words, *HoL* succeeds in holding up against its digital counterparts which have built-in audiovisual effects. *HoL* counts on the readers' familiarity with the medium to predict and pilot the reading and create an incredible experience. More importantly, *HoL* proves that there remains an immense unexplored potential in books, provided that writers challenge themselves, the medium and their readers.

#### **V.4.2.1.2.2 *House of Leaves*, a kinetic novel**

The usage of the medium in *House of Leaves* is not limited to creating audiovisual impact. The novel takes a step further and although it seems impossible to create movement in the stationary medium of print, *HoL* successfully adds kinetic effects to the story when needed. Once more, the book utilizes the tools available in the medium of print to realize the hidden potential of words, and adjust their shape and position on the page to indicate movement. The previous section briefly discussed how the novel simulates the gunshot and the movements of characters, but since the book contains some outstanding examples of putting words in motion, a succinct study of the kinetic qualities of *HoL* seems necessary. The following section concentrates on the group's attempt to leave the labyrinth (pages 285-295) and Navidson's last solitary expedition inside of it.

After Holloway disappears behind the closed door, the rest of the group approaches the staircase which connects them to home. Tom has been waiting for them at the top of the stairs and has prepared rope and other equipments for the team. While Navidson is sending Reston up in his wheelchair, he notices that "the excess rope at [his] feet starts to vanish while the rope he holds begins to slip across his fingers and palms with enough speed to leave a burning gash."<sup>613</sup> He has to let go of the rope, but to his surprise, Reston's "ascent only accelerates." Suddenly he notices that

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<sup>613</sup> *House of Leaves*, 285

the staircase is getting darker and the light illuminating the top is getting smaller. To his fright, Navidson discerns that either the staircase is stretching or he is sinking.

The impact of the mentioned episode has been extremely intensified through typography and layout. Danielewski has used a simple technique to depict the abnormal defiance of the house and its consequences such as Reston's ascent and Navidson's fall in order to employ the words not only to describe but to literally display the horrendous happenings. The words can be compressed or dragged letter by letter to indicate movement. Moreover, the words can be written in different directions. In the mentioned scene, the verticality of the words and their direction suggest the upward or downward movement. The readers will follow the story as it appears and of course, there are no rules against turning the book in all direction, are there?

Once more, the position of the words on the page helps the readers watch the scene from two different points of view: Tom's (and later Reston's) at the head of the staircase and Navidson's at the foot of the staircase. However, most of the story is told from Navidson's point of view. As if shot from a low angle, the position of the word "top" indicates Navidson's place at the bottom of the stair watching Reston going up. If this were not so, the word would not be written upside down (page 287). Interestingly, the increasing darkness of the stairway is portrayed by the blankness of page 288. By now, the readers have accepted the blank part of the page as the unknown fear, danger or supernatural power that encompasses the characters. Therefore, the position of the paragraph at the bottom of the page and what is narrated emphasize the weight of the blank page and intensifies Navidson's horror of what is happening around him. The following page, the most interesting in this section, displays the increasing growth of the staircase in height, length and width. The upside-down sentence on page 289 reads "Navidson is sinking . . . or the staircase is stretching expanding."<sup>614</sup> The words shape an incomplete three-dimensional cube and the words "stretching" and "expanding" are dragged letter by letter to demonstrate the enlargement of the staircase from

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<sup>614</sup> *House of Leaves*, 288

the point of view of Navidson, who has been positioned appropriately at the bottom of the page and seems to look up at the stretching staircase. The low angle, to use cinematic terminology one more time, inspires fear and conveys Navidson's insignificance and insecurity against the unknown phenomenon. The vicinity of letters close to Navidson in comparison to the increasing space among the letters as we get closer to the top of the staircase induces motion and makes the readers feel that the staircase is indeed expanding. Moreover, the readers may hold the book normally and read the upturned letters or turn the book over and read normally. The first position will help the readers identify with Navidson and feel his confusion while in the second one they are dominant and looking down on Navidson. This position emphasizes Navidson's helplessness and vulnerability. The readers who turn the book upside down will get a better understanding of Navidson's sinking because they are looking at Navidson from Reston's point of view. It is remarkable that the expansion of the staircase from the top angle (top of the page), is synonymous with the fall of the staircase. As if in an hourglass, the definition of "up" or "down" and "ascending" or "descending" changes according to where you are standing, in the lower bulb or the upper bulb. This reading justifies why Reston keeps moving upward after the rope slipped through Navidson's hands. Page 290 records the exact moment when it dawns on Navidson that the staircase is "dropping, and as it slips (page 290) dragging Reston (page 291) up with it (page 292)." While the quoted sentence was narrated from Navidson's point of view, which is why Reston is seen upside down (page 291), the rapid shift between the normally positioned and the upturned words in the three pages mentioned indicates the position of each character, and controls the direction of reading. Once more, the readers are required to turn the book every other page in order to continue reading. The shift, as already mentioned, enables the readers to look at the story from the point of view of all the characters involved, but more importantly, the constantly changing direction makes the readers experience the disorientation and the confusion the characters feel. After a while, the readers need to check the direction of the page number in order to make sure they are holding the book correctly.



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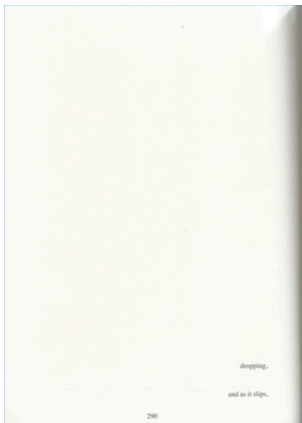
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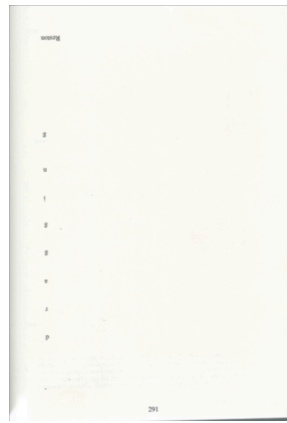
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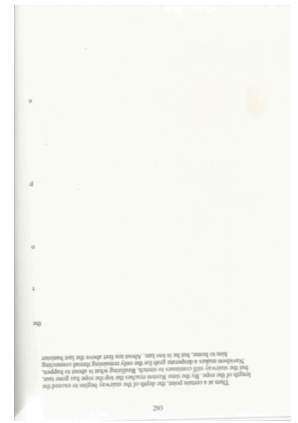
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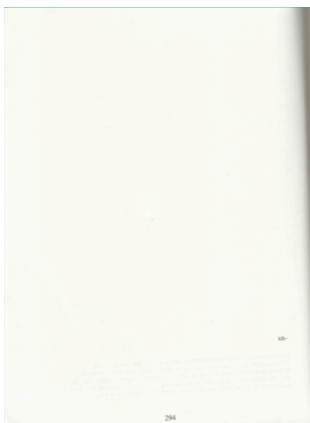
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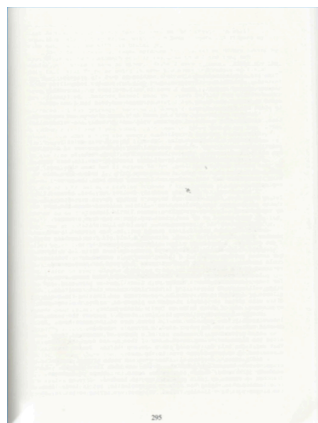
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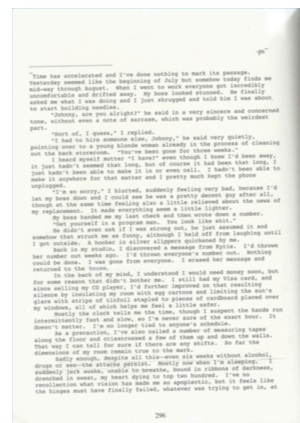
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Figure V.4.2.1.2.2.P.1  
*House of Leaves*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 286-296

The next three pages (293-296) portray Navidson’s struggle to get hold of the rope and get to the top of the staircase before it is too late. Reston has reached the top. The remainder of the rope — the length of which is pictured on page 293 using increasing spaces among the letters of “rope” — is hanging loose, but the still stretching staircase is robbing him of his last chance to go home. He finally gets hold of the thread, but as Navidson watches in slow-motion and we experience over

three pages, the rope snaps [sn- (page 294) -a- (page 295) -ps (page 296)]. The position of the words over these three pages and the en dashes among the letters help the reader imagine the leaning direction and disintegration of the rope. If we draw an imaginary line between the letters of the word “snaps,” we notice that the bottom to top composition of the letters indicates Navidson’s eye movement. The shift between high and low angles depending on how you hold the book once more emphasizes Navidson’s powerless position. The letter “a” and the en dashes on its both sides show the exact place where the rope is ripped. The space among the letters makes us read mechanically and slow down. While speed is implied in the word “snaps,” the hauling of the words over three pages helps the reader experience the abruptness of action in real time and the slowed-down action through Navidson’s incredulous eyes simultaneously. It takes three pages to read a one-syllable word. Diminishing the speed and the difficulty of reading helps the reader experience Navidson’s turbulent feelings.

Navidson’s solo journey into the labyrinth provides another example of how the shape and the position of the text indicate the unexpected movements of the house. For the last expedition into the labyrinth, Navidson decides to explore the corridors instead of the staircase. He takes several cameras, food and water supplies for two weeks, a medical kit and other necessities and loads them into a two-wheel trailer “secured to an aluminium-frame mountain bike.”<sup>615</sup> By this point, the readers expect and even anticipate the erratic behavior of the house. So when Navidson, who has been moving slowly due to the weight of his luggage, suddenly recognizes he does not need to pedal anymore, the readers know what is to come. Navidson realizes that “this hallway seems to be on a decline. In fact all I do now is brake”<sup>616</sup> After hours of heading downhill, he finds it wiser to return, since measuring his speed and distance shows that it will take him six or seven days to reach his starting point. However, when he turns around in the opposite direction, he notices he is moving

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<sup>615</sup> *House of Leaves*, 424

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid*, 424



downhill again. Confused and disturbed, he examines other directions. But again he is moving down a slope. His remark that “it’s as if I’m moving along a surface that always tilts downward no matter which direction I take” marks the beginning of another period of turbulence and disorientation for both Navidson and the readers.

The versatile text of *HoL* facilitates visualizing Navidson’s journey. The shape of the sentences is of great significance in visually describing the objects and happenings such as the architecture of the house (pages 436 and 437), the steps (pages 440 and 441) and the door (page 443). However, it is the text’s ability to adapt to the constant movements of the house, the contortion of the rooms, corridors and hallways that portrays Navidson’s helpless struggle against the variable house to move along and find a way out. The corridors Navidson passes change height, width and even direction. When “the ceiling drops on him” (page 427), the readers see the ceiling falling down through the vertical movement of the sentences from the top to the bottom of the page. The readers know that Navidson is situated at the bottom of the page, so they are not surprised to read that the ceiling “begins to graze his head” (page 428). Then as the text reads, the ceiling is rising again. The rising sentences which are leaning toward the left demonstrate both the rise of the ceiling and Navidson’s attempts to move forwards (page 429). As the ceiling disappears altogether,

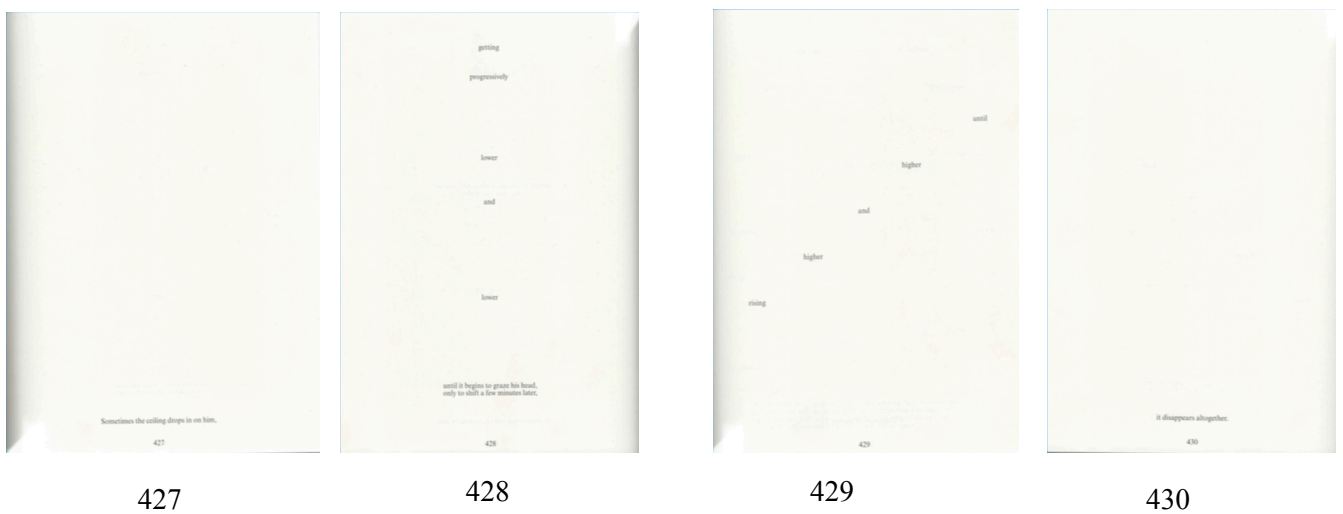


Figure V.4.2.1.2.2.P.2  
*House of Leaves*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp. 427-430



the mentioned rotation. The rest of the journey through the labyrinth includes doors that decrease in size and whose reduction is displayed by words that miss a letter or are cut in half to shape perfect rectangles (pages 442 to 449), and corridors which make Navidson crawl on his stomach to pass them (pages 450-458). These corridors shrink by changing the number of lines and the space among them. There are upward and downward slopes on the right, left, up and down (pages, 464, 465, 475, 476, and 483), horizontal and vertical lines which read from right to left, from left to right, from top to the bottom, from bottom to the top (pages 469-474). Yet another exemplary usage of words to indicate movement appears on pages 440 and 441 where Navidson climbs a ladder.

The section starts with Navidson climbing a new staircase, but the moment he reaches the

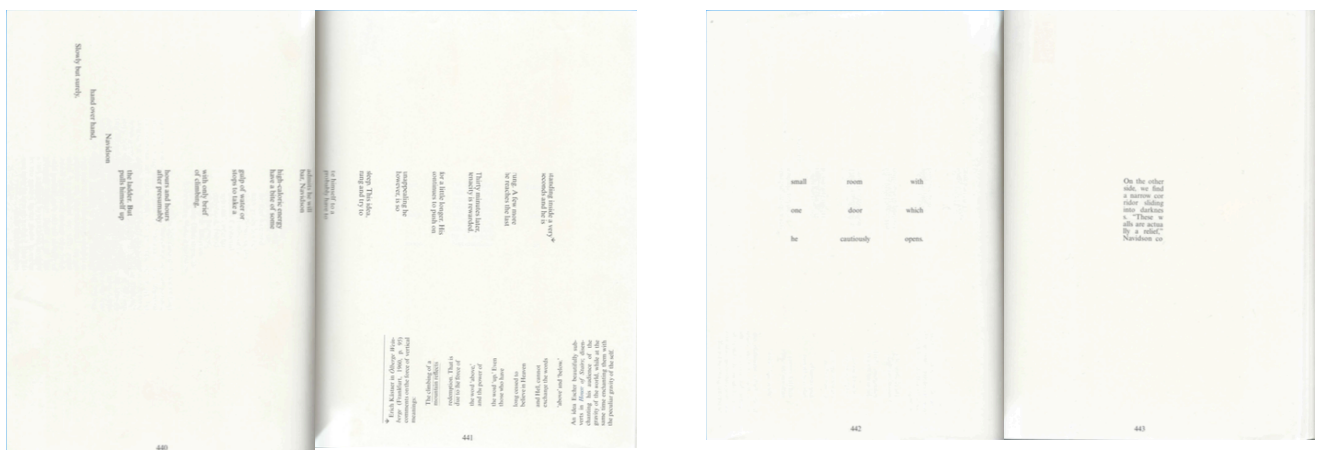


Figure V.4.2.1.2.2.P.4  
*House of Leaves*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp. 440-443

first step “the floor below him vanishes along with the bike, trailer, and everything else he left behind, including additional water, food, flares and lenses.”<sup>618</sup> Terrified by the “gaping pit” underneath, Navidson moves upward in a hurry. After hours of climbing, he reaches the last step and finds himself “in a small circular chamber without doorways or passages, just a series of black rungs jutting out of the wall leading up to an even narrower vertical shaft.”<sup>619</sup> The direction of the text on the following page shows the continuation of the steps while the width of the lines

<sup>618</sup> *House of Leaves*, 439

<sup>619</sup> *Ibid*

emphasizes the decrease of the passage in size. What is interesting about this ladder-like structure is that the readers have to imitate Navidson's movement in order to read the passage. As demonstrated in **Figure V.4.2.1.2.2.P.4**, the readers are required to turn the book on the side in order to continue reading, so they have the steps in front of them just like the character. They may start from the top out of the force of habit. If so, they will soon realize that the text does not make sense. At this point, they may realize that the direction of the text corresponds to Navidson's path and therefore, they should start from the bottom. The first three lines/ steps show how Navidson climbs out of the circular chamber and moves towards the rungs. The mentioned lines also hint at the direction of reading. As the readers climb with Navidson, the footnote, displayed parallel to the text, leads the readers downward and in the opposite direction in order to reach the following page which displays a small room with one door (pages 442 and 443). The flexibility of the layout and the constant change in the direction of reading reflects the changeability of the house and its turbulent environment. As a result, the readers who have to change direction at least five times to keep up with Navidson, share his disorientation and struggle to keep moving.

The mentioned examples and many more demonstrate how experimentation with the familiar format of the book creates outstanding results. The innovations of *HoL* stand out even more in comparison to formidable digital opponents such as *Tube Lines*. *HoL* simply reconfigures the book and its typography. It employs words as its most effective tools and concentrates on their shape and position as well as their possible meanings. The words and their components literally visualize objects and events in *HoL* and the layout is used to create an illusion of motion just like digital hypertexts. There is also another dormant component to the words that can be activated. The sound pattern, the most recognized technique in poetry, may be put into use to create audio effects if the text is read aloud. In short, nothing is new in *House of Leaves*, and yet everything is novel.

The difference of the medium and the fact that audiovisual and kinetic material can be easily included in digital hyperfiction make *HoL* an admirable attempt to prove books still have things to

offer, provided that the author(s) and the readers are willing to take the risk. Moreover, the convenience of the digital medium to author a multimedia text sometimes becomes its Achilles' heel, as the hypertext concentrates more on creating the experience and less on the development and readability of the fiction it presents. Such problems are considerably rare in a printed hypertext fiction such as *House of Leaves* where the special effects are designed to serve the development of the plot, intensify the experience of reading and engage readers actively. Printed hypertexts are fully aware of the delimitations of the medium and their status as closed hypertextual networks. Even though it may sound reductive, *HoL* basically relies on the well-recognized elements of the book and the habitual typography to question and develop our conception of printed book. Instead of banishing or imitating forerunning digital hypertexts, *HoL* (2000) tries to achieve the same results in the medium of print using the possibilities it provides. What makes *HoL* an exceptional experience is the mutual relation between the medium and the content: the innovative integration of the medium in the fiction and the original representation of the fiction through the medium. Furthermore, the printed book is the best example of a closed network. First, there is a dominant medium among the constituent media. Therefore, the other media and their components serve to satisfy the requirements which the dominant medium establishes. In the case of *HoL*, all elements serve the purpose of the story, which is an intricate network of references created in language, the dominant medium. Secondly, developing a coherent story is the main goal of *HoL*. The tendency of *Tube Lines* to favor the experience over the story affects the interpretation and bifurcations. *HoL*, however, considers the medium as a means to create a re-readable story. Therefore, *Tube Lines* fails to remember that the medium is nothing but a vessel to carry the story. Thirdly, while there are infinite links to be made, the network cannot be changed in essence. The users, readers in this case, are supposed to follow the clues, make assumptions, hypothesize and interpret, but the finished story will never change on paper. In *Tube Lines*, as a semi-closed network, the random appearance of some of the narratives and the inclusion of pictures and videos on screen create the illusion of

constant changeability. While the readers are required to strive to find the meaning, the network does not strictly determine a path towards certain themes. *HoL* is aware that despite the versatile look of the book, the surface stability of the fiction enables the readers to draw conclusions and build assumptions. This is the fact that *Tube Lines* ignores and thus, makes the process of interpretation even more complicated. Last but not least is the respect for and the trust in the readers that makes *HoL* a commendable prototypical hyperfiction on paper. On the one hand, the book trains the readers and encourages them to take the constant challenges it sends their way. On the other hand, it never oversimplifies, overstates the points or leads toward conclusions. The book trusts its readers with the difficulties and the ambiguities to expand its core text figuratively through interpretations and literally by creating branching texts. The MZD discussion forum confirms that the readers pick up on the challenge enthusiastically.

#### **IV.4.3 Reader-centrality**

Do not do me the discounts of underestimating my ability to interpret you, catch your signs, crack your codes.

*House of Leaves*<sup>620</sup>

All the previous arguments and examples clearly exhibit the high expectations of *House of Leaves* when it comes to readers. The book relies on the readers' visual literacy, the ability to close-read and the familiarity with different literary genres and traditions. However, the readers without the mentioned qualifications do not find the book incomprehensible, but a playfully designed puzzle that can be demystified through re-readings, connecting the dots and finding the references. It is not surprising that *HoL* has rapidly become a cult book. Academics take pleasure in the complexity of the book and its challenges and other readers are encouraged to apply themselves to the experience. To avoid repetition and yet discuss the third hypertextual trait in *HoL* in a section separate from

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<sup>620</sup> *House of Leaves*, 600

non-linearity and medium-consciousness, this part studies reader-centrality focusing on two texts: first, “Appendix II, Exhibition E,” also titled “The Three Attic Whalestoe Letters” which contains the letters Pelafina Heather Lièvre, Johnny Truant’s mother sent to him from the asylum, and second, the CD companion of *HoL*, *Haunted* by Poe (Anne Decatur Danielewski). The first part demonstrates how the readers, who have been trained by *HoL* easily make deductions, find clues and interpret the text by the end of the book, and the second part concentrates on *Haunted*, two tracks in particular: “Exploration B” and “5&½ Minute Hallway,” as a branching text.

#### **V.4.3.1 Appendix II: Pelafina Heather Lièvre**

Pelafina does not have a major role in the main narrative of *HoL*. First, she is only mentioned as Johnny’s mother in his story and second, her story, which has been narrated through letters in Appendix II, does not seem to reveal any connections to Navidson’s story. However, Pelafina is arguably one of the major characters of *HoL*. Her story offers some insight into Johnny’s backstory and justifies his choices. It owes its prominence to its reader-centrality and the afterlife of the novel rather than to its role in the progression of the narrative. As discussed in the previous sections, the typographical experimentation and innovations of *HoL* help the readers understand and visualize the novel. Moreover, the book attempts to change the readers’ opinion of the act of reading by suggesting unconventional reading methodologies with the hope of training readers who actively seek out clues and find the links. I would like to argue that the addition of “The Three Attic Whalestoe Institute Letters” under appendix and separate from the main narrative is not a coincidence. If *HoL* is a masterclass in reading, the exhibits at the end of the book, Pelafina’s letters in particular, are the consolidating exercises and the concluding project. Having undergone such an exhilarating experience, the readers cannot help but take part.

The extra material at the end of *House of Leaves* comes in four parts: “Exhibits,” “Appendix I,” “Appendix II,” and “Appendix III.” “Exhibits” includes Zampano’s instructions or personal

notes on how to compile the book. Johnny explains in his note to “Appendix I” that the fragments, however unrelated to *The Navidson Record*, may give us a glimpse into Zampano’s personality and writing. This appendix has six parts: A. “Outline & Chapter Titles,” which shows Zampano’s plan for the book, B. “Bits,” which presents fragmentary thoughts and comments on various topics, C. “... And Pieces,” which includes photos of Zampano’s manuscript, D. “Letter to the Editor,” which records Zampano’s criticism of historical inaccuracy and misguided information in an article about World War II Ithaca Model 37 Trench guns, E. “The Song of Quesada and Molino,” which has been left blank and the editors' note declares it “missing,” and F. “Poems,” which includes complete and incomplete poems allegedly written by Zampano. The editors’ note to “Appendix II” clarifies that this section was added to the second edition and due to the popular demand, Johnny had agreed to provide the editors with the extra material. Unlike Appendix I, Appendix II has no stated author. Some of the bits appear to belong to Johnny, but there is some contradictory evidence. This section also has six parts: A. “Sketches and Polaroids,” B. “The Pelican Poems,” C. “Collages,” D. “Obituary” for Johnny’s father, E. “The Three Whalestoe Institute Letters” and F. “Various Quotes.” “Appendix III” claims to offer contradictory evidence and is followed by the index.

The readers of *House of Leaves*, who have just finished reading a book which presents a complicated interconnected web of stories in detail, will find it difficult to treat the additional material as extra. The book has convinced the readers that each bit and scrap shall be incorporated in the story and will provide the readers with integral clues about the main narrative. Having just finished Johnny’s story on how to compile a book out of notes, bits, and photos, the readers find themselves in Johnny’s shoes. It is their turn to use the provided material and compose a coherent narrative. “The Three Whalestoe Institute Letters” creates the perfect opportunity for the readers to study an already existing, but underdeveloped character and determine her relation to the stories. It seems that Danielewski has intentionally excluded Pelafina from the main narrative in order to provide the readers with an opportunity to bring her back. Encouraging the search for justifiable



links among Pelafina and other characters, stories and places, *HoL* opens the text to new assumptions and interpretations, some of which have already been mentioned. Although the readers will never know for sure, whether their assumptions were part of the story, their attempts to justify the ambiguities of the book using the given clues is what keeps the narrative alive and creates a multitude of stories. In other words, encouraging the readers to expand the text, *HoL* creates a flexible text that is liable to change figuratively, an ever-growing house of leaves. It is interesting to know that the additional material expands the book by one-fourth just like the house. The readers, like Navidson, need to find a way to justify this abnormality.

The epistolary novella is an appropriate format for an exercise in expanding the text because the concept of letter writing implies the selection of information as well as interpretive and chronological gaps which make it perfect for an exercise in putting missing pieces into the puzzle and finding the links. The search for Pelafina's place in *HoL* has led to several theories and hypotheses mentioned on MZD forums, the most favorable of which has already been mentioned; Pelafina is the uncredited writer of the book. Since this brief section on Pelafina will not have the opportunity to study all the theories, it will focus on this well-argued hypothesis.

The theory that Pelafina is the writer of *House of Leaves* can be considered from two points of view. First, Zampano is a persona and Johnny is in fact compiling Pelafina's notes. Second, both Zampano and Johnny are figments of Pelafina's imagination. Apart from the similarity of the assigned font to Pelafina's story and the font of the real writer's name on the cover, the readers have recognized major similarities between Pelafina's style of writing and Zampano's. Johnny even mentions that his mother used to write him letters "full of strange colored words,"<sup>621</sup> the distinguishing quality of *HoL*. It is true that frequent allusions to Greek and Roman mythology, quotations from German, Latin, French and other languages, the complexity of syntax, the ambitious vocabulary and generally the outstanding command of the language bear striking

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<sup>621</sup> *House of Leaves*, 380

resemblance in both cases. Pelafina can turn an ordinary letter inquiring about Johnny's well-being and offering motherly advice into a dramatic monologue:

Apparently your fists refuse to rest. 15 battles in just one week! Is that true? My you do have a mighty heart. Even Marine Man Raymond must be proud.

My little Viking warrior! Let the monsters all tremors! Let tomorrow's Mead Halls rejoice! Their Viking soon will come! Micel bip se Meotudes egða, for þon hī sēo molde oncyrræð. [...]

Well, if you must strike then I certainly won't stand in your way. Just remember words can exceed the might of all blows. In some cases they can be fatal, for the rare few, even immortal. Try them out now and then on your foes.<sup>622</sup>

The eloquence, the attention to details, the irrefutable mastery of the language, the intertextual structure, the layout and many other similarities, which can be traced between Zampano's text and Pelafina's letters, make the readers constantly compare examples, return to the main narrative and in short, initiate and develop hypotheses. This ongoing process opens the text to infinite interpretations and bifurcations.

The letters and the foreword to the separate volume of *The Whalestoe Letters* also hint at the connection between Zampano and Pelafina. Walden D. Wyrhta, the information specialist who wrote the foreword, states that she was beautiful and possessed "fierce intelligence,"<sup>623</sup> but she was irrefutably mad. He tells the readers how his wife noticed in one short meeting what took him a few interactions and several conversations with Pelafina to recognize: "few get brighter than that."<sup>624</sup> Waheeda, Walden's wife, summarizes Pelafina in a metaphor: "It's an awful thing to see. That old woman's fine as silk, but she is stuck inside a wrecked old mill."<sup>625</sup> Her statement and Walden's observations confirm that Pelafina was undoubtedly mad and inscrutable at times. Moreover, Walden proceeds to say that sometimes she seemed "absolutely blind. Blind to the moment, to me,

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<sup>622</sup> *House of Leaves*, 595

<sup>623</sup> *The Whalestoe Letters*, xi

<sup>624</sup> *Ibid*, xi

<sup>625</sup> *Ibid*, xii

to the director, even to the walls. Her pupils suddenly blue to the whole world.”<sup>626</sup> The readers of *House of Leaves* immediately trace the blindness back to Zampano. It may be argued that her story appears in a separate section to hint at her separate existence from her work, the main narrative of the book. Additionally, the similarity between the irregularities and unconventional typography of the main narrative and the letters (Figure V.4.3.1.P.1) invite comparisons. Accepting Pelafina as the writer and the unorthodox layout of her letters as the manifestation of her mental affliction and descent into madness, opens the main narrative to a psychological reading of the labyrinths in the ever-changing house.

As Pelafina surrenders to paranoia, the layout and the content both reflect her turbulent mind and lead the readers to question Zampano and Johnny’s existence. In the postscript to a letter dated September 14, 1985, for instance, she tells Johnny that after her last episode, the New Director insists on reading and censoring her letters. The following letter, dated September 19, 1985 picks up the same theme and Pelafina asks Johnny to “place in your next letter a check mark in the lower

right hand corner. That way I’ll know you received the letter.”<sup>627</sup> The readers who have inspected the main narrative meticulously, or the readers who will re-read the main narrative after this letter shall find out that indeed a checkmark appears in the lower right hand corner of page 97, chapter VIII.

Interestingly, this chapter uses SOS in Morse code as its paragraph breaks and echoes Pelafina’s cry for help. Considering the fact

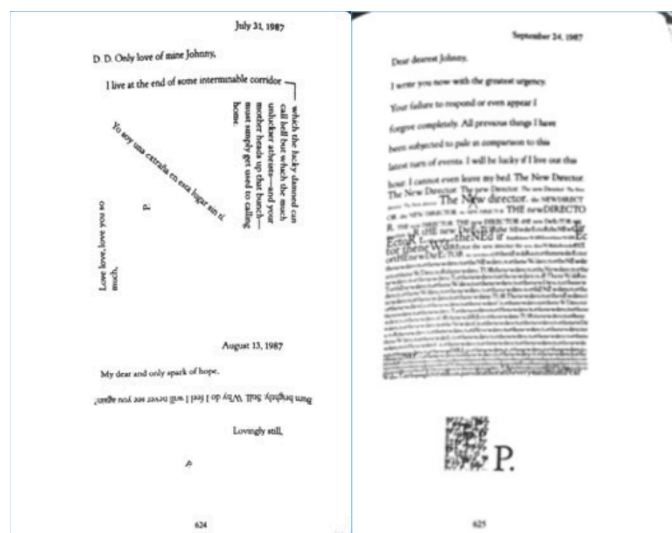


Figure V.4.3.1.P.1  
*House of Leaves*  
 Mark Z. Danielewski  
 pp. 624-625

<sup>626</sup> *The Whalestoe Letters*, xii

<sup>627</sup> *House of Leaves*, 609

that Pelefina hanged herself on May 5, 1989, this checkmark and the alleged communication between mother and son both confirms and causes chronologic discrepancies. First, Zampano's manuscript falls into Johnny's hands after Pelafina's death when Johnny is an adult. So if the readers take Zampano as a persona for Pelafina, Johnny has been intentionally deceiving the readers about the origin of the manuscript. This is not unlikely, as Johnny has proven himself to be an extremely unreliable narrator time and time over. However, the checkmark appears in a text which was allegedly written after Pelafina's death. Even if we ignore the timeline problems, how will Pelafina see the checkmark if it is not in a letter? How does she have access to adult Johnny's writing? Can it be that she has written both her letter and Johnny's response? If so, has Pelafina created both Zampano and Johnny? Have her letters been gathered in a separate section to emphasize her different diegetic level?

Pelafina's "increasingly suspicious" thoughts reappear in the letter dated April 27, 1987. In this letter, she instructs Johnny on decoding her future letters: "pay attention: the next letter I will encode as follows: use the first letter of each word to build subsequent words and phrases: your exquisite intuition will help you sort out the spaces: I've sent this via a night nurse: our secret will be safe"<sup>628</sup> This letter, whose strange punctuation makes it very different from Pelafina's precise style, is followed by a long encrypted letter, dated May 8, 1987. The readers of this letter, which I shall return to shortly, have to follow Pelafina's system to decode the text. The readers who painstakingly decode the letter dated May 8, 1987 will uncover another disturbing letter underneath the surface:

My Dearest Johnny,

They have found a way to break me. Rape a fifty-six year old bag of bones. There is no worse and don't believe otherwise.

The attendants do it. Others do it. Not every day, not every week, maybe not even every month. But they do it. Someone I don't know always comes when it's dark. Late.

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<sup>628</sup> *House of Leaves*, 619      There is no full stop after "safe" in the original.

I've learned not to scream, screaming gave me hope and unanswered hope is shattered hope. Think of your Haitian. It is far saner to choose rape than shattered hope. So I submit and I drift.

I let caprice and a certain degree of free association take me away. Sometimes I'm still away long after it's done, after he's gone—the stranger, the attendant, the custodian, the janitor, cleaning man, waiting main, dirty man — the night tidying up after him.

I'm in hell giving into heaven where I sometimes think of your beautiful father with his dreamy wings and only then do I allow myself to cry. Not because your mother was raped (again) but because she loved so much what she could never have been allowed to keep. Such a silly girl.

You must save me Johnny. In the name of your father. I must escape this place or I will die.

I love you so much. You are all I have.<sup>629</sup>

The content of this disconcerting letter opens the text to new interpretations which are beyond this discussion. However, this coded letter leads the readers to suspect that Pelafina may have concealed information in her other letters. This technique, if applied to other letters, leads us to interesting results. For instance, Zampano's name has been shrouded in Pelafina's letters. Readers report on MZD forums that part of the letter dated April 5, 1986, reads "Dear Zampano, who did you lose?"<sup>630</sup> The hypotheses that Pelafina wrote Zampano may be confirmed by Walden who explains in the foreword that "somehow she managed to make you feel as if she had invented you."<sup>631</sup> In reference to the metaphor his wife had used, he writes "I am simply satisfied to believe, if that is not too bold or rash a thing to state, that perhaps in the end, some of her fine silk did manage to escape the mill."<sup>632</sup> The silk implies the familiar portrayal of the storyteller as the weaver of threads who spins a story. Can *House of Leaves* be the fine silk this distinguished spinner has woven? Although some over-readings and projections are undoubtedly involved in the production of such

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<sup>629</sup> *House of Leaves*, 620-623

<sup>630</sup> <<http://forums.markzdanielewski.com/forum/house-of-leaves/house-of-leaves-aa/321-dear-zampano>>

<sup>631</sup> *The Whalestoe Letters*, xv

<sup>632</sup> *The Whalestoe Letters*, xiv

theories, the fact that the letters refer the readers back to the main narrative, encourages them to explore the text, apply new reading strategies and inspire new understandings is exactly what the novel intends to do. Whether Pelafina is Zampano, has created Zampano, or is merely Johnny's disturbed mother, her existence creates the opportunity to analyze and question *HoL* over and over again.

Pelafina as the writer answers some of the questions regarding the creation of such an extraordinary story and her mental disturbance justifies the unconventional typography. At the same time, some new questions are raised about the validity of the story. First, is it possible for a character with such short windows of lucidity to compose such delicate and detailed narratives? Second, Pelafina as the writer questions the existence of Johnny. Why would Pelafina create an imaginary son? The first question can be given both positive and negative answers based on the letters at hand. The main narrative of the book is a compilation of fragments and pieces that make it plausible for Pelafina to compose whenever in her right mind. The unconventional story told through an unusual use of typography can easily be classified under mad, schizophrenic, and disturbed. At the same time, the diversions from the norms, however unsettling, reflect the brilliant mind that could make sense of them.

The response to the second question about Johnny's existence is significant in proving Pelafina is the writer of the book and will justify the abrupt ending of Johnny's story. While reading the main narrative, the readers will not learn much about Pelafina or her relationship with Johnny. However, what we learn is shocking and thought-provoking. When discussing his scars, Johnny tells the readers about his mother, her episodes, and how she tried to kill him when he was seven. She was interrupted by Johnny's father and the incident led to Palefina's hospitalization in The Whalestoe Institute. Readers who believe that both Johnny and Zampano are fictional argue that Palefina succeeded in murdering her child and later brought an adult fictitious version of him back to life in remorse. The supporters of this theory mention parts of *House of leaves* to justify their

answer: Johnny's foster family in the main narrative and the letters, Johnny's silence in the letters and the story of the newborn baby at the end of Johnny's narrative.

Johnny briefly mentions his life with his foster family in chapter XIII. This section is rather different from Johnny's well-organized writing which usually narrates one complete story or contemplates on a single point from Zampano's writing. His footnotes start with his description of the burned parts of the manuscript, move on to Lude's visit and his advice to throw the manuscript out, then he suddenly remembers his abusive foster father and how his mother's letters helped him deal with the situation, thinks about his attacks and his collapsing body, shows paranoid behavior in checking his apartment and bolting the door, and reflects on his role in relation to *The Navidson Record* and Zampano. "Fly from the path" appears before most of the page breaks and implies a sense of confinement that brings to mind Pelafina's confinement in the mental institute. The separate extracts demonstrate suspicious similarities to Pelafina's letter-writing style. The content also reveals a strong resemblance between Johnny's account of his foster home and Pelafina's, and in some instances, Pelafina's letters provide the readers with more precise details about the events she did not witness.

Johnny's memory of his foster home begins with his explanation of how his constant fights at school led to a violent beating by his foster father. This incident results in two major events. First, Johnny starts making up stories as a defence and coping mechanism which gives him the time to prepare for the second event, his escape from home. His description of his storytelling skills links this section to Pelafina's letters and invites the readers to compare Johnny's account of his time in foster care with Pelafina's recount of the same events in her letters.

I started to befriend guile, doped Raymond with compliments and self-deprecating stories. Made-up stories. I dodged, ducked, acquired a whole new vocabulary for bending, for hiding, all while beyond the gaze of them all, I meticulously planned my flight. Of course, I admit now that even though I tested well, I still would never have succeeded had I not received that September, only weeks later, words to find me; my mother's words tenderly

catching my history in the gaps, encouraging and focusing my direction, a voice powerful enough to finally lift my wing and give me the strength to go.<sup>633</sup>

Returning to Pelafina's letters, the readers will realize that two letters, both written in September, fall under the mentioned category and that Johnny had summarized the events of these twelve months in a couple of pages. Surprisingly, Pelafina's letters present the readers with a complete and sometimes detailed version of the events that happened during those twelve months in comparison to Johnny's writing. This calls into question Johnny's claim that his mother has learned about his story by reading between lines, or in Johnny's words, "catching my history in the gaps." In the first letter dated September 29, 1983, Pelafina addresses Johnny as "Dearest Fighter" and advises him to proceed in a calm manner and blames his "sudden interest in pugilism" on her "questionable genetic bequeathal."<sup>634</sup> Johnny uses similar vocabulary to blame his panic attacks on his genes and "crumbling biology."<sup>635</sup> Moreover, her jaunty remark after pugilism, "Get thee to your COED,"<sup>636</sup> echoes Johnny's "acquired a whole new vocabulary." It is remarkable that Pelafina writes that Johnny comes from a long line of aggressors on the maternal side while he himself refers to his panic attacks and the possibility of madness, which takes the readers back to Pelafina and her mental affliction.

Another point that raises questions about Johnny's claim that his mother read his agony between the lines is that, according to Pelafina's letter, it seems that Johnny has not kept the line of communication open during this period. Her letters indicate that Johnny responds to every other letter and make the readers question Pelafina's account of the events. She writes on March 15, 1984 that "I do long to hear from your tender lips. Please write to me and recount everything."<sup>637</sup> The letter dated April 22, 1984 reveals that Johnny has responded, but he has not said much about the

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<sup>633</sup> *House of Leaves*, 325

<sup>634</sup> *Ibid*, 593

<sup>635</sup> *Ibid*, 325

<sup>636</sup> *Ibid* 593

<sup>637</sup> *House of Leaves*, 593



beating: “I am also troubled by your reluctance to tell me more about the incident.”<sup>638</sup> The following letter, dated June 3, 1984 opens with: “I have decided not to question your silence”<sup>639</sup> and the letter that marks the end of this period, dated September 7, 1984, which seems to be the letter Johnny refers to when contemplating on the past, reads: “To endure over two months without a word and then with the first words learn such terrible news tore me to pieces.”<sup>640</sup> Pelafina’s sentences in this letter echo Johnny’s quotation: “Bear in mind though that your mother is an infinitely more subtle reader than you care to give her credit for.” She then proceeds to write “for the life of me, I cannot understand your lasting silence on this matter, but I must put my faith in your instincts. Nevertheless do not do me the discourtesy of underestimating my ability to interpret you, catch your signs, crack your codes.”<sup>641</sup> However, the fact that Pelafina was not exactly in touch with her son, and that Johnny’s silence, her own chronic episodes, and the rarity of face-to-face visits — only one visit was mentioned in the letters — encourage the readers to question the authenticity of Pelafina’s first-hand information, namely facts and details about Johnny’s injuries and Raymond’s behavior. Interestingly, Johnny’s comments in the corresponding section in chapter XIII suggest his awareness of some degrees of fictionality:

A moment comes where suddenly everything seems impossibly far and confused, my sense of self derealized & depersonalized, the disorientation so severe I actually believe — and let me tell you it is an intensely strange instance of belief — that this terrible sense of relatedness to Zampano’s work implies something that just can’t be, namely that this thing has created me; not me unto it, but now it unto me, where I am nothing more than the matter of some other voice, intruding through the folds of what even now lies there agape, possessing me with histories I should never recognize as my own; inventing me, defining me, directing me until finally every association I can claim as my own — from Raymond to Thumper —Kyrie to Ashly, all the women, even the shop, my studio and everything else —

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<sup>638</sup> *Ibid*, 598

<sup>639</sup> *Ibid*, 598

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid*, 599

<sup>641</sup> *Ibid*, 600

is relegated to nothing; forcing me to face the most terrible suspicion of all, that all of this has just been made up and what's worse, not made up by me or even that matter Zampano.

Though by whom I have no idea.<sup>642</sup>

Accepting the above quotation as the confirmation of Zampano and Johnny's fictionality and their creation by Pelafina may provide a justification for the abrupt ending of Johnny's story. Moreover, Johnny's statement that "I am nothing more than the matter of some other voice" has a familiar ring. It reminds the readers of his reference to his mother as "a voice powerful enough to finally lift my wing and give me the strength to go"<sup>643</sup> and links this part to the story of the mother who let go of her infant son to ease his suffering.

Johnny's last entries appear in chapter XXI. As previously discussed, the organization of these entries which also appear in the introduction present a distraught Johnny. The paragraphs do not follow an order. Nor do Johnny's thoughts. In this stream of consciousness writing, he constantly digresses, reconsiders, retells, and in some instances, cancels his own narration repeatedly. But including the story of a mother with a dying infant as the concluding part of his narration seems the most aberrant of all his choices. Johnny has just supposedly burned the book and his final reflections on the nature of darkness before starting the last story indirectly point to the writer of the book:

Of course these are only images, my images, and in the end they're born out of something much more akin to a Voice, which though invisible to the eye and frequently unheard by even the ear still continues day and night, year after year, to sweep through us all.

Just as you have swept through me.

Just as I now sweep through you.

I'm sorry, I have nothing left

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<sup>642</sup> *House of Leaves*, 326

<sup>643</sup> *Ibid*, 325

Except this story, ~~what I'm remembering now~~, too long from the surface of any dawn, the one Doc told me when I was up in Seattle — <sup>644</sup>

The capitalization of the “Voice” and the confession that the images are not Johnny’s indirectly refer to another writer. While the passage can be read in reference to Zampano and how reading his work has changed Johnny’s life, it can also be read as a reference to Danielewski himself or Pelafina. What makes Pelafina a probable choice is the struck through “~~what I was remembering~~” and the mention of the doctor who helped Johnny in Seattle, the same friend the existence of whom he keeps denying and confirming. The mentioned extract has been placed between Johnny’s sudden recall of his mother’s attempt on his life and the concluding story of the baby. The connection among these three parts leads the readers to believe Pelafina is the writer of the book and justifies the story of the baby.

The word “remember” connotes Johnny’s confession from the previous page that finishing Zampano’s book and contemplation on the meaning of light and darkness make him recall his mother’s departure. What follows is a clear attempt at exonerating Pelafina. Johnny recalls that she had never tried to kill him, and that his father’s scream when he saw them was in fact that of his mother, who did not want to let him go, and that her apology letter from the asylum was just to help him deal with the situation:

She hadn’t tried to strangle me and my father had never made a sound.

I can see this now and I can hear it too.

Perfectly.

Her letter was hopelessly wrong. Maybe an invention to make it easier to me to dismiss her. Or maybe something else. I’ve no idea. But I do know her fingers never closed around my throat. They only tried to wipe the tears from my face.

I couldn’t stop crying.

I’d never cried that much before.

I’m crying now.

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<sup>644</sup> *House of Leaves*, 518

All these years and now I can't stop.

I can't see.

I couldn't see then.

Of course she was lost in a blur. My poor father taking her from me, forced to grab hold of her, especially when they got to the foyer and she started to scream, screaming for me, not wanting to go at all but crying out my name — and there it was the roar, the one that I've been remembering, in the end not a roar, but the saddest call of all — reaching for me, her voice sounding as if it would shatter the world, fill it with thunder and darkness, which I guess it finally did.<sup>645</sup>

While the reader would like to forget Pelafina's attempt on her child's life as much as Johnny does, this passage raises serious questions. First, the threat to Johnny's life was the reason Johnny's father sent Pelafina to an asylum. If the act had never happened, why would Johnny have remembered that "my poor father taking her from me, forced to grab hold of her"? Pelafina would not have left her family if this incident had not happened. Second, the description of Pelafina's "crying out my name" makes the the readers remember her letter on page 632 in which she simply repeats "Johnny" (**Figure V.4.3.1.P.2**). Interestingly, this letter follows Pelafina's clear confession to strangling her child and attempt at justifying her actions. In the letter Johnny mentions in the quotation above, dated March 19, 1988, Pelafina seems to to be lucid because, although it is placed between rather oblique letters that show her turbulent mental status, this confessional piece of writing describes the incident and explains the reasons behind it. Moreover, there are undeniable links between this letter and Johnny's last story.

Johnny's story involves a mother whose baby

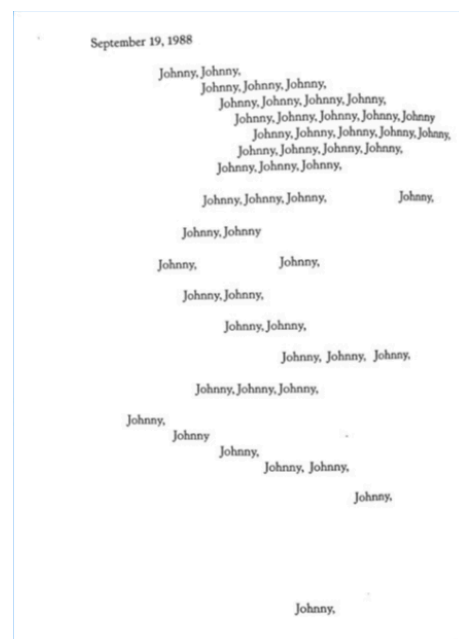


Figure V.4.3.1.P.2  
*House of Leaves*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 624-625

<sup>645</sup> *House of Leaves*, 517

was born with holes in his brain. The endeavors of the medical team keep the baby alive, but the doctor, appropriately named Nowell, warns the mother that the baby will not make it and that she should prepare herself to let him go. The mother, however, does not even sleep. She sits with her baby and whispers and sings to him. The days pass and the mother's words and melodies keep the baby alive. The nurses believe that they are witnessing a miracle and people believe that the baby will heal. The mother stays with the infant for four days and then asks the doctor to unplug her child. Incredulous that the mother has given up but willing to ease the baby's pain, the doctor explains the procedure and prepares the child and then:

The mother returns to her boy, gently drawing her fingers over the top of his head. For a moment everyone there swears she has stopped breathing, her eyes no longer blinking, focusing deeply within him. Then she leans forward and kisses him on the forehead.

"You can go now," she says tenderly.

And right before everyone's eyes, long before Dr. Nowell or anyone else can turn a dial or touch a switch, the EKG flatlines. Asystole.

The child is gone.<sup>646</sup>

The story seems out of place as the concluding part of Johnny's narration and highly confusing at first reading. After reading over five hundred pages about mysterious corridors, symbolically versatile places, adventurous explorations, the darkness within, and facing fears, this ending anecdote which seems to have no connection to either the characters or the narratives perplexes the readers and even infuriates them. On the other hand, this dissatisfying ending motivates the readers to seek connections to justify the inclusion of this story and ignites enthusiasm to interpret and in consequence, expand the network. One of the obvious links can be found between the mother's story and Pelafina's confessional letter to Johnny in the appendix.

Pelafina in her letter dated March 19, 1988 discusses how she tried to kill her son and explains her reasons. Although Pelafina opens the letter with "do not forget that your father stopped

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<sup>646</sup> *House of Leaves*, 521

me and took me to The Whalestoe,” she does not seem repentant. She believes that she tried to free her child from “the awful weight of living, so ridiculously riddled with so many lies of tranquility and bliss at best half-covering but never actually easing the crushing weight of it all.”<sup>647</sup> She relates the events in detail and takes the child’s lack of struggle as a sign of understanding and appreciation. At the same time, she contradicts herself by mentioning that the boy clamped his hands around her wrist, and how his grip loosened and his eyes became glassy. Even though she confirms that her husband saved Johnny and he recovered, the details of Johnny’s eyes wandering away and the hint at “my dear solitary boy who abuses his mother with his silence, who mocks her with his insupportable absence”<sup>648</sup> make the readers skeptical. The letter raises the question whether Pelafina blames this memory for Johnny’s reluctance to meet her or if Johnny was killed at the age of seven and his death justifies his “silence” and “insupportable absence.” Pelafina’s insistence that her attempt on her son’s life was an act of love and that not the act, but her failure is the source of her shame, reinforces the theory that the book is Pelafina’s way to deal with the guilt: “But it was love just the same Johnny. Believe me. For that, should I be ashamed? For wanting to protect you from the pain of living? From the pain of loving?”<sup>649</sup>

Even the seemingly redundant details of this letter link it to Johnny’s last pages and modify the readers’ understanding of the house and its story. Pelafina mentions, for example, that she had “long, ridiculous purple nails”<sup>650</sup> when she tried to strangle Johnny and Johnny watches the sunset stating: “reds finally marrying the blues. Soon night will unfold us all.”<sup>651</sup> He adds that he has his “own dark hallway” and refers to the incident as “those five and a half minutes.” Both phrases have been associated with the house up to this point. He also writes that the “roar” that he remembered belonged to his father and the readers cannot help but recall the roar that Navidson and his family

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<sup>647</sup> *House of Leaves*, 629

<sup>648</sup> *Ibid*, 629

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid*, 630

<sup>650</sup> *Ibid*, 630

<sup>651</sup> *House of Leaves*, 516

keep hearing from the depth of the house. These details, however vague, make the readers see the house in a new light, as a symbolic representation of the unconscious and an infinite feeling of guilt that keeps growing. There is no “fly[ing] from the path.”<sup>652</sup>

The letter indirectly justifies Johnny’s story of the dying baby. Although that story seems inappropriate to conclude a multi-layered story about a house which is bigger on the inside, it is a beautiful ending for the story of a mother who has taken her son’s life. The theory that Pelafina has written the book suggests that she has channeled her guilt into writing a version of her son that she would have despised in order to ease her pain and pacify her conscience. The adult version of her son is an aimless tattoo artist who hangs out with scoundrels and prostitutes, is not unfamiliar with drugs, has wasted his talent of storytelling and has betrayed his love for words. The adult Johnny is so different from the Johnny she portrays in her letters that it may lead the readers to sympathize with Pelafina or at least wonder whether Johnny would have been better off if he had not survived. The hypothesis, which credits Pelafina as the writer, justifies the placement of Johnny’s euthanasia story. By telling the story, Pelafina finally alleviates the pain, forgives herself and finally finds the courage to hang herself at the end of the letters. By concluding Johnny’s story, Pelafina prepares herself to finally set her son free.

The concept of reader-centrality in *HoL* promotes the readers from active participants in decoding the text, a familiar concept in hypertexts, to punctilious artisans, responsible for the expansion of the network. Defamiliarizing the book and modifying the functions of its elements, *HoL* provides the readers with the material to link parts of the story and develop interpretive theories. However, the book makes sure that the readers have enough contradictory material to cancel each theory and keep going on. Appendix III has been suitably named “contrary evidence.” The goal is not to reach a plausible conclusion. The book constantly encourages and equips the readers to seek clues, link pieces, make hypotheses, argue theories, and cancel them. Then do it all

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<sup>652</sup> *Ibid*, 323.

over again. The readers learn to read and re-read, deconstruct and reconstruct, and always look for hidden pieces and concealed connections. Wandering through the ever-expanding hallways of *House of Leaves* turns the readers into the architects of multiplying texts, these ever-growing houses of leaves. If you are not ready to take the challenge, be warned: “This is not for you.”

#### V.4.3.2 *Haunted*, a branching text

“Listen to the [house](#) ... “HAUNTED.” This sentence on the back cover of *House of Leaves* invites the readers to believe that *Haunted* is complementary to *HoL*, an assumption that cannot be farther from the truth. *Haunted*, an album by Anne Decatur Danielewski, also known as Poe, although indubitably related to *HoL*, is an independent work of art. The reciprocal relationship between the book and the album provides us with an appropriate example of a branching text that does not conceal its ties to the core text and at the same time, creates an original piece that can be studied on its own merits. In brief, *Haunted* manifests the characteristics of the ideal branching text.

The ideal branching text, which is usually the result of wreading, is supposed to stand on its own while exhibiting its similarities with the core text. If it is too dependent, the bifurcated text will lose the potential to become a core text itself. The relationship between the core text and the bifurcated text is not unlike the child-parent bond. While the child has definite similarities with the parent in terms of appearance and manners, she / he is undoubtedly her/his own person and has the potential to grow, develop new ideas and even create her / his own offspring. The fact that *Haunted* has been assimilated to *HoL* and yet can be analyzed as a separate text makes it an impressive example of branching texts which are the ultimate results of user-centrality in hypertexts. The first part of the following section explains how the branching texts and their view of the core text trigger a chain of interpretations and enable the readers to hypothesize, understand and explain the unjustifiable and less-explored parts of the core text. The second part offers a thematic study of



*Haunted* in order to demonstrate how the album creates an independent work of art in close collaboration with the core text.

*Haunted*, released in October, 2000 includes 18 tracks (listed in the following page) which both directly and indirectly develop the themes presented in *House of Leaves*. The titles of the tracks that clearly claim kinship with *House of Leaves* allude to various plots and subplots of the novel. “Exploration B” refers to Navidson’s Exploration A and his initial contact with the house. “5&½ Minute Hallway” is a reference to the VHS video Navidson made to show the spatial irregularities of the house.<sup>653</sup> As pointed out earlier, Johnny Truant hears a band playing this song and upon inquiry, hears that the song has been inspired by a book released on the internet called *House of Leaves*. “Dear Johnny,” “Could Have Gone Mad,” “Lemon Meringue” and “Spanish Doll” all allude to Pelafina and “The Three Attic Whalestoe Institute Letters.” While the titles contain obvious references to the book, the contents call attention to the book indirectly, and requires effort on the part of the listener to recognize the connections and interpret the songs in relation to the storylines.

The songs that do not contain direct references to the book demonstrate close thematic connections. Moreover, the background sound and special acoustics communicate non-verbal messages. The roar of the house that sometimes can be heard in the background, for instance, teleports the readers to the labyrinthine corridors and stairways. Furthermore, the album presents three recurrent characters whose songs and narrations link all the tracks: Young Annie, Adult Annie (the singer) and the father whose audios provide the listeners with hints and clues on how to interpret the songs and put them in the context of the story. This way, the album subtly develops some of the themes that *House of Leaves* has left unexplored, namely the Navidson’s children’s relationship with their father, and answers some questions about the house and its final dissolution. In other words, *Haunted* as a branching text offers an explanation of the core text and opens it up to

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<sup>653</sup> *House of Leaves*, 460

new interpretations and further re-readings. Since studying the whole album is beyond the scope of this discussion, the following part will show how some lines from the album may trigger re-readings of the novel and in consequence, clarify and expand the themes presented in *HoL*.

#### V.4.3.2.1 Re-visiting *House of Leaves* via *Haunted*

Difficult communication between parents and children is one of the central themes of *Haunted*. The first track, “Exploration B,” is a message Adult Annie leaves on her mother’s answering machine to inform her that the father has passed away that day. She emphasizes that her father “wanted you to know / he isn’t holding a grudge / and if you are, you should let go.”<sup>654</sup> Despite Annie’s pleas, her mother does not pick up the phone and the conversation never takes place. In *House of Leaves*, Navidson embarks on Exploration A to learn about the mysteries of the house. Annie’s journey is more personal in comparison and involves the exploration of her relationship with her parents, her father in particular. This understanding is confirmed by her father’s narration at the end of “Wild” which functions as a bridge between “Wild” and “5&½ Minute Hallway:” “Communication is not just words / Communication is architecture / Because of course it’s quite obvious / That a house which would be built without the sense / Without the desire for communication / Would not look the way your house looks today.” “5&½ Minute Hallway” responds to the unanswered questions the book has raised and turns the house and its abnormal changes into a symbolic representation of Annie’s relationship with her father, which is not unlike Will Navidson and Daisy’s

#### Track Listing

1. “Exploration B”
2. “Haunted”
3. “Control
4. “Terrible Thought”
5. “Walk the Walk”
6. “Terrified Heart”
7. “Wild”
8. “5&½ Minute Hallway”
9. “Not A Virgin”
10. “Hey Pretty”
11. “Dear Johnny”
12. “Could Have Gone Mad”
13. “Lemon Meringue”
14. “Spanish Doll”
15. “House of Leaves”
16. “Amazed”
17. “If You Were Here”
18. “Hey Pretty” (Drive-By 2001 Mix)

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<sup>654</sup> Poe. “Exploration B,” *Haunted*. Atlantic. 2000.

relationship.

“5&½ Minute Hallway” provides a reason for the growth of the house if the song is analyzed according to Zampano’s explanation of Daisy’s desire to play a game called “always.”<sup>655</sup> The persona, presumably Young Annie, resides in the hallway instead of the house and yet, “as far as I can see / you are still miles from me in your doorway.”<sup>656</sup> If we assume that “communication is architecture” as Annie’s father suggests, the expansion of the hallway refers to the growing distance between Young Annie and her father. While she thinks “five more minutes and I’ll be there,” it is impossible to get to the father’s doorway in reality. The house from this perspective represents the construction of a relationship. The addition and / or omission of rooms, corridors, and stairways, whose twists and turns create a maze, point out the complexity of establishing trust and intimacy. Furthermore, any addition to this physical structure might increase the metaphorical distance among the occupants. Adult Annie likens waiting in her father’s hallway to standing on a cliff and ends her song on a hopeful note: “I’m tumbling like an echo / Cause there’s only so far I can go / When you’re living in a hallway that keeps growing / I think to myself / Thirty seconds and I’ll be there.” But Young Annie interrupts to voice her exasperation at the end of the song: “you never listen to me.” Adult Annie’s expectations and regrets have never been communicated in her father’s lifetime and since now it is too late, she attempts to express her love, loss and frustration through her art. The song ends by the father’s narration that says “We cannot really experiment with love / As freely as we think / It is a much more complicated topic.”

The mentioned song provides the readers of *HoL* with some key information about the Navidson’s children’s conception of the house. Although the children have entered the ever-growing hallway, there is no account of what they have experienced in the book. They have never articulated what happened in the maze, but there are clues that they have both “faced the darkness.” Moreover,

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<sup>655</sup> *House of Leaves*, 73

<sup>656</sup> Poe. “5&½ Minute Hallway,” *Haunted*. Atlantic. 2000.

they have seen their father disappearing for a while, Jed's lifeless body taken out of the house and they have survived the assault of the house which took their uncle away. The book mentions that Chad remains silent because "he has no words to describe it"<sup>657</sup> and Poe sings that "there's more to this story/ than I have exposed." Re-reading this quite vague part of the novel while keeping Poe's concept of communication as architecture in mind, the readers can study the nature of the house and justify the unexpected disappearance of it. Focusing on the communication problems amongst the Navidson family, especially the parents and the children, is the key.

While the parents and even the story are too occupied with important issues to focus on the children, Chad and Daisy manifest worrying symptoms of anxiety, fear and rage following two significant incidents: first, the return of the rescue team with Jed's lifeless body and without Navidson and second, the violent attack of the house on its inhabitants. Even before these incidents, Chad exhibits an enraged attitude towards everyone and prefers to spend his time outside of the house while Daisy confines herself to her room and avoids interactions. Chad's teacher, Teppet C. Brooks, is horrified to see disturbing fantasies such as wolves at each other's throats or a dragon that "incinerated everything around it with a happy blossom of heliotrope and gamboge"<sup>658</sup> in Chad's drawings. Having given an assignment to draw a picture of their house to the students, Ms. Brooks is agitated by Chad's drawing of a house with no windows, doors or chimneys:

In fact, it was nothing more than a black square filling ninety percent of the page. Furthermore, several layers of black crayon and pencil had been applied so that not even a speck of the paper beneath could show through. In the thin margins, Chad had added the marauding creatures.<sup>659</sup>

This drawing persuades the teacher to take a look at Daisy's drawing in the kindergarten. To her surprise, she finds the exact same drawing in her class. The only difference is this time, the picture of the "impenetrable square" was drawn "with not even the slightest speck of white showing

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<sup>657</sup> *House of Leaves*, 545

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid*, 313

<sup>659</sup> *House of Leaves*, 313

through.”<sup>660</sup> She decides to take a look at the house and talk to the parents. At the house, she finds more than just a room full of the mentioned drawings:

Brooks was hardly prepared for the slaughterhouse she was about to enter: a woman sobbing in the living room, a big man holding her, two bodies in the kitchen surrounded by blood and on the staircase, Chad sitting next to his sister who kept quietly singing to no one in particular words no one else could understand — “ba.dah.ba-ba.”<sup>661</sup>

She has arrived exactly when Reston and Tom get Holloway’s team out of the house and lose Navidson inside. The book describes the children’s reaction to Jed’s body as “disquieting”: “They both seem so removed. Almost in a daze.”<sup>662</sup> Their quiet question about their father’s whereabouts and their silent retreat to the staircase when they do not get an answer is heart-wrenching. Moreover, they step into the blood and create a horrifying image of “small red imprints on the floor.”<sup>663</sup> Accepting the house as a representation of the relationship the parents built with their children, Chad and Daisy’s drawings of the unyielding house filled with violent animals and the actual dead bodies and bloodshed hint at what has been left unsaid.

The second and even more disturbing episode that ensues shows the house’s attempt on the children’s lives when it virtually engulfs them. The incident also confirms the role of Navidson’s twin brother, Tom, as the mediator between the children and their parents who have completely drifted apart. After Navidson’s disappearance, the children show their fear and anger in different ways. Chad escapes the house and refuses to come in or talk to his mom until Tom finally finds him in the branches of a tree. Later he spots Daisy “— her forearms scrawl with strange scratches — swaying in front of the hallway screaming “Daddy!” despite the absence of a reply, the absence of

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<sup>660</sup> *Ibid*, 314

<sup>661</sup> *Ibid*, 314

Daisy’s intelligible song has been featured in the eponymous track of *Haunted* in which Adult Annie sings about being haunted by the past lies, actions and promises and how there is no escape. Young Annie’s voice provides the refrain, “ba-dah, ba-ba.”

<sup>662</sup> *Ibid*, 317

<sup>663</sup> *Ibid*, 317

even an echo.”<sup>664</sup> The distraught children finally make Tom overcome his fear and step into the hallway to rescue his brother. The image of Daisy calling for her father where he had disappeared may be the very moment on which “5&½ Minute Hallway” focuses. However, there is no one in *Haunted* who might be able to bridge the chasm between the parents and the children.

While avoiding direct references to the novel, *Haunted* hints at a new interpretation of the house and what it represents in *HoL*. On the one hand, the house represents the family and their relationship. Karen and Navidson have bought the house to work on their marriage. On the other hand, the extra space that appears in the house drives them apart. As Annie’s father states, communication is architecture and therefore, can have different functions. Corridors and hallways may bring people together or put space between them. Then the appearance of extra space that keeps growing in *HoL* insinuates that the lack of real communication will end in disaster. The turbulent behavior of the house that entails Navidson’s return serves as an appropriate example.

Navidson’s return does not bring the family closer together as expected. Karen is still preparing to leave and Navidson is still obsessed with the house. *Haunted* captures a horrifying image of the isolated couple in “Walk the Walk” when Adult Annie describes the mother spending “ten years sitting by a window, scared if she spoke, she would die of a heart attack / She listened as her dreams silently screamed / They drowned like little dolphins caught in a fishnet.” The image of the father, who “had a sad, sad story livin’ in his eyes” in the same track, intensifies the solitariness of the members of this household. The emotional rift between the parents leaves Tom to care for the children. Since Tom has been the only person who has played with the children and told them stories, it does not come as a surprise that it is he who attempts to mend the rift that has opened up between the parents and the children. He finally sacrifices his life to get the children out of the house after the second aforementioned horrendous episode.

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<sup>664</sup> *House of Leaves*, 320

The violent behavior of the house comes as a shock to the readers. Up to this point, it had been necessary to enter the labyrinth to experience the abnormalities and hear the growl. Suddenly the unsolicited expansion is ready to swallow the characters. Putting this episode in the context of Poe's song, the readers may justify how the expansion of the house as the distance among the characters and the lack of communication lead to annihilation. The evasion of dialogue and the suppressed anger animate this spatial abnormality to the point that the house literally attacks the residents through a figurative function of self-inflicted silence:

The whole place keeps shuddering and shaking, walls cracking only to melt back together again, floors fragmenting and buckling, the ceiling suddenly rent by invisible claws, causing moldings to splinter, water pipes to rupture, electrical wires to spit and short out. Worse, the black ash of below, spreads like printer's ink over everything, transforming each corner, closet and corridor into awful dark.<sup>665</sup>

In short, the house transforms into Daisy and Chad's drawings, an impenetrable square with not even the slightest speck of white showing through. In this critical situation in which the aperture created by the lack of communication is literally killing the family, Tom comes through in his moderator role and saves Daisy and the family on the larger scale.

The moment the house starts to heave, Tom re-enters to look for the children. Chad has already snuck out, but Daisy has gotten stuck in the kitchen. The floor is moving backward like a conveyor belt and makes it impossible for the five-year-old to reach the door. To quote "5 & 1/2 minute Hallway" once more, she struggles to cross the thirty-second distance and to get out, but the growing space works against her. In this situation, Tom steps in, cradles Daisy in his arms and "trying to outrace the void yawning up behind him,"<sup>666</sup> gives Daisy to Navidson through the window and "tumbles into blackness."<sup>667</sup>

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<sup>665</sup> *House of Leaves*, 345

<sup>666</sup> *House of Leaves*, 345

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid*, 346

The book clearly states that even if the children showed willingness to communicate their fear, the parents would be too occupied to listen. That is why the final rescue depends heavily on Tom in the role of the mediator. Navidson's fascination with the exploration and Karen's focus on her relationship with her husband impede communication with the children. In the parallel editing of the footage of Navidson's documentary at the end of chapter V, where Karen states that she is ready to leave and Navidson confesses to lying to Karen, nobody notices Daisy's direct reference to the house. Zampano's commentary accurately notes that everyone assumes that Daisy's request to play "always" with her father is "just a childish neologism" while "'always' slightly mispronounces 'hallways.' It also echoes it."<sup>668</sup>

"5&½ Minute Hallway" studies the house from a new angle that the book avoids discussing. The nature of the house and the reason for its turbulence remain obscure in the book, since Navidson, Zampano and Johnny's stories and the simulation of the experience for the readers are of greater significance. Poe's understating of the house as a relationship, in fact, helps the readers of *House of Leaves* make sense of some unexplored subplots. Karen and Will Navidson, for instance, have moved to Ash Tree Lane to rebuild their relationship. The closet appears at the first signs of conflict. Karen's claustrophobia and Navidson's thirst for exploration lead to further disputes. Karen refuses to set foot inside the extra room and Navidson leaves her behind. They avoid talking to each other about the house while each one tries to find a remedy on their own. As they grow apart, the extra space in the house expands. At some points in the novel, the extra space literally divides them. The extension of the house and its development into a labyrinth, which drives the characters to madness, represent the complicated and sometimes perilous relationship. Poe in "5&½ Minute Hallway" refers to the lack of communication that results in growing space among the characters: "[...] there's more to this story / Than I have exposed / There are words made of letters / Unwritten and yes, I forgive you for leading me on." The unwritten words and the blank space they create

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<sup>668</sup> *Ibid*, 73



represent the architecture of the house and contribute to the kinetic quality of the book. Therefore, the house has been created of words either uttered or unvoiced. If the conversation takes place, the extra space will be filled with words and the labyrinthine extra space on paper will disappear.

The denouement of the story confirms the mentioned reading. Since all the evidence points to Navidson's disappearance inside the maze, Karen moves back in the hope of finding her husband. However, her claustrophobia and fear of unknown impede her entrance into the extra room. The last descriptions of Navidson in the labyrinth allude to his imminent death: "he knows his voice will never heat this world. Perhaps no voice will. Memories cease to surface. Sorrow threatens to no longer matter. / Navidson is forgetting. Navidson is dying. / Very / soon he / will vanish / completely in the wings / of his own / wordless / stanza: / Except / this stanza / does not remain / entirely / empty."<sup>669</sup> The description of Navidson's death as a wordless stanza, however poetic, seems vague. The accompanying illustration shows immense brackets made of fifteen small ones on each side which contain a small asterisk in the upper right corner. It seems that the colon has been used so the text and the bracket look equal on pages 484-5 and 486-7 visually. *Haunted* brings light to this mysterious bracket.

The mention of the extra space as the distance between the characters that "5&½ Minute Hallway" helps the readers solve the mystery of pages 486-7. The text on page 484 indicates Navidson's imminent death and the colon equals large and empty brackets. The text

on page 486, however, mentions "the stanza does not remain entirely empty" and the colon equals the same bracket which contains a small asterisk. While there seems to be no connection between



Figure V.4.3.2.1.P.1  
*House of Leaves*  
Mark Z. Danielewski  
pp. 486-487

<sup>669</sup> *House of Leaves*, pp. 483-486 There is no full stop in the original.

the asterisk and Navidson's declaration of surprise at the sight of light on the following page, the last part of the chapter describes the end of the Navidson's video in quite a despondent manner:

Sure enough the final frames of Navidson's film capture in the upper right-hand corner a tiny fleck of blue crying light into the void. Enough to see but not enough to see by.

The film runs out.

Black.

A different kind of black.

Followed by the name of the processing lab.<sup>670</sup>

The readers may take the asterisk as the "tiny fleck of blue light," especially as Navidson says "Light [...] Can't. Be. I see light. Care ——" <sup>671</sup>This is in contrast with the readers' knowledge of Navidson's dire situation. In the following chapters, we read that he has disappeared in the house. None of his belongings has been found. When Karen moves back in, she has no clue that Navidson is alive and in the house. The cameras Navidson had installed around the house are still running. They record the "real emptiness," <sup>672</sup> which opens behind her one night, and reinforce her determination to explore the darkness that is consuming her family. She gets a flashlight and steps in:

As everyone knows, Karen stands there on the brink for several minutes, pointing her flashlight into the darkness and calling out for Navidson. When she finally does step inside, she takes no deep breath and makes no announcements. She just steps forward and disappears behind the black curtain. A second later that cold hollow disappears too, replaced by the wall, exactly as it was before, except for one thing: all the children's drawings are gone. <sup>673</sup>

It will take the readers longer and possibly a couple of re-readings to understand that the asterisk that enters the empty brackets represents Karen visually and wonder whether Navidson's last words

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<sup>670</sup> *House of Leaves*, 489

<sup>671</sup> *Ibid*, 488

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid*, 522

<sup>673</sup> *House of Leaves*, 522

“Light [...] Can’t be. I see light. Care —” is a reference to Karen’s flashlight. The book even hints at “Care” as the inaccurately recorded “Karen” in the words of “esteemed translator Sofia Blynn:”

The most important light Karen carried into that place was the memory of Navidson. And Navidson was no different. Though it’s commonly assumed his last word was “care” or the start of “careful.” I would argue differently. I believe this utterance is really just the first syllable of the very name on which his mind and heart have finally come to rest. His only hope, his only meaning: “Karen.”<sup>674</sup>

Keeping in mind that “asterisk” means “little star” and that it was historically used to indicate the date of birth<sup>675</sup>, it may be concluded that the asterisk has a broader meaning than the twinkling of the flashlight Karen is carrying. Karen’s entrance and the consequent conversation indicate the figurative birth of a new relationship. The unsaid will be communicated. The brackets will be filled with words and the extra space will vanish. Moreover, the asterisk fulfills its typographical function by giving a comment on the last section: Navidson will not die. He will follow the little star to safety. This reading easily justifies the disappearance of the house at the end of Navidson’s story.

Whenever Navidson finds himself confronted with the house, his safe escape depends on the entrance into the labyrinth of another person with whom he has an intimate yet troubled relationship. The first time that he is trapped in the extended hallways, Tom, the twin brother with whom he had lost touch the past years, overcomes his fear of the unknown and steps into the darkness to save him. Tom’s death when saving Daisy, Navidson’s daughter, triggers Navidson’s final exploration which ends with the dissolution of the house and the reunion of the family. The second time, it is Karen who overcomes her paralyzing fear of dark and closed places and steps into the labyrinth to save her husband. Considering Poe’s interpretation of the house as the physical manifestation of a metaphorical distance, these two incidents may offer an explanation for the unexpected dematerialization of the house: “Regardless of what finally enabled her to walk across

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<sup>674</sup> *Ibid*, 523

<sup>675</sup> Strizver, Ilene. “Important Symbols.” *Fonts.com*, [www.fonts.com/content/learning/fontology/level-3/signs-and-symbols/important-symbols](http://www.fonts.com/content/learning/fontology/level-3/signs-and-symbols/important-symbols).

that threshold, forty-nine minutes later a neighbor saw Karen crying on the front lawn, a pink ribbon in her hair, Navidson cradled in her lap.”<sup>676</sup> The house has disappeared.

The outcome of Navidson’s expeditions and Karen’s selfless decision seems anti-climatic at first reading. While the readers expect another epic encounter between the house and its inhabitants after the suspenseful cliffhangers of chapter XX and Karen’s out of character decision to enter the labyrinth, the conflict resolves the moment Karen and Navidson get together. Karen enters the labyrinth and the house simply dissolves around them. Poe’s understanding of the house as the representation of alienation among characters sheds some light on this ending. The hostile part of the house exists due to the conflictual relationship among its inhabitant. The moment the residents willingly start to communicate, the house loses its purpose and naturally disappears. The denouement, however confusing at first, makes sense if put in the context of the song.

“5&½ Minute Hallway” is not the only track that offers insight into the complicated relationship among the characters of *House of Leaves*. However, explaining the core text is not the sole purpose of the album. *Haunted* also expands the core text by studying the ambiguities of the book, the parents and the children’s relationship in this case, from a new outlook. For instance, while the album is presented from Adult Annie’s point of view, Young Annie finds a chance to interrupt and comment nonetheless. Adult Annie’s lyrics focus on the long-lasting consequences of miscommunication and misunderstanding. She expresses her fears, sense of loss and loneliness and confesses that she is still wandering in the hallways of the confounded house: “I’m haunted / By the hallways in this tiny room / The echoes there of me and you / The voices that are carrying this tune / Ba dah ba ba.” The seemingly meaningless chant at the end echoes Daisy’s repetition of “ba.dah.ba-ba” after the violent events inside the labyrinth. The mantra she used to console herself links Adult Annie to her younger version who ends the song by saying “I think I am crying. I don’t cry. My heart will break before I cry. I will go mad.” The reference to madness might remind the readers of

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<sup>676</sup> *House of Leaves*, 523

the older female generation in *HoL*, Pelafina's afflictions and Karen's struggles and bring it full circle.

While *Haunted* is thematically linked to *House of Leaves* and, as demonstrated in the only studied track, expands, and gives insight into the ambiguities of the core text brilliantly, it is an independent piece as a true branching text should be. *Haunted* builds its own world which, although it bears some resemblance to the world of *HoL*, is strikingly different. The independence of the album from its worthy opponent is especially evident in the interpretation of the listeners who are not under the spell of *HoL*. The following part is an attempt to display this distinctive quality of branching texts and study the lyrics on their own merit in order to demonstrate the potential of a branching text on the verge of turning into a core text itself.

#### **V.4.3.2.2 *Haunted* without the house**

Standing alone as an independent work is one of the indicators of a good branching text. This quality elevates the branching text from a mere adaptation to an independent yet intertextual text with the potential to initiate a hypertextual network. *Haunted* with its various musical style, interconnected narrative songs and multiple voices undoubtedly meets the criteria.<sup>677</sup> Poe has created her own haunted house.

*Haunted* is an exploration of a daughter's relationship with her father. The album begins with "Exploration B" in which Adult Annie leaves a message on her mother's answering machine to tell her "Daddy died today." "Exploration B" marks the beginning of a turbulent journey into Annie's mind and an expression of her thoughts and feelings after her father's death. She rages, revisits the events, reminisces, mourns, and finally forgives her father and makes peace with his

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<sup>677</sup> In his review of the album, Steven Clark states that the impressive tracks have "too many musical styles to count" and adds "it has everything from folk to a Radiohead-esque sound to a hard, electronic drum beat. Clark, Steven. "'Haunted' by Her Father's Death, Poe Finds Inspiration." *The Red and Black*, The Red & Black, 20 Mar. 2001, <[www.redandblack.com/variety/haunted-by-her-father-s-death-poe-finds-inspiration/article\\_78e27cbe-f9dc-58bd-a0bb-63f660ca2a85.html](http://www.redandblack.com/variety/haunted-by-her-father-s-death-poe-finds-inspiration/article_78e27cbe-f9dc-58bd-a0bb-63f660ca2a85.html)>

death. The tracks have been ordered in a way that the listener can follow Annie in different stages of her life and of her grief. Even the music critics have agreed that the album “is more like a story anyway.”<sup>678</sup> The voice of the departed father and Young Annie that interrupt to add, reject and sometimes to intensify the feeling have enriched this enchanting exploration. The profusion of the music styles, background sounds and voiceovers that remind the listener of *HoL* leaves the audience engrossed in the story and overwhelmed with feelings. Moreover, the mentioned qualities also indicate the potential of *Haunted* to be expanded into a hypertextual network. The richness of the musical styles, which respond to the variety of genres in *HoL*, coupled with the intricate narrative the tracks entwine, results in a branching text which stands equal to its prominent core text without denying the connections.

*Haunted* takes Tom, the bridge between the children and the parents, out of the equation to study the long-term impact of loss, loneliness and lack of communication by focusing on the future life of the characters, Annie / Daisy in particular. The seventeen tracks of *Haunted* have been ordered to follow Annie’s journey from rage and loss to forgiveness and inner peace in the same way a novel develops the plot. The tracks are connected by either conversations, or narrations. Sometimes short conversations between Young Annie and Adult Annie or Young Annie and her father link the songs and sometimes narrations by the father, Adult Annie or Young Annie connect the tracks. The journey that starts with the lonely message in “Exploration B” is pursued track by track and demonstrates how Annie copes with the memories, regrets and frustrations that this simple unanswered message triggers. In “Haunted,” the eponymous track of the album, Annie expresses that she is still haunted by the past. The fact that she addresses an unnamed ghost, who she claims she would always want, need, love and miss, and asks him to come closer for a farewell look before she lets go of him, confirms that the besetting memories involve her father. In a way, she is evoking

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<sup>678</sup> Wilson, MacKenzie. “Haunted - Poe | Songs, Reviews, Credits.” *AllMusic*, AllMusic. <[www.allmusic.com/album/haunted-mw0000090574](http://www.allmusic.com/album/haunted-mw0000090574).>

a ghost by opening this creative conversation with the past. The father and Young Annie's conversation in which the latter explains that she cannot cry, and that she will go mad instead, mark the transition to "Control" which represents a strong woman in charge of her destiny. She basks in the glory of her power and enjoys her newly found freedom. However, "crashing percussion" and "goth-like string arrangements" that intensify the impact of the emotional message imply that she is still full of rage.<sup>679</sup> The song ends by the father's voice while repeating "it's your world," insists that, she cannot do what she wishes. His authoritative tone and high expectations awaken the younger version of Annie who interrupts to say she is scared. However, the father is still heard talking about "predictable deterioration" and the cease of the creative energy. His remarks link "Control" to "Terrible Thought" in which the speaker vaguely discusses her fears and worries.

"Control" ends in subordinate clauses are completed in "Terrible Thought." These clauses suggest that the father's rejection and the mention of creative barrenness have shaken Annie and affected her self-esteem. However, comparing the thought to a drunken and unwelcome roommate who cannot be evicted, she insists that she would not let the thought or the father's opinion control her mind. The song ends with the father asking Young Annie about her greatest worry. She answers: "sometimes I can't hear myself thinking," a predictable answer from a daughter whose father's voice usually silences her train of thought even years later.

The tumultuous journey of Annie continues with "Walk the Walk" in which she reviews her parents' regrets and mistakes, and states that she intends to "walk to the beat of my own drum." This track reveals the speaker's desire to get over the fears her relationship with her father has induced. The father interrupts her to say "it's a wonderful idea, but it doesn't work." The dialogue between Young Annie and her brother ends the song with a direct reference to *House of Leaves* and is a reminder of Chad and Daisy:

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<sup>679</sup> Wilson, MacKenzie. "Haunted - Poe | Songs, Reviews, Credits." *AllMusic*, AllMusic.<[www.allmusic.com/album/haunted-mw0000090574](http://www.allmusic.com/album/haunted-mw0000090574)>

**Young Annie** There's someone knocking on the wall.

**Another child** Like an echo.

**Young Annie** Ba dah ba ba

The allusion to the part of the book where Navidson is deep down in the labyrinth and has lost contact with the children once more brings the readers' attention to the children and their relationship with their father. Annie, the adult version of Daisy, still suffers the consequences of the distance between herself and her father. She uses the same strategy to get over being lost in horrifying corridors of the house. She writes songs. The innocent "Ba dah ba ba" that Daisy chanted to calm down has turned into elaborate music, but the problem persists. The following track, "Terrified Heart," features another phone message that reveals Annie's fears and loss of self-esteem. This one remains unanswered too.

The course of the events justifies Annie's frustration and fury in "Wild" in which Annie acknowledges her discontent and rage, and addresses the person whose return has caused her anguish. She repeatedly inquires about the intentions behind this unexpected visit and implies that this person has authority and control over her. She states that they have broken the rules they had written to contain her, thus, she has gone wild and "untamed." Her analogy of hunter and prey and her hint that she has been preparing for this return and consequential attack make the ending and the father's comment on communication more surprising and raise the question whether "Wild" is not about a much anticipated confrontation.

"5 & 1/2 minute Hallway" resumes the theme of isolation and conflict by drawing on the father's reference to communication as architecture and compares the distance between the daughter and the father to an ever-growing hallway. In "Not A Virgin," Annie expands the anger and rebellion against the father to the whole patriarchal society and challenges, patronizes, and mocks the established social norms. She maintains this attitude in "Hey Pretty" in which the persona invites the addressee to join her in the exploration of her world. This song corresponds to Johnny's Truant's



encounter with Kyrie in *House of Leaves* (pages 88-90). “Hey Pretty” revisits this explicit narration from the woman’s point of view quite discreetly and with a focus on communication rather than the explicit content. She clearly states that she determines the direction the relationship shall take by singing “I am the sole architect / I build the shadows here / I build the growling voice I fear / You add it up, but to do better than that / You’ve got to follow me, boy / I’m trying to show you where I’m at [...]” The sarcastic question the woman asks at the end of the song, “do you get the gist of this song now?” confirms that that Annie is finally regaining her confidence and starting the final phase of her self-searching odyssey.<sup>680</sup>

The short eleventh track, “Dear Johnny,” confirms the connection between “Hey Pretty” and the book and prepares the readers among the listeners for “Could Have Gone Mad,” “Lemon Meringue,” and “Spanish Doll” which all contain references to Pelafina and *The Whalestoe Letters*. *Haunted* takes a step further in each song and introduces new themes. Annie in “Could Have Gone Mad” invites a new person into her life and informs them that she has room in her heart for them and everybody who comes with them. Midway through the song, she notices the similarities between the said person and someone else (maybe the father) and questions her choices. The father’s voice interrupts to inform that he has been to her house and experienced her madness. Young Annie’s shouts (possibly at the father) “out, out, out” are followed by the father’s voice who continues “And I rejected the entire experience.” This song marks the end of the wrathful songs and the beginning of the more peaceful ones such as “Lemon Meringue” whose bittersweet taste symbolizes the ambivalent father-daughter relationship, and “Spanish Doll” which suggests that despite the loneliness, the abandonment, and the heart-break that she has gone through, the speaker

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<sup>680</sup> When “Hey Pretty” was not permitted to be aired due to the explicit content, Poe remixed the track and replaced her verses with her brother’s voice reading an excerpt from the book in which Johnny Truant goes for a ride in Kyrie’s BMW in Mulholland Drive. This time the graphic sexual content did not cause any inconvenience and a new track called “Hey Pretty (Drive By 2001 Mix)” was added to the album.

Bishop, Bart. “‘Haunted,’ the Album Inspired by Mark Z. Danielewski’s ‘House of Leaves.’” *LitReactor, The LitReactor Magazine*, 9 Oct. 2015, [litreactor.com/columns/haunted-the-album-inspired-by-mark-z-danielewskis-house-of-leaves](http://litreactor.com/columns/haunted-the-album-inspired-by-mark-z-danielewskis-house-of-leaves).

still misses her father. She realistically mentions that the relationship has left her “tattered and torn” and yet, she will always be “a stranger in this world without you.” The Spanish song that the background singers add to the main one is a plea to be found, cared for and remembered. The father’s voice takes over to tell the story of a girl whose gun injury did not affect her life as much as “the years of her childhood” and suggests “Perhaps that is where the real story is / In her family house.” Young Annie’s question “House of Leaves?” links this song to the following track, “House of Leaves,” and explains a lot about Annie’s family life.

“House of Leaves” is a significant piece in *Haunted* not only because of its direct connection to *House of Leaves*, but because it is a portrayal of the family in Annie’s narrative. This hallucinatory polyvocal piece that includes flashbacks to Annie’s childhood and family relations depicts a conflicted family whose members fail to connect. They are together and alone. They talk and yet no meaningful communication takes place. Each one is wandering in his or her own never-ending hallway:

**Spanish School Teacher**

Well, Now after all that thinking,  
wouldn’t it be fine if  
we could take a trip? We will do it,  
I know a game we all like to play  
Inside la casa, the house.  
We will play hide and seek.

**Daughter**

I can hear myself. I’m somewhere in there....  
What’s happening? Daddy?

**Mother**

Nobody’s home...Nobody’s home...

**Father**

I thought he was dead

**Daughter**

Where are you?

**Father**

Dead.

[Daughter Crying.]

**Father** (soft)

I wasn't sure if I'm going

To survive this horror.

**Brother**

No one should (fading) brave the  
underworld alone.

The parents singing "Dominique," a French song:<sup>681</sup>

Dominique, nique, nique

S'en allait tout simplement

Routier pauvre et chantant

En tous chemins, en tous lieux

Il ne parle que du bon Dieu

Il ne parle que du bon Dieu

**Father**

Try now to take the next step.

[RING.]

**Father**

You sing very well Annie.

[RING.]

**Mother**

Hello? Hello?

**Annie**

Mom?<sup>682</sup>

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<sup>681</sup> The song was written and performed by Jeannine Deckers, better known as "Sœur Sourire" in 1963. One expects the Danielewskis were aware of the double entendre in French.

Legacy. "Jeanine Deckers, The Singing Nun." *Legacy.com*, Legacy.com, 8 Mar. 2016, [www.legacy.com/news/celebrity-deaths/article/jeanine-deckers-the-singing-nun](http://www.legacy.com/news/celebrity-deaths/article/jeanine-deckers-the-singing-nun).

<sup>682</sup> Harms, Steven G. "An Analysis of House of Leaves Part II: Poe's 'Haunted.'" Personal Site of Steven G. Harms. Stevengharms.com, 5 Aug. 2015, [stevengharms.com/blog/2015/08/05/an-analysis-of-house-of-leaves-part-ii-poes-haunted/](http://stevengharms.com/blog/2015/08/05/an-analysis-of-house-of-leaves-part-ii-poes-haunted/).

The lyrics have been taken from the mentioned website.

This musical snapshot of Annie's family life reveals a lot about her childhood as well as the family relationships in *House of Leaves*. Despite the poly-vocality of the piece, nothing is really communicated. Each family member is lost in his or her own thoughts. Young Annie says that she can hear herself and that she is somewhere in there, but the mother denies that anybody is home. The song the parents sing is about a traveller who knows no final destination. It is difficult to find a chronological order in the piece. It seems that the memories flood in and take Annie back to her childhood. The ringing phone, however, brings her back to the present time and she finally gets the call she was waiting for from her mother.

Adult Annie's reveries reveal a strong connection between this piece and *House of Leaves*. It begins with the mention of hide and seek in the house, the game that the house played with the Navidson family. Young Annie has been entrapped in the house like Daisy and her pleas for her father remind the readers of Daisy's shouts for Will Navidson when he disappeared and also her agitated screams when the house tried to claim her. Unfortunately, there is no Tom in this version to save Annie. The father mentions surviving the horror. The brother's line that "no one should brave the underworld alone," which has been taken from Poe's first album, *Hello* (1995), also reminds us of the task Will Navidson attempted to accomplish. "House of Leaves" is a dramatization of the relationship among the Navidson family members in *House of Leaves*.

The reconciling tone that Annie has adopted in "House of Leaves" is developed in "Amazed" where she confesses she cannot flee her past, so she has to make peace with it. She is back in the house and "the hallways I wouldn't mind crawling through." Although she has tried not to listen, she can hear the voice of her father, the very voice that has repeatedly interrupted or connected the tracks and finds it amazing that she intends to listen this time. Annie is finally ready to let go of the past, forgive her father and move on.

*Haunted* offers an interpretation of its core text in “Amazed.” The last part of the song in direct reference to *House of Leaves* ties the loose ends. The speaker looks back at the events of the novel from a distance and confesses that she is amazed at what she sees. Annie’s play on words “amaze” and “a maze,” one of Danielewski’s famous techniques to charge the words with more than their own meaning, is a constant reference to the labyrinth in the house. She notices that the hallway was not a hallway, but a maze through which Johnny has exhausted his function and Pelafina is finally ready to let go. This indirect reference to Pelafina as the writer of *House of Leaves* is reinforced when Annie sings “Cause all of the ink that was bled from her hands / Has painted a picture that she understands / It’s amazing.” The imagery points out that the speaker has left the house on Ash Tree Lane. Now “The Ash is a tree and the voices [are] free.” Although she can still hear “The voice of my father still loud as before,” it doesn’t scare her anymore. The story is finished. The maze has been revisited and explored. It holds no mystery. Annie has left the house.

The last song of *Haunted*, “If You Were Here,” is a tale of loss, regret, reconciliation and peace. The song starts with a conversation between the father and Young Annie who confesses she misses him. Annie’s conversation with the ghost she has evoked is coming to an end. In her song, she expresses the feelings and thoughts she would communicate if he were alive, reveals how she treasures all his memories, and respects his opinion. She states that she is what he made of her, that the result would amaze him. She adds that he never noticed how all the emotions that he hid behind his face were tangible to her, because she experienced and hid the same feelings. Therefore, his voice is resonating through her now. The voice of the father who seems to respond beyond the grave is uncharacteristically soothing and makes the ending seem like a real dialogue between the father and his daughter. He says that he is sharing his reflections with her and she sings that she hopes that he hears his “music gentle and true / Singing inside [her] with the best parts of [him].” He finally reveals how proud he is and she finally confesses how much she loves him. Young Annie echoes the end of Johnny’s story when she says “It’s OK. You can go now.” Annie’s Exploration B and

wanderings in the hallways of the haunted house have brought her peace. The two-minute silence at the end of this track is a beautiful tribute to her departed father.

True to its nature as a branching text, *Haunted* manages to simultaneously comment on the core text and maintain its own originality. Written by one of the first readers of *House of Leaves*, the album reacts to the ambiguities of the novel, (e. g. the Navidson family dynamics) and responds to some of the unresolved issues (e. g. the ending of the Navidson story and the disappearance of the house). Yet, it is able to contribute to the story and open the core text to new readings by studying the future consequences of the events in the life of Annie, Daisy's alter ego. *Haunted* without a doubt offers an insightful feedback on *House of Leaves*. What is more, *Haunted* presents its understanding of the novel in the form of an original song collection. The fact that the theme of alienation between parents and children can be traced back to Poe's first album, *Hello* (1995),<sup>683</sup> suggests her remarkable ability to weave the themes close to her heart into the intricate texture of *House of Leaves* and offer an exquisite example of wreading as a unique approach to reading and interpretation where the reader's creativity and the writer's skill intersect. Finally, *Haunted* delivers the last testimony to prove the hypertextuality of *House of Leaves*, a printed book whose non-linearity and medium consciousness inspire the readers and create the potential for further wreadings and expansion across the media.

## V.5 The final Word

Mark Z. Danielewski's books easily bridge the gap between printed fiction and hyperfiction. *House of Leaves*, *The Whalstoe Letters*, *Only Revolutions*, and *The Fifty Year Sword* all exhibit the three main features of hypertexts in the medium of print. Danielewski's constant experiments with typography, layout, and the materiality of the book have resulted in multi-layered texts which engage the medium in telling the story, entice the readers and comment on the process of writing.

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<sup>683</sup> In the eponymous track of *Hello*, Poe sings: "Mothers are trails on stars in the night / Fathers are black holes that suck up the light/ That's the memory I filed on the fringe / Along with the memory of the pain you lived in."

Poe, "Hello." *Hello*. Modern Records. 1995

The innovative usage of typography and layout compensates for the alleged shortcomings of the medium in terms of audio-visual and kinetic material and proves that nothing can compete with the readers' imagination given the right circumstance. Additionally, the texts draw on the readers' prior familiarity and experience with books, the internet and other media to guide them through the text and underscore certain thematic and formal connections. In consequence, the books train their readers how to read the text, raise questions and seek answers. The collaboration of the readers in the realization of the predicted potential for expansion ensures subsequent pluralization and diversification of the core text, either in the form of interpretive activities, or independent branching texts.

*Only Revolutions* (2006) experiments with the materiality of the book as well as its typographic surface. Danielewski has found a vessel for the circular and never-ending story in a palindromic book. The story starts and ends on both sides of the book to comment on the historical cycles and include two separate, yet interconnected stories in a single book. Moreover, *OR* employs typography and the layout to allocate four narratives, two fictional and two historical, on each page. The parallel placement of the narratives suggests no affiliations among them and yet, the font, the bold type and the flexible orthography hint at the connections between the fictional content and the history gutters, and encourage the readers to study the story in the historical context for better understanding. The previous chapter demonstrated how the text guides the readers to detect the connections and put the fictional events in the historical context, the assassination of president Kennedy and the foundation of the Ku Klux Klan as the examples discussed in the previous chapter. The fact that the events have been narrated from two points of view and in two different historical contexts persuades the readers to compare the recounts and analyze them from a historical distance. The history gutter has been left blank from 2005 (when the book was finalized) onwards and the enticing white expanse invites the readers to contribute the prominent events of their time and reread the novel with an eye to the recent history. Moreover, the lyrical quality of the monologues

and the concentration on the slangs and the register of each decade have resulted in rich and resonating sound patterns. The audiobook, the first branching text of *OR*, shows how intonation and accent will alter and multiply interpretation if the dormant feature of language are activated, a concept that Danielewski has developed further in *The Fifty Year Sword*. The contradictory readings in IV.2.2 demonstrate how readers use a certain number of the mentioned elements to analyze the text, launch hypotheses, cancel them and start over. The website of *OR* even invites readers to contribute their understanding of the novel by uploading a photo that captures the essence of the story. The network never ceases to expand.

*The Fifty Year Sword* (2005) focuses on the connections between the illustrations and the text as well as the dormant potential of words to develop the themes and engage the readers. Realizing the metaphor of weaving and spinning a tale, *T50YS* consists of five entwined narrations whose winds and twists create a coherent, yet highly intertextual tale. The sewn illustrations represent the interlacement of these strands visually and even hold the key to clarifying some ambiguities of the story. The undone harvester butterfly (discussed in V.3.1.1), for example, helps the readers react to the questions concerning the Story Teller's origin and the symbolic significance of his quest. Identifying the links between the written text and the illustrations, the readers unveil new aspects of the story which, in turn, trigger innovative interpretive processes.

*T50YS* also uses the illustrations to draw attention to words as proliferating centers of meaning. The book attempts to display the flexibility of the words and their role in the dissemination of the meaning. To display the layers of meaning underneath, the strands of sewn pictures sometimes cut through the words in order to point out the potential words within. This impact is reinforced by the unconventional orthography which condenses several descriptive sentences into newly coined compound words. The distorted spelling sometimes reflects accents and intonation to call attention to the association of sounds and meaning; a quality which lies dormant in written language and is usually responsible for the multiplication of the story when read.



Inclined to stress the readers' role, *T50YS* even depicts the process of activating the dormant features of the words symbolically. The Story Teller's itinerary in search of the fifty year sword includes traversing The Valley of Salts, where shadows remain behind, The Forest of Falling Notes, where sounds fall apart, and The Mountain of Manyone Paths, where he is alone and yet, he sees his duplicates everywhere. The journey to meet The Man With No Arms is a symbolic representation of the transformation of the spoken word into written or printed and back to speech when read. As in The Forest of Falling Notes, words are deprived of sounds and intonation when written. The printed or written text on paper resembles The Valley of Salt where shadows leaves smudge on the ground. Nonetheless, the words retain the potential to be interpreted in various ways according to the tone and intonation added when read. A single word may become the source of multiple meanings, not unlike The Mountain of Anyone Paths. The Story Teller in *T50YS* is, in fact, in search of "words." The key to unlocking the box and reaching the sword was to rearrange the letters and solve the anagram. The clue was hidden in the title in plain view.

*House of Leaves* (2000) is the best study case for hyperfiction on paper so far. The book has reconfigured the medium to tell the multi-layered story of a house which defies the laws of physics. The unconventional graphic surface of the page alongside a captivating story has resulted in an exhilarating reading experience. *HoL* revisits the concept of the book by redefining the elements such as introduction and footnotes and assigning new functions to them in order to develop the story. The introduction, for instance, is also the conclusion of Johnny Truant's story and imposes a circular form, on one of the narratives only. This strange technique underlines the fictionality of the characters and justifies some of the inconsistencies in the book. Other elements such as footnotes have been entrusted with more than their usual function. The footnotes of *HoL* have been used to allocate parallel narratives on the same page, for instance. They also challenge their title by running in different directions, sometimes even replacing the main text. The fluidity of the footnotes enables the text to expose its non-linearity as well as represent the labyrinthine house visually, and create a

sense of disorientation and confusion for the readers. Even when footnotes fulfill their function as the provider of extra information such as in Zampano's explanation of his writing, they direct the readers in making a detour from the text and back in order to interrupt and control the process of reading.

*HoL* uses a combination of the text and the medium to put the readers through the same ordeals as the characters. Not only does the text which presents Navidson's explorations of the hallways visualize the situation, but it also creates the illusion of movement. The placement of chunks of text on the page in the rescue mission, discussed in V.4.2.1.2.1, depicts the maze the characters explore. The second exploration, discussed V.4.2.1.2.2, induces the illusion of movement by experimenting with the direction of the text, length of the words, the space between the lines and among the letters of words and literally forming the words into shapes and patterns. These techniques intensify the impact of the content and inspire fear, claustrophobia and disorientation in the readers. It is noteworthy that all the mentioned techniques serve the purpose of the story and are employed when required by the plot. Creating an extraordinary experience is not the final goal for *HoL*, but a means to an end. The simulated situation enables the readers to follow the plot attentively and engage in uncovering the mysteries of the novel, some of which such as the empty stanza have been discussed in this chapter. Some digital hyperfictions, in comparison, rely on medium to create an invigorating experience and fall short of the requirement of story telling.

*HoL* takes reader-centrality to another level by leaving parts of the story ambiguous and then leaving clues everywhere from the cover page to the index for the readers to find and analyze. The majority of these pointers that lead the readers back to the text are concentrated in the appendices at the end of the book. Training the readers how to read analytically is not new to fiction. *HoL*, however, provides the readers with extra material for further practice. "The Three Attic Whalestoe Institute Letters" which has been analyzed in this chapter is among the mentioned fragments. Pelafina's letters enable the readers to develop the character, determine her relationship with Johnny

Truant and Zampano as well as the narrative, and use the acquired knowledge of the characters to explain some ambiguities of the novel. The inclusion of appendices ensures the return of the readers to the text in order to confirm or debunk their presumptions. The exchange among the main text and the extra material filtered through the readers results in ongoing conversations with and about the text. Some of these stimulating discussions are still accessible on MZD forums.

The last part of this chapter concentrated on Poe's *Haunted* (2000) as an ideal branching text. Being a relative of the writer and possibly privy to the details that have not appeared in the book does not disparage Poe's unique achievements in presenting her wreading of the core text in an independent text of her own. As a branching text, *Haunted* can be interpreted in relation to *HoL* or independently. The study of "5&½ Minute Hallway" in connection to the novel (presented in V. 4.3.2.1) shows how the branching texts expand the core text. The branching text, the ultimate result of the process of wreading, reacts to the equivocacy of the novel and develops the themes, characters and plot lines that the core text has left unexplored. Poe's understanding of *HoL* leads to the demystification of the empty bracket and dissolution of the house. *Haunted* also develops the child-parent relationship in the Navidson family that the book does not, and studies the permanent consequences of growing up in such a household. In a true example of wreading, *Haunted* establishes a conversation with the core text which makes the readers move back and forth between the two texts. This dialogue answers some questions and raises others. The texts keep growing.

*Haunted* can also be studied as independent work of art. The album employs various music styles to contemplate relationships, grief and peace in its seventeen tracks. Although the songs are not particularly narrative, the thematic connections among the tracks shed some light on the persona, her family background and the impact of her father's death. The songs follow Annie through different stages of mourning from incredulity to peace while the background sounds and narrations simulate the emotional atmosphere for the listener. In brief, *Haunted* embodies the concept of wreading, as the album demonstrates how an insightful reading of the core text results in

the writing of a remarkable branching text, which can stand alone and has the potential to turn onto another core text. The publisher of *House of Leaves* recommends that the readers listen to *Haunted* on the side. The music publisher of *Haunted* may make the same claim.

To conclude, the study of Danielewski's books proves the possibility of hyperfiction on paper. He has succeeded in realizing non-linearity in a traditionally linear format, integrating the medium in thematic development of the story and training avid readers. His experimentation with layout, typography and the book itself show that it is possible to simulate the features associated with the digital medium in a medium which is traditionally fixed and devoid of sound or movement. More importantly, the medium always serves the purpose of the story in Danielewski's writing. The goal is to tell the story effectively to the points that the readers take pleasure in the pluralization and the expansion of the network. His houses of leaves confirm that hyperfiction did not expedite the end of books, but inspired books without end.

## **VI. Conclusion**

### **VI.1 Hyperfiction**

The inadequacy of the existing definitions for hyperfiction set the present project in motion, so the end of this journey necessitates a look back to follow the evolution of the concept along the way. As the junction between fiction, poststructuralist critical theory and digital media, hyperfiction manifests the distinctive features of its forebears. Hyperfiction has its genesis in the poststructuralist stance towards the text and its components. The notions of the ideal, readerly and writerly texts, the death of the author and the dissemination of the meaning by the reader have resulted in the emergence of hypertext in the digital medium as well as metafiction in the print-based medium. The two resultant texts converge in hyperfiction to give birth to a non-linear, medium-conscious and reader-oriented fiction which engages the medium in the development of the story with the aim of training avid readers. As the heir to the distinctive features of both hypertext and metafiction, hyperfiction either employs a mixture of the techniques exclusive to metafiction when presented in the digital medium, or adapts its hypertextual tenancies to the medium of print when emerging on paper. Similar to hypertext, hyperfiction defines the text as a non-linear, intertextual and multimedia entity with the potential for expansion. However, hyperfiction oscillates between hypertext and metafiction in regard to the mentioned concepts.

Hypertext ascribes non-linearity to the digital medium which makes links among fragments of texts possible. Hyperfiction, on the other hand, adopts the metafictional stance on non-linearity and regards texts as intrinsically non-linear. Any text is a meticulous compilation of various fragments of texts which have been skillfully assembled, so the readers overlook the gaps and inconsistencies. In addition to the author's adeptness in concealing the rifts, the uninterrupted flow of the words on the page creates the illusion of continuity. Metafiction unveils the cracks underneath for two reasons. First, metafiction regards these interstices as joints instead of fractures and considers them the apertures where meaning may multiply, provided that the readers find the

lacunae and make the connections. In other words, these nexuses function the same way digital links do. Second, the story gains autonomy in the readers' minds. The readers' recollection of the story depends on countless variables such as their familiarity with literary tradition, their mindset and personal experiences. It is unlikely that readers remember the story the exact same way that it was presented. Therefore, metafiction calls attention to the process of writing in order to expose the non-linearity of the text in the hope of training the readers to locate the junctures, and initiate various interpretive processes. Metafiction uncovers non-linearity through language, discussed in "The Garden of Forking Paths" and *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, as well as through the medium, analyzed in *Albert Angelo*, *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry*, *House Mother Normal*, and *The Unfortunates*. Hyperfiction functions on both levels.

As a multimedia text which has chosen language as its dominant medium, a digital hyperfiction flaunts its non-linear attributes through language as well as its other constituent media and in consequence, comprises both digital links of hypertexts and virtual links of metafiction. In *Lies* by Rick Pryll, the digital links to "truth" and "lies" connect chunks of the story and determine certain reading paths. However, the readers may easily make their own links following the codes and the clues embedded in language. *Patchwork Girl* tends towards metafiction even more. It uses digital links to record the resurrection of its eponymous character. An underlying map has even been included to shatter any illusion of linearity. However, it is on the language level that Jackson demonstrates how she locates the junctures of the texts (the unfinished female monster in *Frankenstein* and the stories behind Scraps' patches in *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*) to create her own unique patchwork text. She uses the medium to uncover the underlying intertextual web at one click. A single paragraph of *Patchwork Girl* may include lines from *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, *Frankenstein*, *Coming to Writing*, etc, alongside Shelley Jackson's writing. Each distinguished from the other by a different font or typeface. In brief, digital hyperfiction challenges and evolves the

non-linearity which metafiction first exhibited. This is one of features that facilitates the final return of hyperfiction to the print-based medium.

Although hyperfiction tends more toward hypertext than metafiction in regard to its multimedia nature, it adopts a different approach in order to serve the purpose of the story. The digital medium supports the inclusion of audiovisual and kinetic fragments in a single text and leaves it to the reader to determine the direction of reading. None of the constituent media is favored over the others and hypertext unfolds when requested. The goal is to provide the users / readers with the freedom to explore the text by following the path they desire.

Similar to hypertext, the core text is a composite of fragmentary texts produced in various media in hyperfiction. However, hyperfiction distances itself from hypertext by choosing language as the dominant medium which, to some extent, directs the process of reading and imposes limitation on the expansion of the text. The story is of utmost importance to hyperfiction. Therefore, the other media serve the purpose of the story. The digital medium helps the authorial group predict possible reading strategies and map out probable reading paths by linking certain fragments. Hyperfiction spreads out on request indeed, but in thoroughly thought-out directions.

Hyperfiction accurately believes that language is the best medium of communicating a story. However, the dominance of language in hyperfiction does not denote the redundancy of hyperfiction's other component media. Hyperfiction utilizes its multimedia nature to tell the story effectively, either by creating an outstanding experience for the readers, or by hinting at the hidden clues and concealed apertures. In short, the medium is integrated into the story to the point that if the story is relocated to a new medium, it may partially lose its impact. *Patchwork Girl* persuades the readers to reflect on the construction of the female identity when they put the pieces together, and figuratively sew the patchwork girl into being. Moreover, *Patchwork Girl* puts the readers through the experience of writing and compilation, as they spot the links among the fragments and decide how to order them. Resurrecting the *Patchwork Girl* equals the act of writing. Jackson has

demonstrated how she has resuscitated the patchwork girl out of the pieces of Mary Shelley and L. Frank Baum's books and encourages the readers to bring her patchwork girl back to life. *Tube Lines* uses its constituent media to simulate the experience of riding on the tube. The constant movement, the feeling of frustration, detachment and disorientation are all the results of the added audiovisual and kinetic features. This practical view of the medium and engaging it in telling the story, however sporadic, is not new to metafiction. B. S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* recreates the rush of the memories and the consequent confusion and disorientation, and *House Mother Normal* simulates the struggles related to dementia and Alzheimer. To sum up, the preference of language over other constituent media and the integration of the medium in the development of the story enable hyperfiction to find its way to the medium of print easily.

The awareness of the medium of presentation and its functions have given rise to varied digital hyperfiction with the themes of construction, connection, interruption, disintegration and in short, the themes and topics which can be realized in a medium which functions thanks to the accumulation of parts and pieces. *Patchwork Girl* serves as a good example once more. This hyperfiction's main themes include the creation of a girl out of body parts and its consequences; the identity crisis which ensues from such a procedure, and the creation of an original fiction by constantly rearranging the old pieces of writing among the new ones. What is more, hyperfiction celebrates the final fragmentary and heterogeneous product. The patchwork girl and the hypertext may seem deformed, unconventional and monstrous from a traditional perspective. Hyperfiction, however, regards them as unique, disruptive and original. This attitude is responsible for the creation of different representations of the urtext in order to encourage the pluralization of the core text.

The idea that both the medium of presentation and the media which form the core text should serve the development of the story and intensify the effect on the readers has resulted in a liberating opinion of the relationship between the story and the medium. It is not necessary for the



story to conform to the rules of the medium and accept the imposed limitations. It is preferable to challenge the established ideas in order to explore the concealed potentials and push the boundaries or even better, find a medium suitable to the story. This revolutionary idea liberates fiction from the constraints of the medium and proves that hyperfiction is not a medium-bound concept. Moreover, this standpoint has already resulted in the creation of numerous exceptional works, some of which defy classification. *Skin, A Mortal Work of Art* (2003) by Shelley Jackson, for instance, has been published on the skin of 2095 participants. *Skin* is a contemplation on skin which is the frontier between us and the external world, the source of life inside us, on who we are, how we relate to each other and our on immanent death. *Skin* also challenges our perception of the text and the process of writing. The connections among the words are arbitrary and the story is prone to constant changes. The words move with the people who carry them on their skin. Therefore, the words have been scattered all around the globe. The rearrangement of the words due to the relocation or the annihilation of the bearer leads to new stories. There are infinite possibilities for the emergence of new stories and at the same time, the story will die if meaningful connections among the words are not detected. The story dies without a reader who brings the words to life.

Hyperfiction vacillates between hypertext and metafiction on the concepts of reader contribution and the expansion of the network. Hypertext supports ultimate freedom in choosing the reading path and expanding the core text through either interpretation or the creation of branching texts. The text is designed to comply with readers' requests and to meet their wishes. This idea leads to the emergence of ever-growing networks which know no boundaries. Metafiction, on the other hand, is in favor of guided reading and the multiplication of the text through interpretive processes. Comprehending the story and recognizing its subtleties are of great significance and metafiction intends to train the readers to read analytically and uncover layers of meaning. Both views are realized in hyperfiction as a closed network.

Hyperfiction follows metafiction in its position regarding the story. Hyperfiction is mostly concerned about the story, how it is presented and how it is perceived. The choice of a dominant medium makes it possible for hyperfiction to exercise more control over its core text in comparison to hypertext. The core text of hyperfiction has been finalized and protected. The text will not change. The fragments have been connected to lead the readers toward certain reading paths and inspire reading strategies which guide the readers toward desired destinations. This is not in contrast with the readers' freedom to choose the path which hypertext promotes. The only difference is that the readers choose a path from the alternatives which the author has determined.

Hyperfiction does not directly comment on the text, address the readers and train them to read analytically the same way metafiction does. Instead, it encodes the text using certain key words and phrases and connects the pieces in particular orders in an attempt to guide the readers through the story. As the result of such a controlled process, hyperfiction trains the readers how to decipher and analyze the text. Each hyperfiction has its own mechanism and customizes its unique reading strategies, the only access to which is to read and re-read the text. The patient participants of the game, which the hyperfiction has designed, will finally find a path compatible with their taste, knowledge of literature or personal background and initiate the process of interpretation. It is worth mentioning that, as might be expected, it is always possible that the readers surpass the authors and spot joints which the authors have not consciously planned. This is why the readers are able to expand the core text through pluralization of the meanings.

It may seem that the dominant medium, the protected text, and the guided process of reading are in contrast with the hypertextual concept of expansion. Although hyperfiction defines expansion slightly differently from hypertext, its general perception of expansion is not intrinsically different. The core text of hypertext is extremely protected. Any modification to the core text may ruin the web which has been meticulously designed by the authorial group. However, the core text is still an intertextual and multimedia entity. Hyperfiction exposes its intertextuality to re-contextualize the

story repeatedly and inspire diverse readings. Additionally, the multimedia texture will create the potential for the core text to branch out in different media. Even though it appears as if hyperfiction favors pluralization over expansion, hyperfiction does not impede the emergence of branching texts. Similar to any other hypertext, it is possible to expand hyperfiction across the media in the form of branching texts. However, the core text defines bold borders between itself and its bifurcations and distinguishes between the texts produced by the authorial group and the branching texts made by the readers. The external links, which connect the branching texts to the core text cause the growth of the network. The core text never reciprocates. The distinguishable frontiers of the text enable the core text to maintain its individuality while supporting the expansion of the network.

The dominance of language as the primary medium is another significant factor in the expansion of the core text. Although the choice of a dominant medium guides the process of reading and restricts the process of interpretation to some extent, the possibility of creating the three hypertextual features in language opens the core text to various readings and interpretations. The point is that language helps the authorial group maintain control over the text and at the same time create the potential for the multiplication of meaning. *Lies* by Rick Pry, for instance, guides the reading paths by restricting the readers' choices to two options of "truth" and "lies" which result in certain combinations. However, the intricate web of meaning encoded in language opens the hypertext to different readings which, in turn, inspire a plentitude of interpretations. Moreover, the reader is the variable over which the core text has no control. The reader's personality, past experiences, familiarity with literary traditions, knowledge of the historical context and many other factors will come into play the moment the act of reading begins. The core text is reliant on reader participation for expansion as much as it depends on its intertextual and multimedia features. This is the reason why both metafiction and hyperfiction hold the reader in high regard.

The guided process of reading by the use of the medium appears to obstruct the expansion of the text and limit the readers' freedom, whereas it is a method of calling the readers' attention to the

significant points of the fiction, teach them how to make connections and read analytically instead. The idea of guiding and training the readers finds its roots in metafiction, which draws attention to the process of writing and composition constantly in order to teach the readers about the elements of writing and how they function in both the creation of the fiction and the generation of the meaning. As discussed earlier in this project, metafiction either interrupts the story to explain and comment, as Johnson does in *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry* and *Albert Angelo*, or seeks a more discrete approach as in *House Mother Normal* and *The Unfortunates* by the same writer. Hyperfiction blends both methods. The possibility of leading the process of reading through the medium eliminates the need for direct intervention by the author and provides an opportunity for the readers to explore the text themselves, uncover the connections and immerse themselves in the process of interpretation. The process the readers undergo to put the pieces together and reach cohesive versions of the core text by following in the author's footsteps bears similarities to the process of writing. In short, reader participation, either presented in the form of interpretation, or branching texts, which cause the expansion of the network, is a combination of writing and reading. Thus, the readers who expand the core text through pluralization and expansion deserve the title of wreaders.

To sum up, as the descendant of metafiction and hypertext, hyperfiction manifests the main features of both to create a unique type of fiction which draws on its multimedia and intertextual core text in order to encourage reader participation and ensure the expansion of its core text, either in the form of branching texts, or new interpretations of the core text. Hyperfiction exhibits three main hypertextual features of non-linearity, medium-consciousness and reader-centrality. However, the dominance of a single medium over the others makes for a protected core text and controlled reader participation. The main goal of hyperfiction is to tell the story effectively. Therefore, it draws on its intertextual and multimedia texture to engage the readers and create a stimulating reading experience. Nothing for hyperfiction is more important than the story. These attributes, which qualify hyperfiction to be classified under closed hypertextual networks, display a number of

similarities with metafiction and facilitate hyperfiction's return to the print-based medium under the guise of an enhanced metafiction. Hyperfiction is both metafiction and hypertext and yet, neither of them. It is a miscellany, unfamiliar, deformed and different. In other words, original, unique and incomparable.

## **VI.2 Creativity**

The medium and how it is integrated in the development of the story have been the focal centers of the debates concerning creativity in this project. The interrupted flow of the story in the digital medium has been a considerable challenge for digital hyperfiction, which had to adjust the content to the medium of presentation. The challenge for print-based hyperfiction such as Johnson's and Danielewski's books, on the other hand, is to adapt the book to the hypertextual features of hyperfiction. Digital hyperfiction has overcome the obstacles by focusing on the topics which are inherently fragmentary or leave a greater impact if presented in an interrupted fashion. Hyperfictional novels, in contrast, attempt to turn the page into a multimedia screen and re-create non-linearity, medium-consciousness and reader-centrality on paper. These books experiment with form, typographic surface and the materiality of the book in order to realize their hypertext features in a medium which does not traditionally support discontinuity. Both digital hyperfiction and their printed equivalents follow two major goals in their exploration of the possibilities the medium offers. First, they intend to find innovative ways to present the story effectively and intensify the reading experience. Second, they attempt to engage the readers, train them how to locate and analyze important data, and initiate the process of meaning making.

The hypertexts and hyperfiction studied earlier in this project show that the fragmentary nature of the medium has been a significant source of creativity and has resulted in a number of texts whose choice of the subject and exploration of the medium have resulted in extraordinary experiences for the users/readers. Each time the readers of *Patchwork Girl* put the pieces together, a

new patchwork text is born. It may be deformed and strange, but it is undoubtedly original. The section on the patchwork girl's limbs, for instance, benefits from the fragmentary structure to raise significant points about the perception of female beauty and the construction of female identity according to social expectations. Jackson uses the fragmentary pieces to the benefit of the story and reflects on how beauty standards focus on individual parts instead of a complete body. These guidelines, if ever followed, fashion a highly deformed woman; a patchwork which will be considered as a monstrosity according to the same beauty principles. The story of each member and its former owner expands on the idea of the female identity as an assembled entity and points out that each woman is the heir to the unfulfilled wishes and suffocated voices of the women who have shaped her. *Patchwork Girl* calls attention to these issues by demanding that the readers assemble the patchwork girl's body quite literally. *Tube Lines*, as another example, uses the medium to simulate the experience of disorientation and detachment for the readers. The parallel narratives, which run in different directions incessantly, visualize the tube lines. What is more, the constant movement makes the readers divide their attention among four different narratives and finally, leaves them confused and frustrated. The disconnection among the narratives reflects the loneliness and unapproachability of the people who pass each other by, and makes the readers identify with the distant narrator of the love story. *Memento*, as the example of a hypertext rather than hyperfiction, makes use of flashbacks and flash-forwards to replicate an intense experience of memory loss and the struggles the afflicted protagonist undergoes.

The hyperfiction realized on paper, on the contrary, attempts to adjust the medium of print to the requirements of the story. Among the examples studied in this project, *The Unfortunates*, *House Mother Normal*, *Only Revolutions*, and *House of Leaves* stand out. *The Unfortunates*, one of the legitimate progenitors of hyperfiction on paper, imitates the process of recollection in a book which comes in a box of unbound chapters of varying lengths. Like memories, the chapters follow no order. Each one may trigger a plot line followed in another, but the thread may not lead to a closure.

Yet, the memories/chapters will be stored until the next time an image, a smell or a sound initiate the chain reaction. Fully conscious of the unsettling impact of blank spaces in a book, *House Mother Normal* experiments with the graphic surface to hinder the process of readings. The readers grapple with the words scattered on the blank expanse of the page and struggle to make sense of them. Johnson's usage of typography and layout helps the readers experience the deterioration of mental faculties firsthand. *Only Revolutions* experiments with the book as well as typography to vivify the story. The design of the book imposes a circular motion on the narratives to contemplate the repetition of history and its consequences on the characters' lives. The typography has been used to point out the connections in otherwise parallel narratives and train the readers to analyze the story in its historical context. *House of Leaves* puts text, typography, layout and the book into use in order to make its strange subject accessible for the readers. The direction and the placement of different layers of texts on the page helps Danielewski visualize his labyrinthine house and its turbulent episodes and inspire the fear, claustrophobia and disorientation the characters experience. The reconfiguration of familiar elements such as footnotes and their function call attention to the keys to the mysteries of the house and point out the connections which will guide the readers. *House of Leaves* even uses the appendices to give the readers the bases for further readings and future interpretations in order to comment of the expandability of the text, a house of leaves which defies established rules.

The creative integration of the medium in the development of the story, the intensification of the reading experience and training observant readers have been the leitmotif in this project. The study of the innovative employment of the medium in hypertext, hyperfiction and the novels, which they have inspired, has revealed several points. First, as an intertextual, non-linear, and multimedia text hyperfiction is not a medium-bound concept and can realize its hypertextual tendencies in any media. It usually seeks a medium appropriate to the requirements of the story and challenges the fixed functions and ideas of the medium. This attitude usually results in uncovering the hidden

potential and customizing the medium to the needs of the story. Therefore, hyperfiction usually finds ways to adjust the medium to some extent, so it will meet its demands. The discussions concerning hyperfiction on paper explored this characteristic. Second, the idea that the medium should correspond to the requirements of the fiction has facilitated questioning the established perceptions of the media which, in turn, has led to the discovery of unexplored aspects and in consequence, the flexibility and sometimes even versatility of certain media.

The experimentation with the medium of presentation has inspired a number of remarkable works which challenge the medium and defy classification. *Romeo and / or Juliet: a choosable-path adventure* (2016) by Ryan North, as an example, proves that chunk-style hypertext can be recreated in a book. *Romeo and/or Juliet* presents the well-known story in a 476 extracts in a second-person narrative which demands that the readers choose an avatar and get involved in the story. Several choices, which are offered at the end of each extract, permit the readers to determine their path. The original text also exists among the extracts which provide 46,012,475,909,287,476 possible adventures according to the introductory note in the first extract. The varied typefaces and the illustrations help the readers navigate through the story and connect the pieces. Ryan North's *Romeo and/or Juliet* can be easily published as a digital hyperfiction.

The reconfiguration of media has also given rise to new vessels for fiction. *Skin, A Mortal Work of Art* (2003), has chosen the body as its medium of presentation. Steve Tomasola's *TOC: A New Media Novel* (2009) was published on DVD and Sophie Calle's *Tout* (2015), which has been translated to English as *Sophie Calle: My All*, has been published on 54 cards. The cards contain the artist's pictures and the story she has chosen for each. The cards do not follow any particular order and can be interpreted separately or as a part of the collection. It is for the audience to impose an order. Moreover, the personal stories, the self-portraits among other photos and the artist's reflection on her life and art have turned the book, for lack of a better term, into an unconventional memoir. Each picture triggers a memory and causes a domino effect. In short, the original works inspired by



hyperfiction's innovative usage of the medium promise the emergence of groundbreaking fiction in the future.

### **VI.3 And the (postmodern) novel ...**

Tracing the evolution of hyperfiction and its impact on the mainstream novel has been one of the main concerns of the present project. The study of the novels written in the prime of hyperfiction in Chapter Two indicated a reciprocal relationship between hyperfiction and the mainstream novel and raised the question of whether it is possible for hypertextual features to be realized in books. If so, how and by which means can fiction tailor these qualities to its requirements and produce something more than mere replicas? The study of Mark Z. Danielewski's novels in Chapter Five demonstrated how hyperfiction and its derivatives have prompted the creation of unique experimental novels which surpass their worthy digital opponents easily. Now the question is whether Danielewski's novels are solitary phenomena or the early initiators which will catalyse the emergence of new experimental fiction? The complete response to these questions is beyond the scope of this discussion. However, a review of the major impacts of hyperfiction on the novel, which have been demonstrated "hyperfiction on paper," and the mention of some of the recent experimental works seem appropriate to bring this project to a close.

The exposed non-linearity of hyperfiction has normalized fragmentary fiction and proved that readers are fully competent of follow non-sequential writing. Three types of non-linearity may be realized in the novel. The most common form contains fragments of texts as realized in *House of Leaves*. The second form involves the graphic surface, including typography, intentional solecism and illustrations which either literally cut the text or interrupt the process of reading by catching the readers' attention. *Only Revolutions* and *The Fifty Year Sword* reflect this type of non-linearity. The third type relies on both fragmentary texts and typographical elements. This kind of non-linearity is

traceable in all Danielewski's books to some extent, *House of Leaves* and *The Whalestoe Letters* in particular.

Recently, fiction seems willing to embrace its intrinsic non-linearity. David Markson's *This Is Not A Novel* (2001), for instance, presents the story of an author called Writer in single sentences or solitary sparse paragraphs. The writer, who is fed up with making up stories, simply intends to persuade the readers to turn the page. "Writer" claims not to have a destination in mind and yet, relies on the readers to make sense of the text by following the threads and get "somewhere." The result is an original reflection on creative life, provided that the readers deliver their end of the bargain. Reif Larson's *The selected Works of T.S. Spivet* provides a good example of the second type of non-linearity. The novel employs a combination of text and illustrations in order to follow the adventures of T. S. Spivet, a twelve-year old genius cartographer, who uses his detailed charts and color-coded maps to make sense of his life. The maps reflect T. S. Spivet's character and interests. Furthermore, the maps, charts and illustrations are integral to the plot line and develop the narrative also. In short, although the mainstream novel still prefers the homogenous look of the book, it now dares to produce non-linear narrative when the story demands it.

The stance hyperfiction takes toward the medium has triggered formal explorations and experimentations with the book as an object as well as its components. Digital hyperfiction uses the medium to develop the story, guide the process of reading and expand its network. The integration of the medium in the development of the story has given rise to experimental novels which challenge the book and seek ways to adapt the print-based medium to the requirements of the story. *House Mother Normal*, *The Unfortunates* and *House of Leaves*, which have already been discussed at length, are among the best examples of the fiction which explores and realizes the hidden potential of books. *The Familiar* and *Kapow!* can also be mentioned among the more recent examples. Mark Z. Danielewski's *The Familiar*, a twenty-seven volume book, which is being published in installments, follows in the footsteps of its predecessors in experimenting with the

graphic surface and pushing the boundaries of the book. *Kapow!* (2012) by Adam Thirwell explores the significance of layout. Presented as a patchwork compilation of newspaper clips, *Kapow!* recreates the feeling of being bombarded with or buried under the news of the day. The layout intensifies the impact of the narrator's endless monologue which attempts to make sense of the current events in real time during the Arab spring. Hyperfiction and the novels it has inspired have modified our perception of the unyielding print-based medium and demonstrated its unexpected flexibility instead. The hidden potential uncovered by novels such as *House of Leaves* and *Only Revolutions* promises more to come in the following years and stresses that there is still a lot left to be said about books.

The idea of the multimedia texts, which can develop into networks and expand across the media, has also given rise to different types of interdisciplinary fiction as well as the fiction which consciously expands the network. The study of *Haunted* as a branching text in the last chapter illustrated the exchange among the texts of a network. Sophie Calle's books provide other appropriate examples of such reciprocity. It needs to be mentioned that Sophie Calle is not a fiction writer in the general sense of the word. She is famous for re-creating her own life by following strangers, taking photos of them and writing stories about the photos. Thus, she approaches the realm of fiction to some extent. Her recent individual works and collaborations may exemplify the concept of hypertextual networks in books. *Des histoires vraies* (2016) makes a bridge between conceptual art and written text, and underlines the multimedia nature of the text. Moreover, the book consists of the photos of the writer's pieces (statues, pictures, etc.), each accompanied by a short story which draws the readers' attention to particular aspects of the piece or explains what inspired it. The stories have made the transference of the pieces from an art exhibition to paper possible. Furthermore, the stories indirectly reveal to the audience what to look for and guide them toward desired conclusions. To sum up, considering the art pieces as the core text whose multimedia

nature creates the potential for expansion, it can be concluded that the book functions as a branching text which interprets the core text and expands the network in a new medium.

The reciprocal relationship between Paul Auster's *Leviathan* (1992) and Sophie Calle's *Doubles-jeux : De l'obéissance, livre I* (1998) is another example of networks and branching texts. Paul Auster has based Maria Turner, a character who follows strangers to photograph them, on Sophie Calle. The novel's portrayal of Calle and her art inspired the artist to reclaim her fictional alter ego in a piece of her own. To do so, she decided to swap places with Maria and persuaded Auster to write the next year of her life. Calle's experiences in acting out Auster's script, "Personal Instructions for SC on How to Improve Life in New York City (because she asked ...)," which was later published under *Doubles-jeux: Gotham Handbook, livre VII* by both authors, became the basis of *Doubles-jeux* in which Calle reflects on her double life as a fictional and a real character and the double game Auster's novel has started. The mentioned projects and the resulting books offer insight into the expansion of the core text and possible outcomes in fiction.

The digital medium creates the illusion that the text does not exist unless the program is run by the readers. This makes the reader a significant factor in the creation of the text. It is the readers who put the pieces together and assemble the text. Thus, hyperfiction uses the medium to train readers how to approach the text and attempts to create a pleasing reading experience by utilizing the medium. Moreover, hyperfiction readers are also responsible for the expansion of the network, through either interpretation or the creation of branching texts. In short, training readers is one of the main objectives of hypertext fiction.

Although this is not new to novel, metafiction in particular, there are a few examples of novels such as *Ulysses*, *Finnegan's Wake*, *Tristram Shandy*, *House Mother Normal* and *The Unfortunates* which truly challenge the readers. However, the success of novels such as *House of Leaves* and *Only Revolution*, which demand the readers undivided attention and utmost participation, seems to change the traditional view of the reader as a mere recipient. Multimedia and

interactive texts have led to a high-level of visual literacy and non-sequential texts have improved the readers' abilities to spot and interpret the connections. Moreover, hyperfiction has affected the reading process. The fact that each hypertext sets its own rules and offers its own guidelines to be read and interpreted has turned the reading into a unique experience and taught the readers to adopt different reading strategies when facing a new text. In short, the digital media and the experience of hyperfiction have prepared the contemporary readers for any challenges and the contemporary experimental novel shows willingness to oblige.

Finally, in spite of the cynical predictions about the future of the novel when hyperfiction first appeared, this type of fiction could not possibly replace traditional books due to two reasons. First, hyperfiction is the natural result of the evolution of the novel alongside the latest technology. Although first realized in the digital media, hyperfiction, as a direct descendant of poststructuralist critical theory and the postmodern novel inspired by the same theory, manifests a number of similarities with mainstream fiction. Second, the writers' willingness to keep up with the digital revolution has led to an exchange between the mainstream novel and hyperfiction. This conversation, in turn, has resulted in the creation of some of the most extraordinary fiction. The future of novel as envisaged by the discussed experimental novels is actually quite promising.

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## Appendix Hypertext, a timeline

- 1941 *The Garden of Forking Paths* by Jorge Luis Borges. The vision of forking paths presented in this short story - original Spanish title: *El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan* - has inspired scholars of new media studies ever since its publication.
- 1945 Memex. Vannervar Bush employed this portmanteau (**memory** and **index** or **memory** and **extender**) to describe a hypothetical hypertext system in his article “As We May Think” published in *The Atlantic Monthly*.
- 1950 “Computing Machinery and Systems” by Allen Turing in *Mind*.
- 1954 “Man Machines and the World About” by Norbert Wiener
- 1960 Project Xanadu: The first hypertext project founded by Theodor H. Nelson  
“Man-Computer Symbiosis” by J. C. R Licklider
- 1961 “Happenings” in the New York Scene by Allan Kaprow  
*A Hundred Thousand Million Poems* by Raymond Queneau (the Oulipo)  
“The Garden Party” by Billy Kluver
- 1962 “Augmenting Human Intellect: A Conceptual Framework” by Douglas Engelbart
- 1963 “The Cut-up Method of Brion Gysin” by William S. Burroughs  
“Sketchpad: A Man-Machine Graphical Communication System” by Ivan Sutherland  
The publication of Julio Cortázar’s *Hopscotch* (Rayuela in Spanish). This experimental novel has been considered as a proto-hypertext.
- 1964 “The Construction of Change” by Roy Ascott  
“The Medium Is the Message” by Marshal McLuhan
- 1965 “A File Structure for the Complex, the Changing and the Indeterminate” by Theodor H. Nelson
- 1966 E. A. T. (Experiments in Art and Technology) was founded by Billy Kluver, Robert Rauschenberg, Robert Whitman and Fred Waldhauer.  
*9 Evenings* by E. A. T.  
“Cyberated Art” by Nam June Paik
- 1967 HES (Hypertext Editing System): A Hypertext research project conducted by Theodor H. Nelson, Andries van Dam and their students at Brown University.
- 1968 FRESS (The File Retrieval and Editing System): A hypertext developed by Andries van Dam and his students at Brown University. FRESS was an improvement on the capabilities of HES, especially the document size, displays and links.  
NLS (oN-Line System): A revolutionary computer collaboration system designed by Douglas Engelbart and developed by the researchers of ARC (Augmentation Research Center) at SRI (Stanford Research Institute). NLS was the first to use the mouse, screen windowing and raster-scan video monitors and put hypertext links to practical use.  
“A Research Center for Augmenting Human Intellect” by Douglas Engelbart and William English
- 1969 “The Galaxy Reconfigured or the Plight of Mass Man in an Individualist Society” by Marshal McLuhan
- 1970 *Software —Information Technology: Its New Meaning for Art* by Theodor H. Nelson and Nicholas Negroponte  
“Constituent of A Theory of the Media” by Hans Magnus Enzensberger
- 1972 ZOG: The result of a longtime research on artificial intelligence led by Allen Newell. This hypertext system that was designed by Donal McCracken and Robert Akscyn at Carnegie Mellon University pioneered the “frame” or “card” model of hypertexts in which the text

that exceeds the capacity of one screen will be placed in another. In other words, the frames do not scroll to show the continuation of the current content which is held off screen.

“The Pavilion” by Billy Kluver

“Requiem for the Media” by Jean Baudrillard

1973 Xerox Alto Desktop: One of the first personal computers designed for individual use .

*Yours for the Telling* by Raymond Qeneau

“For a Potential Analysis of Combinatory Literature” by Claude Berge

1974 “The Technology and the Society” by Raymond Williams

*Computer Lib/ Dream machines* by Theodor H. Nelson

“The Theatre of the Oppressed” by Augusto Boal

1975 *Software Architecture Machines* by Nicholas Negroponte

1976 PROMIS (Problem-Oriented Medical Information System): A hypertext developed by Jan Schultz and Dr. Larry Weed at the University of Vermont with the prose of keeping healthcare records.

*Computer Power and Human Reason* by Joseph Weizenbaum

1977 “Responsive Environment” by Myron W. Krueger

“Personal Dynamic Media” by Alan Kay and Adele Goldberg

1978 Aspen Movie Map: A revolutionary hypermedia system developed at MIT under the supervision of Andrew Lippman. This early example of hypermedia system enabled the users to take a virtual tour in the city of Aspen, Colorado.

1979 PERQ, also known as ICL PERQ or Three Rivers PERQ was a pioneering workstation computer.

1980 ENQUIRE, the predecessor to the World Wide Web, was a software written by Tim Burners-Lee at CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research).

*Mindstorm: Children, Computers, and Powerful Ideas* by Seymour Papert

“‘Put-That-There’: Voice and Gesture at the Graphics Interface’ by Richard A. Bolt *Zork*, one of the earliest interactive fiction computer games written by Tim Anderson, Marc Blank, Bruce Daniels, and Dave Lebling, was published by Personal Software.

1981 EDS (Electronic Document System). Also known as the Graphical Interactive Documents, this hypermedia system used embedded links and graphics to repair manuals and instruction texts.

Kusmaul Encyclopedia. An early example of a hypertextual online database.

Xerox Star. Also known as Xerox 8010 Information System is one of the first commercial systems that integrated various technologies including email, icons, folders, two-button mouse, file server, email servers, a bitmapped display, a window-based graphical user interface, and Ethernet networking.

“Proposal for a Universal Electronic Publishing System and Archive” by Theodor H. Nelson

“Computer and Writer: The Center Pompidou Experiment” by Paul Fournel

“Prose and Anticombinatorics” by Italo Calvino

1982 Guide. Peter J. Brown developed this hypertext at the University of Kent. This hypertext, which won Brown the British Computer Society's award for technical innovation in 1988, was originally designed for Three Rivers PERQ workstations running Unix.

“Will There Be Condominium in Data Space?” by Bill Viola.

*The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*, a single player adventure game book written by Steve Jackson and Ian Livingstone.

- 1983 KMS (Knowledge Management System). Developed by Don McCracken and Rob Akscyn of Knowledge Systems, KMS was a true multi-user system with the aim of letting the users collaborate in sharing information via an expanding hypertext.  
TIES (The Interactive Encyclopedia System). Developed by Ben Shneiderman at the University of Maryland, College Park, TIES used cursor arrow keys for navigation. The system which originally ran in DOS text mode, later was updated to run in NeWS windows system.
- 1984 “Direct Manipulation; A Step Beyond Programming Languages” by Ben Shneiderman  
NoteCards was developed by by Randall Trigg, Frank Halasz and Thomas Moran at Xerox Park. One of the best known hypertext systems due to its design, NoteCard benefits from analogue windows which contain a cue card of notecards, links, browser card, and a filebox to function.  
“Video Games and Computer Holding Power” by Sherry Tuttle
- 1985 Intermedia. The third hypertext project succeeding HES and PRESS at Brown University, Intermedia, developed by Norman Meyrowitz, Intermedia supported bi-directional, dual-anchor links for both text and graphics.  
Symbolic Document Examiner. Developed by Janet Walker at Symbolics, this powerful hypertext system allowed the users to add bookmarks and search. However, the users could determine the navigation path or make any changes.  
“A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the late Twentieth Century” by Donna Haraway  
“The GNU Manifesto” by Richard Stallman
- 1986 TEXTNET, a network approach for handling texts.  
Neptune. A hypertext system for CAD applications.  
“Using Computers: A Direction for Design” (from *Understanding Computers and Cognition*) by Terry Winograd Fernando Flores  
“Star Raiders: Dramatic Interaction in a Small World” by Brenda Laurel  
“Towards a New Classification of Tele-Information Services” by Jan L. Bordewijk and Ben van Karma  
The online publication of Judy Malloy’s Uncle Roger on Artcom Electronic Network on The Well (The Whole Earth ‘Lectronic Link, normally shortened to The WELL, is one of the oldest virtual communities known for its forums).  
*Endemic Battle Collage*, one of the early examples of computer-animated poems which reflects the incredible knowledge of its creator about concrete and visual poetry and Apple Basic, by Geof Huth.
- 1987 StorySpace. The first software to write hyperfiction was created by Jay David Bolter and Michael Joyce.  
Michael Joyce’s *Afternoon; A Story*, published on a diskette marked the beginning of Hypertext fiction. The story was published and distributed by Eastgate Systems.  
The Incunabula Papers, “a series of online documents related to “Ong’s Hat,” a conspiracy theory that emerged on the Internet in the early 1980s,”<sup>684</sup> by Joseph Matheny.
- 1989 Macromedia Director (Adobe Director): Macromedia, currently part of Adobe systems, designed this multimedia authoring platform to create animation sequences.  
Information Management: Proposed by Tim Burners-Lee, this proposal concerns about the distribution of information at CERN (European Organization for Nuclear Research). It deals

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<sup>684</sup> Williams, Michael. “Individual Work: The Incunabula Papers.” *The Incunabula Papers*. Electronic Literature Directory, 14 Feb. 2011. Web. 29 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/1297>>.

with the problem of information-loss and suggests a solution based on a distributed hypertext system.

- 1990 The World Wide Web. A hypertext system of interlinked multimedia documents accessed via the Internet.
- 1991 Macromedia Authorware, a graphical programming language that could integrate a range of multimedia content and applications.  
The Canon Cat: A task-dedicated desktop computer released by Cannon Inc.  
Hypercard: One the most successful hypermedia systems before the world wide web, Hypercard is an application written for Macintosh and Apple IIGS.  
The Gopher Protocol. An application designed by a team led by Mark P. McCahill at the University of Minnesota with the aim of distributing, retrieving and searching documents on the Internet. This TCP/IP application is viewed as the predecessor of the World Wide Web.  
AmigaGuide. Designed by Amiga, this hypertext document file format stores the files in ASCII and makes it possible to read and edit a file without a special softwares.  
“The Six Elements and the Causal Relations Among Them” (From *Computers in Theater*) by Brenda Laurel.  
The publication of Michael Joyce’s *Afternoon; A Story* by Eastgate Systems.  
The publication of Sarah Smith’s *King of Space* by Eastgate Systems.
- 1992 The publication of Stuart Moulthrop’s *Victory Garden* by Eastgate Systems.  
The publication of Carolyn Guyer’s *Quibbling* by Eastgate Systems.  
The publication of Clark Humphrey’s *The Perfect Couple* by Eastgate Systems.  
The publication of Robert Kendall and Richard Smyth’s *A Life Set for Two* by Eastgate Systems.  
The publication of Clark Humphrey’s *The Perfect Couple* by Eastgate Systems.  
*p0es1s* by Friedrich W. Block et al. *p0es1s* is a bilingual website which has archived international digital poetry and international symposia on the poetics of digital literature from 1992 to 2009.
- 1993 The publication of Judy Malloy and Cathy Marshall’s *Forward Anywhere* by Eastgate Systems.  
The publication of John McDaid’s *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse*, a NewMedia INVISION Award finalist in 1993, published by Eastgate Systems.  
The publication of Judy Malloy’s *its name was Penelope* by Eastgate Systems.  
The Publication of Deena Larsen’s *Marble Springs* by Eastgate Systems.  
The Publication of Yellowlees Douglas’ *I have said nothing* by Eastgate Systems.  
The Publication of Mary Kim Arnold’s *Lust* by Eastgate Systems.  
*The Last Book: A MediaKaos Work in Progress*, an interactive flexible narration which provided the readers with the first two chapters and encourage them to contribute through adding or editing entries created by Joseph Matheny.
- 1994 The Publication of Kathryn Cramer’s *In Small and Large Pieces* by Eastgate Systems.  
The Publication of Kathy Mac’s *Unnatural Habitats* by Eastgate Systems.  
Judy Malloy’s *loveOne*, the first selection in Eastgate Web Workshop.  
Douglas Cooper’s *Delirium*, the first novel serialized on the world wide web.  
*Internet Text*, 1994- [Through Feb 2, 2006], is an ongoing project on "cyberspace," emphasizing language, body, avatar issues, and code-work by Alan Sondheim.
- 1995 Wiki. A web application which encourages user collaboration. A typical wiki, which is written in markup language or rich text editor allows the users to add, modify, or delete content.

- The publication of *Patchwork Girl* by Shelley Jackson. The story was written in StorySpace and published by Eastgate Systems.
- The publication of Michael Van Mantgem's *Completing the Circle* by Eastgate Systems.
- The publication of Tim McLaughlin *Notes Toward Absolute Zero* by Eastgate Systems.
- The publication of Deena Larsen's *Century Cross* by Eastgate Systems
- Adrienne Eisen's *Six Sex Scenes*.
- Stuart Moulthrop's *Hegirascope*. The piece has been described as meta- or anti-theoretical due to its playful treatment of the hypertext theory and the change that took place between version 1 and 2 which limited the readers' full control over the reading process.
- 1996 The publication of Michael Joyce's *Twilight; A Symphony* by Eastgate Systems.
- The Publication of Judith Kerman's *Mothering & Dream of Rain*
- The publication of Richard Smyth's *Genetis: A Rhizography* by Eastgate Systems.
- Bobby Rabid (Robert Arellano) published *Sunshine 69*, the first interactive novel on the world wide web.
- The Company Trappist*, a writing collaboration which won Net Magazine's "Entertainment Site of the Year".
- 253: A Novel for the Internet about London Underground in Seven Cars and A Crash*, the winner of OMNI Magazine Omnivision, by Jeoff Ryman.
- Twelve Blue* by Michael Joyce.
- 1997 The publication of Edward Falco's *A Dream with Demons* by Eastgate Systems.
- The publication of Wes Chapman's *Turning In* by Eastgate Systems.
- The Publication of Bill Bly's *We Descend* by Eastgate Systems.
- Mark Amerika's GRAMMATRON, a multi-linear work which was finally included in Whitney Biennial of American Art.
- The Last Express*, one of the earliest video game tried to simulate real time realistically, was created by Jordan Mechner.
- The Ghost City* by Jody Zellen studies the methods through which mass media affects the cities and their consequences.
- 1998 Everything2. A collaborative web-based database, also known as E2, which archives the interlinked user-submitted material of a wide range of topics and genre.
- XML (Extensible Markup Language). This markup language provides an encoding system which facilitates the production of the formats which can be read by both machines and humans.
- Nelson released Project Udanax, the source code to Xanadu.
- The Unknown*, the winner of the trAce/Alt X Hypertext Competition, by William Gillespie, Scott Rettberg, Dirk Stratton and Frank Marquardt.
- Rice* by geniwate. A series of multimedia poems about Vietnam from the point of view of a tourist, this piece was co-winner of the 1998 trAce/AltX hypertext competition.
- 1999 RSS (Rich Site Summary). An RSS document, called 'feed,' 'web feed' or 'channel,' employs a combination of standard web feed formats to publish the updated information such as news headlines, blog entires, videos and audios.
- ELO (Electronic Literature Organization) was found by Robert Coover, Scott Rettberg and Jeff Ballowe. In 2001, the ELO moved from Chicago to UCLA where it was supported by UCLA's English, SINAPSE, and Design Media Arts departments. After moving to the University of Maryland, College Park in 2006 where it was supported by the Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities under the direction of Matthew Kirschenbaum, it was finally based in MIT under the supervision of Nick Montfort.

*wind sound* by John Cayley is a long digital poem in QuickTime format. The piece won Electronic Literature Award for poetry in 2001.

*White-Faced Bromeliads on 20 Hectares*, an experimental poem which tests the literary variations by producing a new text every ten seconds, by Loss Pequeño Glazier.

*My body: a Wunderkammer*, a semi autobiographical hypertext, by Shelley Jackson.

*Reagan Library*, a meditation on loss and oblivion, by Stuart Moulthrop.

*Bad Machine*, a text-based work of interactive fiction, by Dan Shiovitz.

*carrier* (becoming symborg), a java-created piece in which the hepatitis C virus was personified, by Melinda Rackham and Damien Everett.

*Strings*, a hypertext presenting a live scrawl, by Dan Waber.

*The Fall of the Site of Marsha*, an exploration of the medium and its significance in the act of narration, by Rob Wittig.

*The Great Wall of China*, a hypertext fiction inspired by Franz Kafka's *The Great Wall of China* (1931) by Simon Biggs.

2000 The publication of Deena Larsen's *Samplers: Nine Vicious Little Hypertexts* by Eastgate Systems.

The publication of M.D. Coverley's *Califia* by Eastgate Systems.

*Galatea*, an interactive fiction video game based on the Greek myth of Galatea, by Emily Short. The fiction won the "Best of Show" in the 2000 IF Art Show and XZZZY Award for Best Non-Player Character.

*The Jew's Daughter*, a reconfigurative and multivalent narrative by Judd Morrissey.

*Lexia to Perplexia*, an exploration of the relationship between human consciousness and network phenomenology by Talan Memmott.

*The Dreamlife of Letters*, a poet's "playful meditation on the nature and function of language in kinetic two-dimensional space"<sup>685</sup> by Brian Kim Stefans.

Neil Hennessy's *Basho's Frogger and Jabber*. Based on Matsue Basho's famous haiku, this piece produces infinite variations of the text consisting of three words and the title which never change.

*CyberText Yearbook* by Markku Eskelinen and Raine Koskimaa was found as an academic print publication in 2000 and has been available in PDF format since 2007. Each issue contains articles, papers and conference publications on electronic, ergodic and cyber literature of different forms and genres.

2001 Wikipedia. The well-known free-access online encyclopedia is hosted by Wikimedia foundation and permits the users to add and edit information.

The publication of Richard Holeton's *Figurski at Findhorn on Acid* by Eastgate Systems.

Caitlin Fisher's *These Waves of Girls*, the winner of the ELO award for fiction.

*Nio*, a collection of visual poems by Jim Andrews.

*Cruising*, an example of flash poetry, by Ingrid Ankersen and Megan Sapnar.

*wotclock* by John Cayley is a clock in which language marks the passage of time since the clock employs words and letters instead of numbers and thus changes every passing second, minute and hour.

*Accounts of the Glass Sky*, a flash hypertext, by M.D. Coverley.

*Soliloquy*, a practice of conceptual writing, by Kenneth Goldsmith

*All Roads*, an unconventional interactive fiction, by Jon Ingold

*Faith*, a kinetic poem, by Robert Kendall.

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<sup>685</sup> Stefans, Brian Kim. "The Dreamlife of Letters." The Electronic Literature Directory, 8 Feb. 2011. Web. 09 Dec. 2014. <[http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/stefans\\_the\\_dreamlife\\_of\\_letters.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/stefans_the_dreamlife_of_letters.html)>.



*Carving in Possibilities*, a short flash piece in which the appearance of the lines correspond to the movement of the reader's arm, by Deena Larsen.

*RedRidinghood*, a playful retelling of Red Ridding Hood in form of an interactive flash piece, by Donna Leishman.

*Birds Singing Other Birds' Songs*, an exploration of literary and linguistic boundaries in which sounds can be carried through writing into sound again by Maria Mencia.

*Letter to Linus*, a commentary on creative writing, by William Gillespie.

*Chroma* by Eric Loyer. The piece comments on racial identity in virtual environments.

William Poundstone's *New Digital Emblems*, "an interactive, exhaustive essay on all things ludic in science, literature and the visual arts, ranging across the Oulipo, the Turing Test, and Renaissance Emblem books, etc."<sup>686</sup>

*Quadrego*, a dialogical hypertext by Stefan Maskiewics. It was awarded the First Prize at the 2001 literatur.digital competition.

*Random Paths*, a web-based hypertext which reflects on memory and the association between the incidents, places and their reminiscent by Jody Zellen.

2002 *Landscapes*, short epigrammatic poems, by Bill Marsh.

*Savoir-Faire*, an interactive fiction about a world with unusual physical and magical laws by Emily Short.

*myBALL*, a satirical work masquerading as an informative Flash-based commercial site<sup>687</sup>, by Shawn Rider.

*Storyland*, a randomly created narrative which concerns with social stereotypes and cultural clichés, by Nanette Wylde

*Workscapes or Letterscapes* by Peter Cho. Two sets of 26 works which combine typography, text, image and animation.

Jorg Piringer's *Soundpoems*, some interactive phonetic poems.

*V: Vniverse* by Stephanie Strickland and Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo. The digital poem *Vniverse* and the 2-part book, *V: WaveSon.nets/Losing L'una* in which the words and the patterns should be activated by the reader / user.

*Spawn*, a flash-based interactive poem, by Andy Campbell.

*Manifestants, Police, Politiciens* by Chris Joseph. This bilingual piece is composed of newspaper articles and photos of the riots in April, 2001 in Quebec City, Canada, in protest of the Third Summit of the Americas.

2003 *Of Day, Of Night* by Megan Heyward and published by Eastgate Systems.

*Self Portrait(s) [as Other(s)]*, a recombinant portrait and biography generator, by Talan Memmott

*Dreamaphage*, an exploration of dreams, disease and memory in a strange interface, by Jason Nelson.

*Regime Change*, an exploration of the concept of textual instrument' by Noah Wardrip-Fruin, David Durand, Brion Moss, and Elaine Froehlich

*Separation/ Séparation* by Annie Abrahams, a meditation on physical and psychic disorders, that won an award in the Internet section of ENTERTAINMENT# 3 for travail de la danse/ choréographies de travail.

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<sup>686</sup> Aardse, Kent. "Individual Work: New Digital Emblems." New Digital Emblems. Electronic Literature Directory, 19 July 2014. Web. 15 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/3884>>.

<sup>687</sup> Shawn, Rider "myBALL." Electronic Literature Collection Volume 1. ELO, Oct. 2006. Web. 9 Dec. 2014. <[http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/rider\\_myball.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/rider_myball.html)>

*New Word Order: Basra [NWO]* by Sandy Baldwin. NWO is a game in which the player is allowed to play, read and destroy the words and phrases taken from eIntroduction to Poetry,” a short poem from former US Poet Laureate Billy Collins.

*Whereabouts*, an interactive poems that reflects on urban life, by Orit Kruglanski.

*Screen* by Noah Wardrip-Fruin, Josh Carroll, Robert Coover, Shawn Greenlee, Andrew McClain and Benjamin “Sascha” Shine. Screen is an alternative literary game which uses a room as its virtual reality display. Created in the Cave, Screen projects the words on the walls (virtual pages). The readers may participate as the words start to come off and hit them back to the wall. This interactive pingpong generates new semantic patterns and narrative variations.

2004 *On Lionel Kearns* by Jim Andrew. He describes his poem as “a binary meditation on the work of a pioneering Canadian poet [Kearns] contemplating digital poetics from the early sixties to the present”<sup>688</sup>.

*Log (Stir Fry Texts)* by Jim Andrews and Brian Lennon. The work includes seven pieces of e-poetry which compose a sms conversation.

*Code Movie 1* by Giselle Beiguelman. This work which employs the hexapods of the jpeg images as signifiers ponders the role of the code in meaning construction.

*The Set of U*, an ever-changing poem the words of which changes at each running of the program, by Philippe Bootz and Marcel Frémot.

*Translation*, a trilingual piece which contemplates on the nature of translation, by John Cayley.

*Frequently Asked Questions about ‘Hypertexts,’* a short story in form of FAQ, by Richard Holeton

*open.ended*, a poem which replaces the lines and stanzas with cubes with cubes, by Daniel C. Howe and Aya Karpinska.

*Girls' Day Out*, a hypertextual murder story, by Kerry Lawrynovicz.

*Deviant: The Possession of Christian Shaw*, an animated interactive graphic based on the historical story of the demonic possession of Christian Shaw by Donna Leishman.

*Oulipoems*, a series of six interactive poetry Flash works, by Millie Niss.

*ii — in the white darkness: about [the fragility of] memory*, an interactive piece about memory, by Reiner Strasser and M.D. Coverley.

*Tao*, an interactive cinematic flash poem, by Reiner Strasser and Alan Sondheim.

*Synonymovie* by Eugenio Tiselli. The piece offers a sequence of images based on the word “movie”. The sequence develop a “movie” through algorithmical chain of semantics.

*/\*\*Code\_Up* by Giselle Beiguelman is a digitalized re-production of Michelangelo Antonioni’s *Blow-Up* (1966) in images and Flash form. The viewer is able to zoom, freeze, enhance, or control the density of the images by re-distributing the RGB color values.<sup>689</sup>

*First Person: Introduction* by Pat Harrigen and Noah Wardrip-Fruin. This thread which appeared on the online journal *Electronic Book Review* encourages the academic video game criticism by discussing the essays from creators, theorists, engineers and artists.

*Grand Thieves Audio*, a series of monologues inspired by the video game, by Mark Marino.

*Inside: a journal of dreams*, a meditation on dream, reality and memory, by Andy Campbell.

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<sup>688</sup> Coben, Megan. “Individual Work: On Lionel Kearns.” *On Lionel Kearns*. The Electronic Literature Directory, 8 Feb. 2011. Web. 08 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/1272>>.

<sup>689</sup> Beiguelman, Giselle. "Code Movie 1." *Electronic Literature Collection Volume 1*. ELO, Oct. 2006. Web. 08 Dec. 2014. <[http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/beiguelman\\_code\\_movie\\_1.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/beiguelman_code_movie_1.html)>.

- 2005 The first episode of *Inanimate Alice*, an interactive multimodal fiction was written by Kate Pullinger and Chris Joseph. ASSL, the American Association of School Librarians, chose *Inanimate Alice* as the Best Website for Teaching & Learning in 2012.
- Jean-Pierre Balpe ou les Lettres Dérangées* by Patrick-Henri Burgaud. The poem is a tribute to the poet and software developer Jean-Pierre Balpe.
- The Cape* by J. R. Carpenter. A combination of fact and fiction, the piece raises questions about the reliability of memory and history construction.
- 10:01*, hypermedia version of Olsen's avant-pop novel *10:01* (Chiasmus, 2005) about what goes through the minds of the audience in an AMC theater at the Mall of America ten minutes and one second before the feature film commences,<sup>690</sup> by Lance Olsen and Tim Guthrie.
- The PO.EX Digital Archive of Portuguese Experimental Literature: A Review*, An archive of Portuguese experimental literature.
- Project for Tachistoscope [Bottomless Pit]*, a narrative of a geological anomaly,<sup>691</sup> by William Poundstone.
- Dawn*, a flash poem, by Reiner Strasser and Alan Sondheim.
- Star Wars, one letter at a time*, an exploration of reading on George Lucas' typewriter, by Brian Kim Stefans.
- Whom the Telling Changed*, a short interactive fiction, by Aaron A. Reed.
- I, You, We*, a meditation on the relationship between syntax and semantics, by Dan Waber and Jason Pimble.
- Diagrams Series 6: 6.4 and 6.10*, a series of poems which suggest a system of reading by Jim Rosenberg.
- The Bubble Bath*, a playful exploration of the freedom of choice in hypertext, by Susanne Berkenheger. *The Bubble Bath* won the "Ciutat de Vinaròs Digital Literature Award" in 2005.
- Juliet Davis' *Pieces of Herself*, a contemplation on femininity, female body and identity in relation with private and public space.
- Semantic Disturbances* by Andreas Jacobs. This unusual poem focuses on the changing attitude towards art, philosophy and religion by using words taken from google search results and images as substitution drills.
- Sooth*, an interactive love poem which is created as the reader initiates the production of the words by clicking on the images, by David Jhave Johnston.
- Façade* by Michael Mateas and Andrew Stern. *Façade* is an artificial intelligence based project that is able to assimilate any contribution by the reader into the narrative.
- Still Standing* by Bruno Nadeau and Jason Lewis. *Still Standing* is an interactive installation that invites the participants to use their bodies as reading instruments.
- Jason Nelson's *This is How You Will Die*, a fiction / poem that suggest poetic death scenarios that the reader may experience.
- Amor de Clarice* by Rui Torres. An animated text poem, *Amor de Clarice* was inspired by Brazilian writer Clarice Lispector's short story "Amor" and explore Genette's paratextuality. The hypertext is also present and in the background.

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<sup>690</sup>Olsen, Lance and Tim Guthrie. "10:01". Electronic Literature Collection Volume 1. ELO, Oct. 2006. Web. 09 Dec. 2014. <[http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/olsen\\_guthrie\\_\\_10\\_01.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/olsen_guthrie__10_01.html)>

<sup>691</sup> Poundstone, William "Project for Tachistoscope [Bottomless Pit] ." Electronic Literature Collection Volume 1. ELO, Oct. 2006. Web. 9 Dec. 2014. <[http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/poundstone\\_project\\_for\\_tachistoscope\\_bottomless\\_pit.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/poundstone_project_for_tachistoscope_bottomless_pit.html)>

*Hermeticon: Pop Spell Maker* by Jason Nelson. A pun on the word 'spell' (to spell and to cast a spell,' *Hermeticon* is a piece on logomancy and encourages the reader to spell different words which turn into spells on the screen.

*The Executer* by William Gillespie and Nick Montfort. This collaborative work is famous for the unusual method of writing the authors employed. The writers started with the final sentence of the story and alternatively added sentences to complete the story backwards. *The Last Day of Betty Nkomo*, a flash-based digital fiction, by Young-Hae Chang Heavy Industries.

- 2006 *Arteroids*, an experimental interactive fragmented body poetry by Jim Andrews.
- Like Stars in a Clear Night Sky*, an interactive collection of stories, by Sharif Ezzat.
- Chemical Landscapes Digital Tales*, a series of digital tales by Edward Falco that accompany a series of photograms by Mary Pinto.
- [theHouse]* by Mary Flanagan is a digital poetry piece which works with granular texts in a 3D environment.
- Stud Poetry*, a poetry poker which replaces cards with words, by Marko Niemi.
- The Mandrake Vehicle* by Oni Buchanan. *The Mandrake Vehicle* is a combination of three prose poems which provide different readings of the same set of letters to unveil the poetry hidden inside them.
- Entre Ville* by J. R. Carpenter. A homage to the poet's neighborhood in the city of Montreal, *Entre Ville* is an interactive poetic diary.
- The Sweet Old Etcetera*, an adaptation of e e cumming's poetry to flash environment, by Alison Clifford.
- Family Tree/ Stamboom* by Rozalie Hirs and Harm Van Den Dorpel is "a deceptively simple word-toy that overturns several of our familiar metaphors for the way we discuss time, genealogy, even the individual's relationship to the nation-state by rendering one's "roots" as swaying in space, subject to forces of destabilization and recombination..."<sup>692</sup>
- PlaintextPerformance* by Bjørn Magnhildøen. "It's a live writing performance over the net combining 1) keyboard writing, 2) machinated, algorithmic writing, and 3) feeds from the processes surrounding the writing (like system monitoring, net connection monitoring, ftp log, etc). All in realtime and plaintext."<sup>693</sup>
- Palavrador* by Chico Martinho. The winner of the "Ciutat de Vinaròs Digital Literature Award" in 2006, *Palavrador* is a multi-author work that transports the reader as a flying animal into a 3D world where she navigates six blocks of poems.
- Nick Montfort's *Book and Volume*. Set in the city of nTopia, this interactive fiction portrays the last day of a sysadmin.
- Golpe de Garcia* by Jaime Alejandro Rodríguez. A multimedia narrative, *Golpe de Garcia* combines text, image, animation and sound to tell the story of a near-death experience.
- Critical Code Studies*, a website which studies softwares and computers as cultural constructs, by Mark Marino.

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<sup>692</sup> Aardse, Kent. "Individual Work: Family Tree." *Family Tree*. Electronic Literature Directory, 19 July 2014. Web. 14 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/3879>>.

<sup>693</sup> Memmott, Talan, Brian Kim Stefans, Ambrose Barras, and Rita Raley. "PlainTextPerformance." *PlainTextPerformance*. Electronic Literature Collection 2, n.d. Web. 15 Dec. 2014. <[http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/magnhildoen\\_plaintextperformance.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/2/works/magnhildoen_plaintextperformance.html)>.

*Urbanalities*, “a ten-minute short story-poem-comic strip-musical based around the experiences of a young woman living in a modern, unnamed city,<sup>694</sup>” by Chris Joseph and Maria Colino.

2007 XanaduSpace 1.0.

*Tierra de Extraction* by Doménico Chiappe and Andreas Meire. Each word can be a chapter in this interactive piece. The reader is presented with several navigation routes in each page and he is free to follow the route planned by the author or trust his own instinct in reading in this multilayered text.

*La Casa Sota el Temps* by Ifías Herrero. Translated as “The House under Time,” this piece comments on the process of reading by trying to immerse the reader through various interactive possibilities. *La Casa Sota el Temps* won the Vicent Ferrer award of best Catalan Work, “Ciutat de Vinaròs Digital Literature Awards,” 2007.

Ifías Herrero’s *Universo Molécula* links the poetic language with molecular structure of matter. *Universo Molécula* was the winner of the “Ciutat de Vinaròs Digital Literature Award” 2007.

Justin Katko’s *Up Against the Screen Mother Fuckers*, a manifesto poem that comments on the role of art.

*That Last performance (dot org)* by Judd Morrisey. Reflecting upon the ending in relation with architectural structures, *The Last Performance* invites the collaborators to respond to constraints and contribute to the text-visualization project.

*Flight Path* by Kate Pullinger and Chris Joseph. This multimedia project about an immigrant trying to escape Pakistan and encourages the readers to contribute memories, ideas, text, stories and images.

Stuart Moulthrop’s *Deep Surface*, a game-like hypermedia which reflects upon the significance of reading and immersion. *Deep Surface* was the winner of the first prize in narrative at the “Ciutat de Vinaròs” Awards in 2007.

Jason Nelson’s *game, game, game and again game*, a Flash-based game poem which invites the reader / gamer to browse through the landscape, overcome the obstacles and unlock the texts and the videos.

*Slippingglimpse* by Stephanie Strickland, Cynthia Lawson Jaramillo and Paul Ryan. *Slippingglimpse* is a ten-part flash poem in which a poetic text was combined with a video of rippling ocean.

reWrite, an interactive digital projection installation, by Simon Biggs.

*Poetry Cube* (also known as *poem cube*) by Jason Nelson. This hypermedia piece encourages the user to think of a poem as a multi-dimensional and multi-linear entity by creating his own poems through interacting with the cube.

*The Aesthetics of Net Literature, A Review*. Edited by Peter Gendolla and Jorgen Schafer

2008 *Senghor on the Rocks* by Christoph Benda. The novel was written in the traditional linear narrative and presented through a first-person perspective. The story is presented alongside a google map offering a satellite view of the story’s current location on the page.

*In Absentia* by J. R. Carpenter, a multi-lingual and multi-author writing project that uses the google map application to explore the relationship between fiction and the real physical space.

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<sup>694</sup> Grigg, Mikaela. “Individual Work: Urbanalities.” *Urbanalities*. Electronic Literature Directory, 12 Feb. 2011. Web. 29 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/1276>>.

*Voyage into the Unknown*, a historical non-fiction hypertext about the first geographic expedition down the Colorado River in 1869,<sup>695</sup> by Roderick Coover.

*Public Secrets* by Sharon Daniel and Eric Loyer. Having set in Central California Women's Facility, the reader of this flash-based non-fiction witnesses Sharon Daniel who in turn witnesses the testimonies of women.

*The Fugue Book* by Ton Ferret. A narrative about Facebook and privacy, this winner of the best work in Catalan at the "Ciutat de Vinaròs Digital Literature Award" 2008 combines a variety of platforms such as forums, wikis and blogs to personal identity and social media.

*Andromeda* by Caitlin Fisher is a digital and a real book that need to be read using a webcam.

*Roulette*, a poem that can be read in almost 64000 ways, by Daniel C. Howe and Bebe Molina.

*AH* by K Michael and Dirk Vis. A Flash-animated shower song text, *AH* examines mind and eye coordination in reading a phrase, a sentence or a text in order to represent the flow of time.

*A Show of Hands*, an adaptive hypertext narrative about immigration, by Mark C. Marino.

Nick Montfort's *ppg256*, a new year poem created by Perl poetry generators in 256 characters.

Illya Szilak's *Reconstructing Mayakovsky*. Inspired by the poet Vladimir Mayakovsky, this multimedia novel envisages a world in which discord and doubt have been eradicated from the technological world.

Jim Munroe's *Everybody Dies*, an interactive fiction about the angst of teenage rebellion and the winner of bronze at IFCOMP 2008, the 14th Annual Interactive Fiction Competition.

Christine Wilks' *Tailspin*, a Flash narrative exploring a hearing-impaired father's relationship with his daughter and granddaughters through texts, sounds and animations.

Christine Wilk's *Fitting the Pattern: or being a dressmaker's daughter*, an interactive memoir which flirts with the similarities between the act of writing and the act of weaving.

*i made this. play this. we are enemies.* by Jason Nelson. The second installment of game, *game, game and again game* (2007), the piece is a flash-based poetry game.

*The Visit*, a hypertextual fiction by Anne F. Wysocki.

2009 *Brainstrips* by Alan Bigelow is a series of comic strips designed for web which raises philosophical, scientific and mathematical questions.

*Toucher*, an interactive piece which explores the tactile aspect of the reading experience in a digital environment, by Serge Bouchardon, Kevin Carpentiere, Stéphanie Spénlé.

*88 Constellations for Wittgenstein (to be played with left hand)* by David Clark. An interactive piece which explores the life and the philosophy of Ludwig Wittgenstein through 88 flash pieces which correspond to the 88 constellations in the night sky.

Rui Torres' *Poemas No Miao Do Caminho*, a Portuguese combinatory poem that lets the reader choose his navigational routes. *Poemas No Miao Do Caminho* was the winner of the 4th Premi Internacional "Ciutat de Vinaròs Digital Literature Award" in 2009.

*Mémoire Involontaire No. 1*, a commentary on memory and recollection by Braxton Soderman.

*Consensus Trance, Part 1*, a multimedia story which explores the psyche of its narrative, by Andy Campbell.

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<sup>695</sup> Tomaszek, Patricia. "Individual Work: Unknown Territories: Voyage Into The Unknown." *Unknown Territories: Voyage Into The Unknown*. Electronic Literature Directory, 8 Aug. 2009. Web. 14 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/86>>.

*Morpheus Biblionaut* by William Gillespie and Travis Alber. Set in a self-destructive world in which the USA declares war on China, this Flash-based narrative explores the social nature of man by focusing on an isolated poet-astronaut.

*La Movida Literaria*, a virtual magazine featuring hypertext fiction, poetry, non-fiction and critical articles, by Jesse Tangen Mills.

*Blueberries*, a hypertext fiction on love, blame, trust, language and sexuality which skillfully employs links to reinforce the effect of suspense, surprise and induce coherence, by Susan Gibb.

*A Study in Scarlet*, a Brazilian hypertext detective story (originally *Um Estudo em Vermelho*) with eight possible endings, by Marcelo Spalding.

*human-mind-machine* by William David Jhave Johnson. This Flash-based fiction explores the nature of consciousness.

*TOC, A New Media Novel* by David Tomasula. A combination of text, image, music and animation, *TOC* is a reflection upon time, language and art.

Steve Ersinghaus' *The Night I Saw on My Homeward Way*, a hypertext poem which rewards the reader on his choice of links.

Susan Gibb's *100 Flash Fiction Hypertexts*. A series of short stories written as a part of 100 Days, 100 Stories Project, *100 Flash Fiction Hypertexts* are inspired by the author's daily experiences. The 'flash' in the title refers to the brevity of the stories and not the platform.

*CYOA*, a hypertextual choose-your-own-adventure books, by Christian Swinehart.

*reRead* by Simon Biggs. A companion installation to *reWrite* (2007), *reRead* is an interactive digital projection installation which explores the relationship between reading and writing.

The first issue of *SpringGun Press and Journal*, a web-based journal of contemporary writing and interdisciplinary studies.

*umaestruturaaassimsempudor*, a bilingual blog by Bruno Nieva, which presents visual poetry and collage in English and Portuguese.

*Lollipop Noose* by Todd Seabrook. The piece employs the familiar frame of Hangman to explore the relationship between the language and the body, genres and conceptualizing symbols.

*Undum* by Ian Millington. Designed for HTML5 and CSS3, *Undum* is an interface that the writer customizes to create his own interactive fiction.

*End of Capitalism*, an interactive flash movie by Angela Ferraiolo. The movie is a compilation of texts, education animation, films and television interviews on Capitalism.

*evidence of everything exploding* by Jason Nelson. The third installment in the series *game, game, game and again game* (2007) and *i made this. you play this. we are enemies.* (2008), *evidence of everything exploding* demands reader participation for the poem to progress.

*Every Word I Saved* by Cristobal Mendoza. The words of the piece have been provided from the author's text messages, emails, and other textual documents saved in different computers and softwares. The original capitalization has been preserved and the words appear out of context and in alphabetical order. In other words, the reader determines the context.

*Computers, Cut-ups and Combinatory Volvelles: An Archaeology of Text-generating Mechanisms* by Whitney Anne Trettien is "an essay in that it is a test, a proof, an

experiment — an innovative media-rich mode of the essay that engages the reader as an active participant in determining an outcome.”<sup>696</sup>

2010 *\_cross.ova.ing 4rm.blog.2.log 07/08 XXtracts\_*, a contemplation on writing, network, center-less discourse and codework by Mez.

*This Is Not A Poem*, a Flash-based piece in which the reader may continuously create and unmake poems. by Alan Bigelow.

*Mixed Media Poetry* by Ari Kalinowski. *Mixed Media Poetry* is an electronic journal which studies the relationship between poetry and fine arts.

*Reading Moving Letters: Digital Literature in Research and Teaching, A Handbook* by Amanda Starling Gould.

*Mortara: a bet on naming a new literary subgenre* by Plata Juan Pablo. *Mortara* is a Spanish text that focuses on hypertext genres and the works of Enrique Vila-Matas, Daniel Grassian, Claudio Guillén and Jaime Alejandro Rodríguez.

*Insects*, a flash-based version of a poem by Lluís Calvo by Pedro Valdeomilos and Lluís Calvo.

*Dig* by Steve Duffy. *Dig* is a Java-script visual verbal conflict.

*Canyonlands: Edward Abbey in the Great American Desert* by Roderick Coover. A blend of art and writing, *Canyonlands* is a web-based interactive non-fiction about landscape, navigation and the relationship between text and imagery.

*Pulse*, “a g.a.c.o.i. (Generative, Autopoietic, Collaborative, Open-ended, Intermedial) electronic literary piece,”<sup>697</sup> by Zuzana Husarova and Lubomir Panak.

*Little Book of Prompts* by Sylvanus Shaw. The piece “is one of a pair of Flash artworks presented as “psychometric” tests, along with “Nomen Sacrum Trial,” by Sylvanus Shaw's satirical corporate homunculus.”<sup>698</sup>

*Nomen Sacrum Trial*, the second of the pair of Falsh artwork by Sylvanus Shaw along with *Little Book of Prompts*.

*The ELMCIP or Electronic Literature Knowledge Base: A Review* by Scott Rettberg and Jill Walker Rettberg. The *ELMCIP* is a European collaborative research project on creativity and innovation in practice.

*Nightingale's Playground*, a flash-based fiction about identity, loss and self-perception by Andy Campbell and Judi Alston.

*Changed* by Andy Campbell and Lydia Williams. *Changed* was created by html and java script and deals with the effects of physical and mental abuse.

*@MayorEmanuel*, a satirical twitter project based on a real political personality (Rahm Emanuel, former Indiana Representative and Chief of Staff to Barack Obama during his 2010-2011 campaign for Mayor of Chicago) by Dan Sinker, the professor of journalism.

“Digital Literature and the Three Levels of the Digital” by Serge Bouchardon. The main focus of the paper is on the concept of “unveiling” in digital literature.

“The Heuristic Value of Electronic Literature” by Serge Bouchardon. The essay applies the established methodology to electronic literature and thus discusses the potential of the digital literature and the boundaries of the currents approaches.

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<sup>696</sup> Vincler, John. “Resource: Computers, Cut-ups and Combinatory Volvelles: An Archaeology of Text-generating Mechanisms.” *Computers, Cut-ups and Combinatory Volvelles: An Archaeology of Text-generating Mechanisms*. Electronic Literature Directory, 2010. Web. 29 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/540>>.

<sup>697</sup> Husarova, Zuzanne. “10:01.” *10:01*. Electronic Literature Directory, 1 Dec. 2010. Web. 29 Dec. 2014. <[http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/olsen\\_guthrie\\_10\\_01.html](http://collection.eliterature.org/1/works/olsen_guthrie_10_01.html)>.

<sup>698</sup> Schoenbeck, Rob. “Individual Work: Little Book of Prompts.” *Little Book of Prompts*. Electronic Literature Directory, 11 Jan. 2011. Web. 29 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/1093>>.



*Custom Orthotics Changed My Life*, a slideshow fiction by Richard Holeyton. In this autobiographical piece, the narrator uses the presentation format such as bullet points, graphs, images and colorful charts to talk about his life.

*The Loss of Grasp* by Serge Bouchardon and Vincent Volckaert. This bilingual piece reflects on the experience of loss.

*A [S]creed for Digital Fiction*, an essay by Alice Bell, Astrid Ensslin, David Ciccoricco, Hans Rustad, Jess Laccetti and Jessica Pressman. “This [s]creed offers up a list of exactly what the DFIN [Digital Fiction International Network] embraces, from the practices of close analysis, to the importance of code, to an emphasis on narratological approaches to (digital) narrative fictions. The group believes that narrative theory provides a basis hinged on print-oriented narratological criticism that can be extended to non-print texts. But they also focus on the distinct “(inter-)medial and ludic qualities” afforded by the media-specifics of the digital terminal.”<sup>699</sup>

*The Interactive Fiction Archive* by David Kinder, Stephen Grande, GOOB and ZARF. This website offers an index of interactive fiction submitted by publishers and users.

*\_terror(aw)ed patches\_* by Mez Breeze and Shane Hinton. “According to its authors, “\_terror(aw)ed patches\_ is a “collaborative “fiction” through \_live concurrent editing\_ in Google Wave,” and is presented as a video record of exchanges in that platform, foregrounding the relational power of punctuation as employed in both code and natural language<sup>700</sup>.”

*Official Website of vNovel Interactive*, a literature and entertainment publisher for the web and personal devices.

*Sydney’s Siberia*, a flash-based poetic mediation on urban space by Jason Nelson.

*Other Sides: 12 Webfiction Tales*, a fiction collection by A. M. Harte, Zoe E. Whitten, G.L. Drmmond, MCM, Meilin Miranda, M. Jones, T. L. Whiteman, Nancy Brauer, M. C. A. Hogarth, Lyn Thorne-Alder, Chris Childs, Erica Bercegeay and Charissa Cotrill.

*Locative Hypertext (eastgate.com)*. The website “uses geographic information — usually aided by GPS devices, smartphones, and tablets — to create narratives, poems, or games tied to locations within a specific place (e.g. landmarks in a city) or simply in relation to the participant’s movements recorded over time (regardless of his or her initial starting place).”<sup>701</sup>

The publication of *The Electronic Literature Collection*, Volume 2.

*Time for a Vispo* by Satu Kaikkonen is a blog introduces a weekly visual poetry challenge.

*InDigest Magazine*, a magazine that promotes communication between and about arts by Dustin Luke Nelson.

*The Learning Project* by Lincoln Stoller. The project focuses on the meaning and the process of learning for people of different ages and backgrounds.

2011 Paul La Farge’s *Luminous Airplanes*.

*Trope* by Sarah Waterson, Elena Knox and Cristyn Davis. *Trope* creates a conductive virtual-reality environment to experiment with the process of reading and explore how literary forms inspire ideas and initiate the process of interpretation in readers’ mind.

*OLE Officina di Letteratura Elettronica*, an online archive of Italian e-literature.

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<sup>699</sup> Aardse, Kent. “Resource: A [S]creed for Digital Fiction.” *A [S]creed for Digital Fiction*. Electronic Literature Directory, 5 Feb. 2012. Web. 29 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/3686>>.

<sup>700</sup> Schoenbeck, Rob. “Individual Work: \_terror(aw)ed Patches\_.” *\_terror(aw)ed Patches\_*. Electronic Literature Directory, 11 Jan. 2011. Web. 29 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/1091>>.

<sup>701</sup> Vincler, John. “Resource: Locative Hypertext (eastgate.com)” *Locative Hypertext (Eastgate.com)*. Electronic Literature Directory, 1 Aug. 2010. Web. 29 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/598>>.

*I ♥ E-Poetry* by Leonard Flores. The website is dedicated to 500-word (or less) works of literature.

*Skin: A Mortal Work of Art* by Shelley Jackson. The story has been tattooed on the bodies of the participants.

*Memoire Involuntaire No. 1*, a meditation on the relationship among language, memory and image by Braxton Soderman.

*With love, from a failed planet* by Jason Nelson. The author describes the piece as “an interactive logood world populated with 45 strange and fantastical stories of societal/cultural failure of influential net portals, fast food giants, newspapers, airlines, manufacturers and other oddities.”<sup>702</sup>

*round@bout*, a prezi poem, by Zuzana Husarova.

*4079*, a e-poem about distance by Zuzana Husarova and Lubomir Panak.

*Grace, Wit & Charm* by Rob Wittig “uses the “netprov” form (“networked improve narrative”), to simulate an imaginary service in which the very features of human subjectivity are provided to subscribers by support staff.”<sup>703</sup>

2012 *Fest* by Gabriel Helfenstine. *Fest* is a non-linear self-reflexive narrative that leaves the reader decide how to solve the dilemma: Should the protagonist jump off the cliff or return to her family.

*Unwelt*, an interactive comic by Randall Munroe.

Electronic Literature Exhibit at the Modern Language Association 2012 Convention.

*La Disparue*, a whodunit hypertext that invites the reader to impersonate the detective, by Cécile Iran, Médéric Lulin and Sophie Séguin.

*Dear Esther* by The Chinese Room is “an experimental video game from developer that employs epistolary narrative to convey a fragmented story.”<sup>704</sup>

*DPLA (Digital Public Library of America)*, “a clearinghouse for metadata records of objects and books from libraries, museums, and archives, the DPLA seeks to be the portal where end-users go first to search and access digital content.”<sup>705</sup>

2013 *Stanley Parable*, an interactive fiction game by Davey Wreden.

*Simple, Non-linear Narrative Engine* by Benjamin Hall. It is a story engine that invites the readers to respond to five word prompts and create descriptions and exit options.

*Tube Lines* by Chris Joseph. This parallel-narrative hypertext was one of the finalists of Arte Laguna Art Prize (2013) in visual art Category.

2014 *OpenXanadu*.

*Open Humanities Press (OHP)* by Alexandr Belov. Launched in 2008 under the supervision of Sig Jottkandt and Gary Hall for the first time, OHP intends to solve the problem of access to scholarly material in the field of humanities: “The principal goal of OHP was to catch up with the open access culture already achieved in the sciences and solve the credibility problem of open access resources in the humanities context.”<sup>706</sup>

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<sup>702</sup> Nelson, Jason. “With love, from a failed planet.” *Secret Technology.com*. N.p., 2011. Web. 29 Dec. 2014. <<http://www.secrettechnology.com/flanet>>.

<sup>703</sup> Heckman, David. “Individual Work: Grace, Wit & Charm.” *Grace, Wit & Charm*. Electronic Literature Directory, 21 May 2012. Web. 29 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/3720>>.

<sup>704</sup> Hocker, Grant. “Individual Work: Dear Esther.” *Dear Esther*. Electronic Literature Directory, 3 July 2014. Web. 29 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/3822>>.

<sup>705</sup> Rodgers, Johannah. “Resource: Digital Public Library of America / DPLA.” *Digital Public Library of America / DPLA*. Electronic Literature Directory, 26 Dec. 2013. Web. 29 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/3751>>.

<sup>706</sup> Belov, Alexandr. “Resource: Open Humanities Press.” *Open Humanities Press*. Electronic Literature Directory, 9 Feb. 2014. Web. 15 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/3756>>.

*Bibliopedia* by Alexandr Belov. Still a prototype, Bibliopedia will soon facilitate the multilayer examination of a single work. “The idea of Bibliopedia tool is to extract metadata about works cited, convert that data into a semantic web format, aggregate different repositories, and then display the results on a wiki-style web-site for the scholarly community to verify, annotate, add to, elaborate and discuss (“Bibliopedia”). The mission of the project is to unite under a single umbrella the often separate scholarly silos of information and research in the humanities on a particular work or topic.”<sup>707</sup>

*Literary Gaming* by Astrid Ensslin.

*Analyzing Digital Fiction* by Alice Bell, Astrid Ensslin and Hans Ruad.

*Patatap* by Jono Brandel and Lollatone. This interactive web page turns typed words into explosions of color and sound and create infinite literary and aesthetic possibilities.

*multi.com.plicity* by Chris Joseph. This hypermedia piece is an adaptation of *My Twenty Five Day* by Guy de Maupassant.

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<sup>707</sup> Belov, Alexandr. "Resource: Bibliopedia." *Bibliopedia*. Electronic Literature Directory, 9 Feb. 2014. Web. 15 Dec. 2014. <<http://directory.eliterature.org/node/3757>>

## Computer evolution: a timeline

- 1930 Vannevar Bush developed a partly electronic **Difference Engine**, the precursor to the digital computer.
- 1931 Kurt Godel published a paper on the use of a universal formal language.
- 1937 Alan Turing developed the concept of a theoretical computing machine.  
John Vincent Atanasoff, a professor of physics and mathematics at Iowa State University, attempted to build the first computer without gears, cams, belts or shafts.
- 1938 Konrad Zuse created the **Z1 Computer** a binary digital computer using punch tape.
- 1939 George Stibitz developed the **Complex Number Calculator**, a foundation for digital computers  
William Hewlett and David Packard started **Hewlett Packard**.  
John Vincent Atanasoff and Clifford Berry developed the **ABC (Atanasoff-Berry Computer)** prototype, the first automatic electronic digital computer. The computer could solve 29 equations simultaneously, and for the first time a computer was able to store information on its main memory.
- 1943 Adolf Hitler used the **Enigma encryption machine**.  
Alan Turing developed the code-breaking machine **Colossus**.
- 1944 Howard Aiken and Grace Hopper designed the **MARK series** of computers at Harvard University.
- 1945 John Presper Eckert and John W. Mauchly developed the **ENIAC** (Electronic Numerical Integrator and Computer).  
**Computer Bug**: The term computer “bug” as computer bug was first used by Grace Hopper.
- 1946 F.C. Williams developed his cathode-ray tube (**CRT**) storing device the forerunner to random-access memory (**RAM**).
- 1947 Donald Watts Davies joined Alan Turing to build the fastest digital computer in England at the time, **the Pilot ACE**.  
William Shockley invented **the transistor** at Bell Labs.  
Douglas Engelbart theorized on interactive computing with keyboard and screen display instead of on punchcards.
- 1948 Andrew Donald Booth invented **magnetic drum memory**.  
Frederic Calland Williams and Tom Kilburn developed the **SSEM** (Small Scale Experimental Machine) digital CRT storage which was soon nicknamed the “Baby.”
- 1949 Claude Shannon built the first machine that played chess.  
Howard Aiken developed the **Harvard-MARK III**.
- 1950 **The first electronic computer** was created in Japan by Hideo Yamachito.  
Alan Turing published his paper “Computing Machinery and Intelligence” which led to the creation of Turing Test.
- 1951 T. Raymond Thompson and John Simmons developed the first business computer, the **Lyons Electronic Office (LEO)** at Lyons Co.  
**UNIVAC I** (UNIVERSal Automatic Computer I) was introduced. The first commercial computer made in the United States and designed principally by John Presper Eckert and John W. Mauchly.  
The **EDVAC** (Electronic Discrete Variable Automatic Computer) began performing basic tasks. Unlike the ENIAC, it was binary rather than decimal.
- 1953 The **IBM 701** became available and a total of 19 were sold to the scientific community.
- 1954 John Backus and IBM developed the **FORTRAN Computer Programming Language**.

- 1955 Bell Labs introduced its first transistor computer.
- 1956 **Optical fiber** was invented by Basil Hirschowitz, C. Wilbur Peters, and Lawrence E. Curtiss.
- 1957 **Sputnik I** and **Sputnik II** were launched by the Russians.
- 1958 **ARPA** (Advanced Research Projects Agency) and **NASA** were formed.  
The first integrated circuit, or **silicon chip**, was produced by the US Jack Kilby and Robert Noyce
- 1959 Paul Baran theorised on the survivability of communication systems under nuclear attack, digital technology and symbiosis between humans and machines.
- 1960 **The Common Business-Oriented Language (COBOL)** programming language was invented.
- 1961 General Motors put **the first industrial robot, Unimate**, to work in a New Jersey factory.
- 1962 The first computer game, **Spacewar Computer Game**, was invented by Steve Russell at MIT.
- 1963 Douglas Engelbart invented and patented **the first computer mouse** (nicknamed the mouse because the tail came out the end).  
The American Standard Code for Information Interchange (**ASCII**) was developed to standardize data exchange among computers.
- 1964 IBM introduced **the first word processor**.  
John Kemeny and Thomas Kurtz developed **Beginner's All-purpose Symbolic Instruction Language (BASIC)**.
- 1965 Andries van Dam and Ted Nelson coined the term "**hypertext**."
- 1967 IBM created **the first floppy disk**.
- 1969 Seymour Cray developed the **CDC 7600, the first supercomputer**.  
Gary Starkweather invented **the laser printer** whilst working with Xerox.  
The U.S. Department of Defense set up the Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (**ARPANET**) this network was the first building blocks to what the internet is today but originally with the intention of creating a computer network that could withstand any type of disaster.
- 1970 Intel introduced the world's first available dynamic **RAM (random-access memory)** chip and **the first microprocessor, the Intel 4004**.
- 1971 **E-mail** was invented by Ray Tomlinson.  
**Liquid Crystal Display (LCD)** was invented by James Ferguson.  
**Pocket calculator** was invented by Sharp Corporation.  
**Floppy Disk** was developed by David Noble with IBM. Nicknamed the "Floppy" for its flexibility.
- 1972 Atari released **Pong, the first commercial video game**.  
The compact disc, **CD**, was invented in the United States.
- 1973 Robert Metcalfe creates **the Ethernet**, a local-area network (LAN) protocol.  
The creation of the minicomputer **Xerox Alto** was a landmark step in the development of personal computers  
Vint Cerf and Bob Kahn developed **gateway routing computers** to negotiate between the various national networks.
- 1974 IBM developed **SEQUEL (Structured English Query Language)** now known as **SQL**.  
Charles Simonyi coined the term **WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get)** to describe the ability of being able to display a file or document exactly how it is going to be printed or viewed.
- 1975 Altair produced **the first portable computer**.

- The Microsoft Corporation** was founded on April 4th, 1975 by Bill Gates and Paul Allen to develop and sell BASIC interpreters for the Altair 8800.
- 1976 **Apple Computers** was founded by Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs.
- 1977 Apple Computer's **Apple II**, the first personal computer with color graphics, was demonstrated.  
Ward Christensen wrote the program **MODEM** allowing two microcomputers to exchange files with each other over a phone line.
- 1978 **The first magnetic tape** was developed in the US.  
The introduction of **VisiCalc**, the first computerized spreadsheet program.
- 1979 Word processing became a reality as MicroPro International released **WordStar**.  
Over half a million computers were in use in the United States.
- 1980 IBM hired Paul Allen and Bill Gates to create an operating system for a new PC. They bought the rights to a simple operating system manufactured by Seattle Computer Products and used it as a template to develop **DOS**.
- 1981 The first IBM personal computer, code named **Acorn** was introduced.  
**MS-DOS** Computer Operating System increased its success.
- 1982 WordPerfect Corporation introduced **WordPerfect 1.0**, a word processing program.  
**The Commodore 64** became the best-selling computer of all time.  
**SMTP (Simple Mail Transfer Protocol)** was introduced.
- 1983 More than 10 million computers were in use in the United States.  
**Domain Name System (DNS)** pioneered by Jon Postel, Paul Mockapetris and Craig Partridge. Seven 'top-level' domain names were initially introduced: edu, com, gov, mil, net, org and int.  
The introduction of **Microsoft Windows** eliminated the need for a user to have to type each command, like MS-DOS, by using a mouse to navigate through drop-down menus, tabs and icons.  
Apple's **Lisa** was the first personal computer with a GUI (graphic user interface). It also featured a drop-down menu and icons This computer eventually evolved into the Macintosh.  
**The Gavilan SC** was the first portable computer with the familiar flip form factor and the first to be marketed as a **laptop**.
- 1984 Apple introduced the **Macintosh** with mouse and window interface.  
William Gibson coined the word **cyberspace** when he published *Neuromancer*.  
**Dell Computer** was founded in Austin Texas on 3 May, 1984.
- 1985 Paul Brainard introduced **Pagemaker** for the Macintosh creating the desktop publishing field.  
**The Nintendo Entertainment System** made its debut.  
Microsoft announced **Microsoft Windows 1.0** on 19 November, 1985 as a response to Apple's GUI. It initially sold for \$100.00.
- 1986 Compaq brought the **Deskpro 386** to market. Its 32-bit architecture provided a speed comparable to mainframes.  
More than 30 million computers were in use in the United States.
- 1987 Microsoft introduced **Microsoft Works**.  
Larry Wall introduced **Perl 1.0**.
- 1988 Over 45 million PCs were in use in the United States.
- 1990 Tim Berners-Lee and Robert Cailliau proposed a HyperText Markup Language (HTML) which gave rise to the modern **Internet**.  
Microsoft and IBM stopped working together to develop operating systems.

- The World**, the first commercial Internet dial-up access provider came online on 20 September.
- Microsoft released **Windows 3.0** on 20 September.
- 1991 **The World Wide Web** was launched to the public on August 6, 1991.
- 1993 **The Pentium microprocessor** advanced the use of graphics and music on PCs.  
At the beginning of the year, only 50 World Wide Web servers were known to exist.
- 1994 **The World Wide Web Consortium** was founded by Tim Berners-Lee to help with the development of common protocols for the evolution of the World Wide Web  
**YAHOO** was created in April, 1994.  
PCs became gaming machines. *Command & Conquer*, *Alone in the Dark 2*, *Theme Park*, *Magic Carpet*, *Descent* and *Little Big Adventure* were the games to hit the market.
- 1995 **Java** was introduced.  
**Amazon.com** was founded by Jeff Bezos.  
**eBay** was founded by Pierre Omidyar.  
**Hotmail** was started by Jack Smith and Sabeer Bhatia.
- 1996 **WebTV** was introduced.  
The **DVD** Video format was first introduced by Toshiba in Japan in November, 1996.
- 1997 Altavista introduced its free online translator **Babel Fish**.  
Microsoft acquired Hotmail.
- 1998 **Google** was founded by Sergey Brin and Larry Page on September 7, 1998.  
**PayPal** was founded by Peter Thiel and Max Levchin.  
**Apple Power Book G3** was released on 20 Sep, 1998.
- 1999 The term **Wi-Fi** became part of the computing language as users began connecting to the Internet without wires.
- 2000 Sony released the **PlayStation 2**.
- 2001 Bill Gates introduced the **Xbox** on 7 January, 2001.  
**Windows XP** was launched on 20 Sep, 2001.  
Apple unveiled the **Mac OS X operating system** which provided protected memory architecture and pre-emptive multi-tasking among other benefits.
- 2002 Approximately 1 billion PCs have been sold.  
PayPal was acquired by eBay.
- 2003 **iTunes** was launched on 9 Jan, 2003.  
**Skype** was launched on 20 Aug, 2003.  
The first 64-bit processor, **AMD's Athlon 64**, became available to the consumer market.
- 2004 **Facebook** was first launched on 20 Sep, 2004.  
**Firefox 1.0** was released on 9 Nov, 2004 challenging Microsoft's Internet Explorer.  
**Blizzard's World of Warcraft game**, the most popular and successful MMORPG (Massively Multiplayer Online Role-playing Game) was released 23 Nov, 2004.
- 2005 **YouTube** began on 14 Feb, 2005.  
**Xbox360** was released on 20 Feb, 2005.  
eBay acquired Skype on 12 September, 2005.
- 2006 Skype announced that it had over 100 million registered users.  
The **blu-ray** was first announced and introduced on 4 Januray, 2006.  
The first **iPhone** was released on 29 Jun, 2006 and brought many computer functions to the smartphones.  
**Twitter** was created in March 2006 by Jack Dorsey, Evan Williams, Biz Stone and Noah Glass and launched by July 2006.  
SCE released **Play Station 3** on 11 Nov, 2006.

- Nintendo released **Wii** on 19 Nov, 2006.  
 Apple introduced the **MacBook Pro**, its first Intel-based, dual-core mobile computer, as well as an Intel-based **iMac**.
- 2007 **Windows Vista** was released 30 January, 2007.  
**Tumblr** was created and launched by David Karp on April 27, 2007.  
**iPod Touch** was released on 5 September, 2007.  
 Asus released first **Eee PC (netbook)** on 16 October, 2007.
- 2008 **Macbook Air** was announced on January 15, 2008.  
**First Android OS** and **Android Smartphone** were released on 21 October, 2008.
- 2009 **Windows 7** was released on 22 October, 2009. The new Windows had the ability to pin applications to the taskbar and offered advances in touch and handwriting recognition, among other features.
- 2010 The **iPad** was released on 3 April, 2010.  
**Instagram** was created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger, and launched in October 2010.
- 2011 Microsoft exceeded \$1 billion in sales and became the first company to do so.
- 2012 Apple introduced the **iPhone 5** and the **iPad mini** October 23, 2012.  
**Microsoft Windows 8** and **Microsoft Surface** were released October 26, 2012.  
 The number of smart phones worldwide reached 1 billion.
- 2013 On March 15, 2013 Microsoft discontinued Messenger in favor of Skype.  
 Yahoo announced that it would purchase Tumblr for \$1.1Billion 20 May 20, 2013.  
 Microsoft unveiled the **Xbox One** on 21 May, 2013, a new gaming console to replace the Xbox 360.  
 Apple introduced the **iPhone 5s** and **5c** on September 10, 2013 and **iOS7** on 18 September.  
 Microsoft released **Windows 8.1** on October 18, 2013.  
 The **iPad Mini 2** and the **iPad Air**, the fifth-generation iPad tablet computer, were announced on 22 October, 2013.  
 Sony released the **PS4** November 15, 2013.  
 Apple outsold Windows PCs globally for the first time.
- 2014 Apple introduced the new **iPhone 6**, **iPhone 6 Plus**, and **Apple Watch** on 9 September.  
 Microsoft announced the next version of Windows, **Windows 10**, on 30 September.  
 The **iPad Air 2** was unveiled on October 16.  
 The **iPad Mini 3** was announced on October 16, 2014 and released on October 24.<sup>708</sup>

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<sup>708</sup> “Computer History 2014.” Computer Hope: Free Computer Help and Information. October 27 2014. <<http://www.computerhope.com/history/2014.htm>>

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“Computer Development: Historic Timeline” *and.com*. October 27 2014. <[http://anddum.com/timeline/history\\_short.htm](http://anddum.com/timeline/history_short.htm)>

Zimmermann, Kim Ann. “History of Computing.” June 4, 2012. Livescience. October 27 2014. <<http://www.livescience.com/20718-computer-history.html>>



## Critical theory in the twentieth century

- 1853 Preface to *Poems* by Matthew Arnold  
1864 “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” by Matthew Arnold  
1865 *Essays in Criticism* (First Series) by Matthew Arnold  
1869 *Culture and Anarchy* by Matthew Arnold  
1884 “The Art of Fiction” by Henry James  
1888 *Essays in Criticism* (Second Series) by Matthew Arnold  
1915 Moscow Linguistic Circle was founded.  
*Course in General Linguistics* by Ferdinand de Saussure  
1916 The Society for the Study of Poetic Language (OPOJAZ) was founded.  
1917 “Art as a Technique” by Victor Shklovsky  
1918 “From the History of an Infantile Neurosis” by Sigmund Freud  
1919 “Tradition and the Individual Talent” by T. S. Eliot  
“Hamlet and His Problems” by T. S. Eliot

### Structuralism, Semiotics (1920s- )

- 1924 *Principals of Literary Criticism* by I. A. Richards  
*Literature and Revolution* by Leon Trotsky  
1926 *Science and Poetry* by I.A. Richards  
The Prague Linguistic Circle was founded.  
1928 *The Formal Method in Literary Scholarship: A Critical Introduction to Sociological Poetics* by Mikhail Bakhtin and P. N. Medvedev  
1929 *Practical Criticism* by I. A. Richards  
*Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* by Mikhail Bakhtin  
*Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* by Valentin Voloshinov  
*A Room of One's Own* by Virginia Woolf  
“Womanliness as a Masquerade” by Joan Rivière

### New Criticism, Russian Formalism, Marxist Theories, Psychoanalytic Criticism, Jungian Criticism, First Wave of Feminism (1930s - )

- 1930 *Seven Types of Ambiguity* by William Empson  
1931 *The Literary Work of Art* by Roman Ingarden  
1932 *New Bearings in English Poetry* by F. R. Leavis  
1935 *Some Versions of Pastoral* by William Empson  
1936 *Revaluation: Tradition and Development in English Poetry* by F. R. Leavis  
*Aesthetic Function, Norm and Value as Social Facts* by Jan Mukar'ovsky  
1937 “Criticism, Inc.” by John Crowe Ransom  
“Literary Criticism and Philosophy” by F. R. Leavis  
*The Historical Novel* by George Lukács  
1938 *Understanding Poetry* by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren  
*Three Guineas* by Virginia Woolf  
1941 *The New Criticism* by John Crowe Ransom  
1942 “Keats's Sylvan Historian: History Without Footnotes” by Cleanth Brooks  
1943 *Understanding Fiction* by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren  
*Education and the University* by F. R. Leavis  
1944 *Dialectic of Enlightenment* by Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer  
1946 “The Intentional Fallacy” by W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley

- 1947 *The Well-Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry* by Cleanth Brooks  
 1948 “Technique as Discovery” by Mark Schorer  
*The Great Tradition: George Eliot, Henry James, Joseph Conrad* by F. R. Leavis  
*Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* by T. S. Eliot  
*What is Literature?* by Jean-Paul Sartre  
 1949 “The Affective Fallacy” by W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley  
 “Fiction and the Analogical Matrix” by Mark Scorer  
*The Second Sex* by Simon de Beauvoir

### **Postmodernist Theories (1950s- )**

- 1950 *Studies in European Realism* by Georg Lukács  
 1952 *The Common Pursuit* by F. R. Leavis  
*Black Skin, White Masks* by Franz Fanon  
 1953 *Writing Degree Zero* by Roland Barthes  
 1954 *The Verbal Icon: Studies in the Meaning of Poetry* by W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley  
*Prisms* by Theodor W. Adorno  
*Mental Illness and Psychology* by Michel Foucault  
 1955 *Illuminations* by Walter Benjamin  
*Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism* by Walter Benjamin  
*The Hidden God* by Lucien Goldman  
 1956 *The New Apologists for Poetry* by Murray Kieger  
*Fundamentals of Language* by Roman Jakobson and Morris Halle  
 1957 *Mythologies* by Roland Barthes  
*The Meaning of Contemporary Realism* by Georg Lukács  
*Anatomy of Criticism* by Northrop Fry  
 1958 *Structural Anthropology* by Claude Levi-Strauss  
*The Morphology of the Folktale* by Vladimir Propp  
*Culture and Society 1780–1950* by Raymond Williams

### **Reader oriented Theories, French Structuralism, ‘Structuralist’ Marxism, Second-Wave Feminist Criticism, Marxist Feminism, Post-Structural Theories (1960s - )**

- 1960 “Linguistics and Poetics” by Roman Jakobson  
 1961 *The Rhetoric of Fiction* by Wayne C. Booth  
*The Long Revolution* by Raymond Williams  
*The Wretched of the Earth* by Franz Fanon  
*Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* by Michel Foucault  
 1963 *The Feminine Mystique* by Betty Friedan  
*The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* by Michel Foucault  
*Death and the Labyrinth: the World of Raymond Roussel* by Michel Foucault  
 1964 *Elements of Semiology* by Roland Barthes  
*Critical Essays* by Roland Barthes  
*One-Dimensional Man* by Hubert Marcuse  
 1965 *Selected Essays* by T. S. Eliot  
*Rabelais and His World* by Mikhail Bakhtin  
*For Marx* by Louis Althusser  
 1966 *Sémantique Structurale* by A. J. Greimas  
 “Frontiers of Narrative” by Gérard Genette

- Figures of Literary Discourse* by Gérard Genette  
*Understanding Brecht* by Walter Benjamin  
*A Theory of Literary Production* by Pierre Macherey  
 “Women: The Longest Revolution” by Juliet Mitchell  
*The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* by Michel Foucault  
 1967 *Système de la mode* by Roland Barthes  
*Elements of Semiology* by Roland Barthes  
 “The Death of the Author” by Roland Barthes  
*Criticism and Ideology* by Terry Eagleton  
*Of Grammatology* by Jacques Derrida  
*Writing and Difference* by Jacques Derrida  
 1968 *Negations* by Huber Marcuse  
*Thinking About Women* by Mary Ellmann  
 1969 *English Literature in Our Time and the University* by F. R. Leavis  
*Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* by Louis Althusser  
*Archeology of Knowledge* by Michel Foucault  
 “What Is An Author?” by Michel Foucault

#### **Gender Studies, Queer Theory (1970s - )**

- 1970 *Thomas Hardy: Distance and Desire* by J. Hillis Miller  
 “Describing Poetic Structures: Two Approaches to Baudelaire’s *Les Chats*” by Michael Riffaterre  
*The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* by Tzvetan Todorov  
*The Female Eunuch* by Germaine Greer  
*Patriarchal Attitudes* by Eva Figes  
*The Dialectic of Sex* by Shulamith Firestone  
*Sexual Politics* by Kate Millet  
*S/Z* by Roland Barthes  
 1971 *The Poetics of Prose* by Tzvetan Todorov  
*Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature* by Fredric Jameson  
*Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of Contemporary Criticism* by Paul de Man  
*Discours, figure* by Jean-François Lyotard  
 “White Mythology” by Jacques Derrida  
 “The Discourse on Language” by Michel Foucault  
 1972 *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* by Stanley Eugene Fish  
*Narrative Discourse* by Gérard Genette  
*The Analysis of the Poetic Text* by Yuri Lotman  
*The Prison-House of Language: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism* by Fredric Jameson  
*Selected Writings* by Walter Benjamin  
*The Arcades Project* by Walter Benjamin  
*Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari  
*Positions* by Jacques Derrida  
*Dissemination* by Jacques Derrida  
*For a Critique of the Political Economy of the Sign* by Jean Baudrillard  
 1973 *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* by V. N. Vokoshinov

- Women's Consciousness, Man's World* by Sheila Rowbotham  
*The Lesbian Body* by Monique Wittig  
*The Pleasure of the Text* by Roland Barthes  
*The Anxiety of Influence: A Theory of Poetry* by Harold Bloom  
*The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays* by Clifford Geertz  
*The Mirror of Production* by Jean Baudrillard  
*Lesbian Nation* by Jill Johnstone
- 1974 *The Implied Reader* by Wolfgang Iser  
*Television: Technology and Cultural Form* by Raymond Williams  
*Speculum of the Other Woman* by Luce Irigaray  
*The Revolution in Poetic Language* by Julia Kristeva  
*Economie libidinale* Jean-François Lyotard
- 1975 *The Living Principle: English as a Discipline of Thought* by F. R. Leavis  
*The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* by Mikhail Bakhtin  
*Structuralist Poetics: Structuralism, Linguistics and the Study of Literature*  
 by Jonathan Culler  
*Language, Semantics and Ideology* by Michel Pêcheux  
*Psychoanalysis and Feminism* by Juliette Michell  
 "The Laugh of the Medusa" by Hélène Cixous  
*A Map of Misreading* by Harold Bloom  
*Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison* by Michel Foucault  
*Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari  
 "POSTmodernISM" by Ihab Hassan  
*The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* by Ihab Hassan  
*Lesbian Images* by Jane Rule
- 1976 *Thought, Words and Creativity* by F. R. Leavis  
*The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* by Wolfgang Iser  
*The Analysis of the Poetic Text* by Yuri Lotman  
*Saussure* by Jonathan Culler  
*Marxism and Literary Criticism* by Terry Eagleton  
*Literary Women* by Ellen Moers  
*Symbolic Exchange and Death* by Jean Baudrillard  
*The History of Sexuality: Volume 1. The Will to Knowledge* by Michel Foucault  
*Lesbian Peoples: Materials for a Dictionary* by Sandi Zeig and Monique Wittig
- 1977 *The Modes of Modern Writing: Metaphor, Metonymy, and the Typology of Modern  
 Literature* by David Lodge  
*Aesthetics and Politics* by Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt  
 Brecht and Georg Lukács  
*Marxism and Literature* by Raymond Williams  
*A Literature of Their Own* by Elaine Showalter  
*Literature and Psychoanalysis* edited by Shoshana Felman  
*This Sex Which Is Not One* by Luce Irigaray  
*About Chinese Women* by Julia Kristeva  
*Language, Counter-Memory, Practice, Selected Essays and Interviews* by Michel Foucault  
*Écrits: A Selection* by Jacques Lacan  
*Toward a Black Feminist Criticism* by Barbara Smith
- 1978 *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response*  
*Semiotics of Poetry* by Michael Riffaterre

- Subjective Criticism* by David Bleich  
*Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* by Hayden White  
*Orientalism* by Edward Said  
*Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* by Mary Daly  
*Homosexual Desire* by Guy Hocquenghem  
1979 *Politics and Letters* by Raymond Williams  
*The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* by Umberto Eco  
*Text Production* Michael Riffaterre  
*The Aesthetic Dimension* Hubert Marcuse  
*Politics and Letters: Interviews with New Left Review* by Raymond Williams  
*The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination* by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar  
*Women Writing and Writing About Women* edited by Mary Jacobus  
*Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust* by Paul de Man  
*Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism* edited by Josué V. Harari  
*The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* by Jean-François Lyotard  
“Lesbian Intertextuality” by Elaine Marks  
*Introduction à l'architexte* by Gérard Genette

#### **New Historicism, Cultural Studies (1980s - )**

- 1980 *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretative Communities* by Stanley Eugene Fish  
“Introduction to the Study of the Narratee” by Gérald Prince  
*Problems in Materialism and Culture* by Raymond Williams  
*Man Made Language* by Dale Spender  
*Women's Oppression Today: Problems in Marxist Feminist Analysis* by Michèle Barrett  
“Dancing Through the Minefield: Some Observations on the Theory, Practice and Politics of a Feminist Literary Criticism” by Annette Kolodny  
*Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* by Julia Kristeva  
*Critical Practice* by Catherine Besley  
*Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* by Stephen Greenblatt  
*Criticism in the Wilderness* by Geoffrey H. Hartman  
*The Critical Difference: Essays in the Contemporary Rhetoric of Reading* by Barbara Johnson  
*Romantic Ideology: A Critical Investigation* by Jerome McGann  
“Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” by Adrienne Rich  
“The Temptations of a Motherless Girl” by Adrienne Rich  
“The Straight Mind” by Monique Wittig
- 1981 *Walter Benjamin or Towards a Revolutionary Criticism* by Terry Eagleton  
*The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* by Fredric Jameson  
“On Literature as an Ideological Form” by Pierre Macherey and Etienne Balibar  
*New French Feminisms: An Anthology* edited by Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron  
*Saving the Text: Literature/Derrida/Philosophy* by Geoffrey H. Hartman  
*Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* edited by Robert Young  
*Simulacra et Simulation* by Jean Baudrillard  
*Ain't I A Woman: Black Women and Feminism* by bell hooks

- The Lesbian in Literature: A Bibliography* by Barbara Grier
- This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* by Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa
- “One Is Not Born a Woman” by Monique Wittig
- 1982 *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* by Hans Robert Jauss
- The Rape of Clarissa* by Terry Eagleton
- Writing and Sexual Difference* by Elizabeth Abel
- Feminism and Psychoanalysis: The Daughter’s Seduction* by Jane Gallop
- Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* by Julia Kristeva
- Feminine Sexuality: Jacques Lacan and the École Freudienne* edited by Jacqueline Rose and Juliet Mitchell
- Fiction and Repetition: Seven English Novels* by J. Hillis Miller
- Marxism and Deconstruction: A Critical Articulation* by Michael Ryan
- Lesbian Studies: Present and Future* edited by Margaret Cruikshank
- Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* by Gérard Genette
- 1983 *Literary Theory: An Introduction* by Terry Eagleton
- On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* by Jonathan Culler
- Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* by Raymond Williams
- Towards 2000* by Raymond Williams
- On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after Structuralism* by Jonathan Culler
- Fatal Strategies* by Jean Baudrillard
- The Differend* by Jean-François Lyotard
- The World, the Text and the Critic* by Edward Said
- Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* edited by Barbara Smith
- In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose* by Alice Walker
- Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* by Gérard Genette
- 1984 *Writing in Society* by Raymond Williams
- The Longest Revolution: Essays on Feminism, Literature and Psychoanalysis* by Juliet Mitchell
- Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries* by Jonathan Dollimore
- Black Literature and Literary Theory* edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr.
- “Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation” by Toni Morrison
- “What is a Lesbian Novel?” by Alison Hennegan
- Sister/Outsider* by Audre Lorde
- The History of Sexuality: Volume 2. The Use of Pleasure* by Michel Foucault
- The History of Sexuality: Volume 3. The Care to the Self* by Michel Foucault
- 1985 *Feminist Criticism and Social Change* by Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt
- Sexual/Textual Politics* by Toril Moi
- Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class, and Race in Literature* edited by Judith Newton and Deborah Rosenfelt
- The Subject of Tragedy: Identity and Difference in Renaissance Drama* by Catherine Besley
- Postmodern Culture* edited by Hal Foster
- “Modernity – An Incomplete Project” by Jürgen Habermas
- “Capitalism, Modernism and Postmodernism” by Terry Eagleton
- Gynesis: Configurations of Women in Modernity* by Alice Jardine
- “Racism’s Last Word” by Jacques Derrida
- ‘Race,’ *Writing and Difference* edited by Henry Louis Gates Jr.

- “Three Women’s Texts and a Critique of Imperialism” by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak  
*The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literature* edited by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin  
*This Sex Which Is Not One* by Luce Irigaray  
*Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick
- 1986 *Against the Grain: Essays 1975–1985* by Terry Eagleton  
*Sexuality in the Field of Vision* by Jacqueline Rose  
*Reading Woman: Essays in Feminist Criticism* by Mary Jacobus  
*Sea Changes: Culture and Feminism* by Cora Kaplan  
*The Resistance to Theory* by Paul de Man  
*Travels in Hyperreality* by Umberto Eco  
 “The Other Question: Difference, Discrimination and the Discourse of Colonialism” by Homi K. Bhabha  
 “Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition” by Homi K. Bhabha  
 “Orientalism Reconsidered” by Edward Said  
*The New Feminist Criticism: Essays on Women, Literature and Theory* by edited by Elaine Showalter  
 “What Has Never Been: An Overview of Lesbian Feminist Literary Criticism” by Bonnie Zimmerman  
*Feminist Literary Theory: A Reader* edited by Mary Eagleton
- 1987 *A World of Difference* by Barbara Johnson  
*French Feminist Thought: A Reader* edited by Toril Moi  
*In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak  
*The Ethics of Reading: Kant, de Man, Eliot, Trollope, James and Benjamin* by J. Hillis Miller  
*Wordsworth’s Historical Imagination* by David Simpson  
*Derrida* by Christopher Norris  
*Figures in Black: Words, Signs and the ‘Racial’ Self* by Henry Louis Gates Jr.  
*Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* by Gloria Anzaldúa  
*Articulate Flesh: Male Home-Eroticism in Modern Poetry* by Gregory Woods
- 1988 *Framing the Sign* by Jonathan Culler  
*The Ideologies of Theory. Vol. 1 Situations of Theory, Vol. 2 The Syntax of History* by Fredric Jameson  
*Resources of Hope* by Raymond Williams  
*Writing Differences: Readings from the Seminar of Hélène Cixous* edited by Susan Sellers  
*No Man’s Land: The Place of the Woman Writer in the Twentieth Century* by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar  
*A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* by Linda Hutcheon  
*The Signifying Monkey: A Theory of Afro-American Literary Criticism* by Henry Louis Gates Jr  
*The Construction of Homosexuality* by David F. Greenberg  
 “On Becoming a Lesbian Reader” by Alison Hennegan
- 1989 *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* by Wolfgang Iser  
*What I Came to Say* by Raymond Williams  
*The Dictionary of Feminist Theory* by Maggie Humm  
*Speaking of Gender* edited by Elaine Showalter  
*Rethinking Historicism* edited by Marjorie Levinson, Marilyn Butler, Jerome McGann, and Paul Hamilton

*The Politics of Postmodernism* by Linda Hutcheon  
*Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* by bell hooks  
*Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* Minh-ha Trinh T.  
*Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* by Alan Sinfield

### Postcolonial Criticism (1990s - )

- 1990 *Doing What Comes Naturally: Changes, Rhetoric, and the Practice of Theory in Literary and Legal Studies* by Stanley Eugene Fish  
*The Ideology of the Aesthetic* by Terry Eagleton  
*Tropes, Parables and Performatives: Essays on Twentieth Century Literature* by J. Hillis Miller  
*Encyclopaedia of Literature and Criticism* edited by Martin Coyle et al.  
 “Feminism and Postmodernism” by Sarah Lovibond  
*Feminism/Postmodernism* edited by Linda Nicholson  
*Nation and Narration* edited by Homi K. Bhabha  
 “Introduction: Tell me, Sir, . . . What is “Black” Literature?” by Henry Louis Gates Jr.  
 “My Antonia! Jim Blunden and the Dilemma of the Lesbian Writer” by Judith Fetterley  
*Lesbian Texts and Contexts: Radical Revisions* edited by Karla Jay and Joanne Glasgow  
*Lesbian and Gay Writing: An Anthology of Critical Essays* edited by Mark Lilly  
*A Lure of Knowledge: Lesbian Sexuality and Theory* by Judith Roof  
*Epistemology of the Closet* by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick  
*Narrative Discourse Revisited* by Gérard Genette and Jane E. Levin
- 1991 *Theory Now and Then* by J. Hillis Miller  
*Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* by Fredric Jameson  
*Strangers to Ourselves* by Julia Kristeva  
*Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* by Jonathan Dollimore  
*Representing the English Renaissance* by Stephen Greenblatt  
*Shakespearean Negotiations: The Circulation of Social Energy in Renaissance England* by Stephen Greenblatt  
*The Textual Condition* by Jerome McGann  
*New Historicism and Renaissance Drama* edited by Richard Wilson and Richard Sutton  
*What’s Wrong with Postmodernism: Critical Theory and the Ends of Philosophy* by Christopher Norris  
 “Goodbye Columbus? Notes on the Culture of Criticism” by Henry Louis Gates Jr.  
*Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* by bell hooks  
 “Imitation and Gender Subordination” by Judith Butler  
*Sexual Dissidence: Augustine to Wilde, Freud to Foucault* by Jonathan Dollimore  
*Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity* edited by Julia Epstein and Kristina Straub  
*Inside/Outside: Lesbian Theories, Gay Theories* by Diana Fuss  
*The Safe Sea of Women: Lesbian Fiction 1969–1989* by Bonnie Zimmerman  
*Writing Space: Computers, Hypertext, and the Redemption of Print* by Jay David Bolter
- 1992 “Force of Law: The “Mystical Foundation of Authority”” by Jacques Derrida  
*Faultlines: Cultural Materialism and the Politics of Dissident Reading* by Alan Sinfield  
*The Ethics of Deconstruction* by Simon Cirtchley  
*Foucault and Literature: Towards a Genealogy of Writing* by Simon During  
*Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* by Christopher Norris  
*Modernism/Postmodernism* by Peter Brooker



- Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* by Judith Butler  
*Postmodernism: A Reader* by edited Thomas Docherty  
*Postmodernism: A Reader* edited by Patricia Waugh  
*Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* by Toni Morrison  
*Sexual Sameness: Textual Difference in Lesbian and Gay Writing* by Joseph Bristol (ed.)  
*Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* by Judith Butler  
*Sodometries: Renaissance Texts: Modern Sexualities* by Jonathan Goldberg  
*Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory* by Marie-Laure Ryan  
*Hypertext : The Convergence of Contemporary Critical Theory and Technology* by George P. Landow  
 “The End of Books” by Robert Coover
- 1993 *Ideology: An Introduction* by Terry Eagleton  
*Wittgenstein: The Terry Eagleton Script, The Derek Jarman Film* by Terry Eagleton  
*Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, The Work of Mourning and the New International*  
 by Jacque Derrida  
*An Introductory Guide to Post-Structuralism and Postmodernism* by Madan Sarup  
*Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* by Judith Butler  
*Culture and Imperialism* by Edward Said  
*Outside in the Teaching Machine* by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak  
*The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader* edited by Henry Abalone et al.  
*Queer Looks* by Martha Gever, Pratibha Parmar and John Greyson  
*Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices* by Judith Still and Michael Horton  
*Fiction and Diction* by Gérard Genette  
*The Fictions of Language, The Languages of Fiction* by Monika Fludernik
- 1994 *The Seeds of Time* by Fredric Jameson  
*Politics of Friendship* by Jacque Derrida  
*Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture* by Jonathan Dollimore  
*Political Shakespeare: Essays in Cultural Materialism* by Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield  
*Cultural Politics – Queer Reading* by Alan Sinfield  
*The Location of Culture* by Homi K. Bhabha  
*Welcome to the Jungle: New Positions in Black Cultural Studies* by Kobena Mercer  
*The Lesbian Postmodern* edited by Laura Doan  
*Homographesis: Essays in Gay Literary and Cultural Theory* by Lee Edelman  
*Reclaiming Sodom* edited by Jonathan Goldberg  
*Queering the Renaissance* edited by Jonathan Goldberg  
*Love’s Litany: The Writing of Modern Homoerotics* by Kevin Kopelson  
*Tendencies* by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick  
*The White Century* by Alan Sinfield  
*Hyper/Text/Theory* by George P. Landow  
*Hypermedia and Literary Studies* by George P. Landow and Paul Delany
- 1995 *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* by Terry Eagleton  
*Marxist Literary Theory: A Reader* by Terry Eagleton and Drew Milne (eds.)  
*Psychoanalytic Criticism: A Reader* edited by Sue Vice  
*Cultural Materialism in Theory and in Practice* by Scott Wilson  
*Effeminate England: Homoerotic Writing after 1885* by Joseph Bristol

- Sexy Bodies: The Strange Carnalities of Feminism* edited by Elizabeth Grosz and Elsbeth Probyn
- Mimologics* by Gérard Genette and Thais E. Morgan
- 1996 *The Illusions of Postmodernism* edited by Terry Eagleton
- New Historicism and Cultural Materialism: A Reader* edited by Kiernan Ryan
- Postmodernist Culture: An Introduction to Theories of the Contemporary* by Steven Connor
- Activating Theory: Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Politics* by Joseph Bristow and Angela R. Wilson
- Towards a Natural Narratology* by Monika Fludernik
- Space, Time, Perversion* by Elizabeth Grosz
- 1997 *Essays: Critical and Clinical* by Gilles Deleuze
- On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* by Jacques Derrida
- Of Hospitality* by Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle
- Sexuality* by Joseph Bristow
- Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* by Judith Butler
- The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* by Judith Butler
- Paratexts. Thresholds of interpretation* by Gérard Genette
- The Post-human Condition* by Robert Pepperell
- Hypertext 2.0* by George P. Landow
- 1998 *Crazy John and the Bishop and Other Essays on Irish Culture* by Terry Eagleton
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## **l'hyperfiction, la créativité et le roman postmoderne**

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## Problématique

Écrire ne diffère de la conversation que par le nom, surtout quand on ménage cet art comme je le fait. Un homme de bon sens ne dit jamais qu'il pense en causant, et un auteur, qui connaît les limites et de la politesse, sait aussi où il doit s'arrêter. Il doit respecter la pénétration et le jugement du lecteur, et lui laisser toujours le plaisir d'imaginer et de devenir quelque chose. Je déteste un livre qui me dit tout, en l'on voit bien, que j'écris le mien d'après ma manière de penser. J'ai toujours soin de laisser à l'imagination de ceux qui me lisent, un aliment propre à la soutenir dans une activité qui égale la mienne.<sup>709</sup>

Depuis l'invention du terme *hypertexte* par Ted Nelson en 1965, il y a eu des débats fréquents à propos des mérites et des dangers des textes numériques, pour savoir si le développement des technologies informatiques causerait l'obsolescence des supports imprimés. Les prophéties étaient apocalyptiques et l'avenir des livres semblait sombre. Environ cinquante ans plus tard, tant les supports imprimés qui étaient condamnés que les hypertextes numériques qui semblaient être leurs exécuteurs<sup>710</sup> existent encore. Les romans sont toujours populaires et les hypertextes aussi. Nul n'est dépassé ou éradiqué par l'autre. Au contraire, la coexistence des livres et leurs homologues numériques a affecté notre perception des textes, des lecteurs, des auteurs et de l'expérience de lecture. Plus important, l'échange entre les deux médias a eu comme résultat l'apparition d'une fiction expérimentale exceptionnelle à la fois sur écran et sur papier. La conjonction entre la fiction et les technologies numériques est au centre de ce projet qui vise à d'étudier l'hyperfiction, ses racines dans la fiction traditionnelle et ses descendants imprimés.

La première étape pour l'étude de l'hyperfiction et de son impact sur le roman traditionnel est de revisiter les définitions de base. Pourtant, un examen des glossaires littéraires et des manuels de narratologie montre que le terme *hyperfiction* n'a pas encore été bien défini. Cette absence de définition est due à deux raisons principales. Premièrement, l'émergence de l'hyperfiction sur un support autre que le support traditionnel souligne sa généalogie comme descendant des hypertextes

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<sup>709</sup> *Vie et opinions de Tristram Shandy, gentilhomme*, trad. J.-P. Frénais, Yorck et Amsterdam: 1777, I.170.

<sup>710</sup> "The End of Books," *The New Media Reader*, 706.

et déclare sa parenté avec le support numérique. Par conséquent, la définition de l'hyperfiction repose sur la façon dont nous définissons *hypertexte* et comme la réalisation d'hypertextes sur papier est improbable, arriver à une définition en tant que terme littéraire est peu plausible. Les définitions présentées par les auteurs principaux des études numériques et de l'informatique restent également insuffisantes, car souvent les arguments tournent autour de l'hypertexte et non pas de la fiction qui en résulte. Un aperçu de la critique produite par les théoriciens distingués des études numériques montre que les œuvres de références majeures comme *Hypertext 3.0* de George Landow tentent d'offrir une définition compréhensible de l'hypertexte, ses origines et ses fonctionnements. L'inspiration littéraire derrière les hypertextes, « Le Jardin aux sentiers qui bifurquent » de Borges a été souvent revisitée et les racines de ces textes dans la théorie critique poststructuraliste ont été exposées à plusieurs reprises. L'hyperfiction, en revanche, a été tout simplement définie comme un hypertexte qui présente un contenu fictionnel. Bien qu'une section soit généralement dédiée à l'introduction des pionniers de l'hyperfiction dans les arguments autour de l'hypertexte, c'est le mécanisme sous-jacent et ses caractéristiques hypertextuelles qui méritent d'être compris. L'absence de définition claire a brouillé la ligne entre l'hyperfiction et d'autres concepts numériques tel que l'hypermédia, et a eu comme résultat une ambiguïté qui soulève plus de questions sur la nature de l'hyperfiction. En bref, la définition de l'hyperfiction repose sur notre définition d'hypertexte. Cette dépendance inhabituelle soulève la question de ce que l'hyperfiction incarne et, plus important encore, comment elle est liée à la fiction traditionnelle.

Le deuxième problème qui entrave la définition de l'hyperfiction est ironiquement l'hyperfiction elle-même. Ce type de fiction semble échapper à toute définition. Chaque œuvre établit ses propres règles et directives et défie la perception des lecteurs sur ce que c'est la fiction ainsi que les définitions déjà établies de lecteur, auteur et texte. De plus, la forme flexible et la nature non-linéaire de ces hypertextes rendent la lecture critique quasi impossible. La pratique analytique tourne autour de la relecture des textes et leur étude sous divers angles. Ainsi, comment

pouvons-nous analyser un texte qui change à chaque lecture ? Ceci soulève la question de ce qu'est réellement l'hyperfiction et comment elle affecte le processus de lecture. Trouver la réponse à la première question s'est avéré être le défi le plus difficile, contrairement aux attentes initiales, ce qui a déterminé l'itinéraire de cette recherche et conduit à deux nouvelles questions concernant l'influence réciproque de l'hyperfiction et de la fiction : comment l'hyperfiction est-elle liée au roman ? Et est-il possible de créer de l'hyperfiction sur papier ?

Les difficultés mentionnées ont précisé la façon dont les discussions devaient être poursuivies. Premièrement, une étude des définitions disponibles de l'hypertexte a semblé nécessaire afin de déterminer quelles caractéristiques intrinsèques transforment le texte tel que nous le connaissons en *hypertexte* et comment la nouvelle définition reconfigure notre perception du texte, car un consensus sur les principales caractéristiques des hypertextes faciliterait l'étude et la classification de leurs dérivés tels que l'hyperfiction et l'hypermédia. En second lieu, une étude générale des diverses hyperfictions s'est avérée indispensable pour observer leurs similitudes et leurs différences, puis parvenir à une définition plus précise que celle d'hypertextes présentant un contenu fictionnel. Le premier objectif a été atteint en examinant la critique produite sur les hypertextes par les théoriciens éminents de l'informatique et des études numériques. L'essentiel de cette recherche, qui sera présenté dans « II.2 Hypertexte : panorama de la critique », a mis en évidence trois caractéristiques principales que tous les hypertextes partagent : la non-linéarité, la conscience du support utilisé et la centralité du lecteur. La voie pour atteindre le second objectif a en outre pu être déterminée : mettre au jour dans l'hyperfiction les caractéristiques mentionnées ci-dessus et leur impact sur la présentation et la perception du contenu fictionnel. Le deuxième objectif a orienté la recherche vers les hyperfictions disponibles, leurs similitudes et leurs différences ainsi que les liens possibles avec la fiction traditionnelle. Certains des précurseurs de l'hyperfiction publiés par la société Eastgate et la plupart des textes archivés dans l'Electronic Literature Collection (volumes 1 et 2) ont constitué le corpus de cette recherche. Electronic Literature

Organization, Electronic Literature Directory et ELMCIP: Anthology of European Electronic Literature ont également été les principales sources pour suivre l'évolution des hypertextes et trouver plus d'informations sur l'hyperfiction qui n'est plus disponibles en ligne.

L'étude des hypertextes a décalé l'axe de cette thèse vers la théorie critique et la fiction inspirées par la position poststructuraliste sur les textes et leurs éléments constitutifs. Ainsi, le lien entre la théorie critique poststructuraliste et la fiction qui en résulte a été pris comme point de départ pour répondre à la deuxième question : comment l'hyperfiction est-elle liée au roman ? La critique poststructuraliste, fréquemment citée comme la base théorique des hypertextes par les grands penseurs des études numériques, analysée au Chapitre trois, montre l'impact des concepts tels que le texte idéal, le texte lisible, le texte scriptible et l'intertextualité sur l'émergence de l'hypertexte. La définition des concepts mentionnés a été légèrement modifiée pour s'adapter au support numérique sous la forme d'autoréférentialité du média utilisé, de la centralité du lecteur et d'intermédialité. . Les trois chronologies de l'hypertexte, de l'évolution des ordinateurs et de la théorie critique, présentées en annexe, ont permis un examen attentif et côte à côte des hypertextes et de la théorie critique afin de trouver des points de rencontre significatifs. En outre, puisque tous les concepts poststructuralistes mentionnés précédemment ont été développés pour être appliqués à la fiction, une étude de la fiction inspirée par de telles théories a paru nécessaire.

L'idée d'un texte ayant le potentiel de se multiplier selon le bon vouloir des lecteurs peut être retracée dans une certaine mesure dans la fiction postmoderne, la fiction autoréférentielle en particulier. La réalisation du texte idéal, qui demande la participation du lecteur pour être décodé, est devenue dans la métafiction le lien perdu entre l'hyperfiction et le roman. Une étude approfondie de plusieurs métafictions – *La Maîtresse du lieutenant français* de John Fowles, *Albert Angelo*, *Christies Malry's Own Double Entry*, *House Mother Normal* et *The Unfortunates* de BS Johnson, – et leur comparaison avec les hypertextes et hyperfictions représentés par *Lies* de Rick Peryll, a fait apparaître de nombreuses similitudes et chevauchements possibles. L'analyse minutieuse de ces

œuvres démontre que l'hyperfiction peut facilement être classée comme une version augmentée de la métafiction. Cependant, la nécessité d'une définition générale de l'hyperfiction, qui la distingue de l'hypertexte et de l'hypermédia, subsiste à ce stade.

La juxtaposition de l'hyperfiction et de la métafiction montre que l'hyperfiction a une plus grande affinité avec la métafiction qu'avec l'hypertexte. Cette découverte a attiré l'attention sur différents types d'hypertextes et sur la nécessité d'une classification reposant sur des caractéristiques hypertextuelles. Puisque l'étude des hypertextes en tant que systèmes isolés est en contradiction avec leur nature interconnectée et intermédiaire les concepts de texte central et de réseaux hypertextuels ont été développés afin d'aider à analyser les hypertextes séparément puis en relation avec leurs textes constitutifs et / ou dérivés. Les trois caractéristiques principales qui définissent l'hypertexte amènent à diviser les réseaux hypertextuels en quatre classes: réseaux ouverts, semi-ouverts, semi-fermés et fermés. Bien que les réseaux semi-ouverts et semi-fermés aient de nombreux points communs, il a semblé plus efficace de les différencier. Un exemple de chaque catégorie, *Doctor Horrible's Sing Along Blog* (2008), *Sherlock* (2010), *Memento* (2000), *Patchwork Girl* (1995) a été analysé afin de déterminer dans quelle mesure chaque réseau engage le support et permet l'extension et / ou la pluralisation. Cette classification a montré que l'hyperfiction appartient à la dernière catégorie, proche de la métafiction, et a ouvert la voie à la troisième question soulevée dans cette thèse : comment les hypertextes peuvent-ils revenir au support imprimé?

La réaction à la dernière question impliquait la recherche de romans qui peuvent réaliser sur papier les trois caractéristiques hypertextuelles de non-linéarité, conscience du support utilisé et centralité du lecteur. L'expérimentation formelle et les innovations typographiques des romans de Mark Z. Danielewski en font des exemples appropriés de l'intersection entre le livre et la fiction informatique *House of Leaves* (2000), *The Whalstoe Letters* (2000), *The Fifty Year Sword* (2005), and *Only Revolutions* (2006) remettent en question notre perception traditionnelle des livres et de leurs éléments, matériels et virtuels, afin de réaliser les potentiels inexplorés du support imprimé.



L'étude de ces romans montre comment ils reconfigurent le support imprimé et modifient notre compréhension du livre en général. Les expériences avec la forme et la surface graphique ainsi que la collaboration étroite entre le texte et le support pour développer l'intrigue reflètent les tendances hypertextuelles. Ces livres exposent la non-linéarité du texte, mettent le support en jeu dans la création de celui-ci et forment des lecteurs attentifs. Plus important encore, la correspondance entre ces livres et tant la métafiction que l'hyperfiction abordée dans diverses parties de cette étude révèle les raisons de la coexistence et de la collaboration prolifique entre l'hyperfiction et le roman. L'hyperfiction, en tant qu'extension de la métafiction, assure la revitalisation du roman plutôt que sa détérioration.

Les arguments concernant les trois questions principales de cette étude ont été répartis en quatre chapitres intitulés « Hypertexte », « Métafiction : le parent de l'hyperfiction », « De l'hypertexte à l'hyperfiction » et « Hyperfiction sur papier ». Un bref aperçu de chaque chapitre et des principaux points abordés semble nécessaire ici, car ils permettront l'introduction des œuvres étudiées ainsi que la progression des débats vers les objectifs finaux de cette étude : définir l'hyperfiction en termes narratologiques en établissant son lien avec la métafiction et l'examen de la possibilité et des circonstances dans lesquelles elle pourrait être réalisée sur papier. Avant d'aller plus loin, j'aimerais clarifier quelques points concernant mes analyses approfondies des œuvres étudiées. Tout d'abord, ces analyses ont été menées pour illustrer et démontrer les arguments, ainsi que pour réagir aux défis de chaque texte. Il me semble que la théorie existe pour faciliter la compréhension de la fiction et qu'elle est inutile si elle est inopérante. Deuxièmement, lorsqu'on discute de textes sans frontières, il n'y a pas d'autre choix que de délimiter les frontières du texte. Cependant, le problème persiste lorsque l'extensibilité est le point central de la discussion et que la lecture vise à montrer comment les textes centraux évoluent en réseaux de plus en plus importants. La section sur les réseaux hypertextuels ouverts, par exemple, fait partie de ces discussions, qu'il est impossible de comprimer sans tomber dans la contradiction. Troisièmement, la centralité du lecteur

et les techniques employées par le texte pour impliquer les lecteurs, influencer le processus de lecture et créer un contexte propice aux interprétations novatrices, sont des éléments fondamentaux de mes arguments concernant l'hyperfiction. Par conséquent, les analyses des œuvres ont permis d'aborder les idées de manière pragmatique et de démontrer les divers processus de lecture qu'un texte peut initier. Une telle approche ouverte a semblé être le meilleur choix pour analyser différents aspects du texte et montrer comment celui-ci peut déclencher des processus d'interprétation multiples et parfois contradictoires. Ceci dit, je suis pleinement consciente que les lectures présentées offrent les idées d'une lectrice en particulier et peuvent facilement être contestées, contredites ou mises en cause. Mais la multiplicité est la beauté de l'hyperfiction, « la liberté qui permet aux autres libertés d'exister ».<sup>711</sup>

### **Résumé des chapitres**

Le chapitre intitulé "Hypertexte" forme la base théorique de cette étude. En raison de la rareté de la littérature critique sur l'hyperfiction, ce chapitre adopte une approche éclectique et a bénéficié des arguments avancés par les personnalités renommées des études numériques et de la théorie critique poststructuraliste. La flexibilité de cette approche a fourni la base des discussions et analyses ultérieures et m'a permis de redéfinir l'hypertexte, l'hyperfiction et l'hypermédia en tant que termes littéraires, de classer les hypertextes, de développer mes propres théories et d'introduire de nouveaux concepts tels que ceux de texte central de base et de réseaux hypertextuels.

Les définitions de base sont la principale préoccupation de ce deuxième chapitre. En raison de l'insuffisance des fondements théoriques sur l'hyperfiction, ce chapitre s'ouvre en mettant l'accent sur la définition des hypertextes. Il s'appuie sur les opinions de Ted Nelson, Jeff Conklin, Jay David Bolter, George Landow et Noah Wardrip-Fruin pour définir l'hypertextualité et ses incidences. Le panorama de la critique aide à établir les critères permettant de définir l'hyperfiction,

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<sup>711</sup> *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, 99.

distinguer différents types d'hypertextes et enfin à les évaluer. Selon les œuvres examinées, la non-linéarité, la conscience du support utilisé et la centralité du lecteur sont partagées par tous les hypertextes. En plus de la définition générale, les opinions de chaque théoricien sur les hypertextes et leurs fonctions décrivent comment les hypertextes perçoivent et modifient les concepts de texte, d'écrivain et de lecteur. Les idées discutées soulèvent des questions sur la définition du texte dans l'hypertexte et les variantes qui en découlent..

La troisième partie de ce chapitre, « *Hypertexte, hypertexte* et réseaux hypertextuels » se concentre d'abord sur la compréhension du texte dans les hypertextes, en reliant les études informatiques à la théorie critique. Cette section revisite la définition du texte à l'ère postmoderne et numérique et examine le concept en ce qui concerne les notions de linéarité, d'*Urtext* transcendantal et du lecteur. Comme la vision hypertextuelle du texte est proche de la perception poststructuraliste des textes écrits, certains des concepts clés introduits par Roland Barthes seront brièvement revus. Les concepts poststructuralistes constituent le point de départ idéal pour rediriger la discussion vers la fiction, puisque les théories mentionnées concernent celle-ci et son évolution.

La section « *Hypertexte* » considère l'hypertexte comme un texte augmenté et réfléchit aux concepts, aux qualités et aux variantes qui résultent de la perception hypertextuelle du « texte ». Le texte sous-jacent et les conséquences des fonctions multimédia du texte sont parmi les sujets abordés. « *Hypertexte* » étudie également le concept de non-linéarité, sa réalisation dans la fiction et la métafiction modernes et son impact sur les lecteurs et le processus de lecture. Ces discussions amènent l'idée d'une lecture active qui utilise le support et montre comment les hypertextes jouent, en les actualisant, des mêmes techniques que la métafiction pour inciter les lecteurs à décoder le texte.

Enfin, le concept de « texte central » est introduit, son évolution et son expansion en « réseau hypertextuel » sont examinées. Les analyses de cette section, qui seront développées dans le Chapitre quatre, permettent de distinguer différents types d'hypertexte, en particulier

l'hyperfiction et l'hypermédia. Le « méta-niveau » est un autre concept étudié dans cette section, qui nous aide à comprendre comment fonctionnent les textes autoréférentiels et conscients de leur médium. Le méta-niveau désigne le niveau diégétique virtuel où coexistent la réalité et la fiction. Ce concept, qu'Internet matérialise, contient à la fois le factuel et le fictif et peut fonctionner comme un niveau diégétique complémentaire à tout texte, ouvrant la voie à des analyses sur la centralité des lecteurs et l'expansion du texte central.

Les arguments et suggestions mentionnés constituent la base théorique de ce projet. Comme mentionné précédemment, le manque de base théorique concernant l'hyperfiction a conduit à cette approche éclectique. Cependant, la diversité des idées issues à la fois de la théorie numérique et des études critiques a facilité le glissement interdisciplinaire entre les médias numériques et le support imprimé et a facilité l'examen ultérieur des œuvres. La plupart des idées présentées au chapitre deux sont réexaminées et développées en détail dans les trois chapitres suivants.

Le troisième chapitre, intitulé « La métafiction : le parent de l'hyperfiction », est centré sur les affinités entre métafiction et hyperfiction. Le chapitre ouvre la discussion en passant en revue le concept de « texte idéal », inventé par Roland Barthes, et les discussions qui en ont résulté. Le but est d'étudier la réalisation des concepts tels que les textes idéaux et les textes scriptibles dans la métafiction et d'examiner la manière dont elle considère les concepts d'auteur, de lecteur et de texte. « Le langage : un moyen de communication oral ET écrit » s'attache à la transformation du discours oral en mots écrits (et vice versa) et aux qualités qui peuvent être perdues ou devenir inactives pendant ce processus. Cet argument sera utile dans la section suivante, qui se concentrera sur la linéarité par le langage et le potentiel inactivé du texte imprimé. Enfin, l'étude des textes lisibles et scriptibles dans la fiction et la non-fiction forme la base des réseaux ouverts et fermés qui seront développés en détail au Chapitre quatre.

La section suivante, « Métafiction : l'autoréférentialité narcissique », soutient que les tendances autoréférentielles de la métafiction ouvrent la voie à l'exposition de la non-linéarité sous-

jacente et à l'implication des lecteurs. Cette partie a été divisée en deux sous-parties : l'une utilise « Le jardin aux sentiers qui bifurquent » de Borges et *The French Lieutenant's Woman* de Fowles comme exemples pour démontrer comment la métafiction réalise des récits non séquentiels et parallèles sur le support imprimé ; la seconde se concentre sur les livres de B.S. Johnson pour étudier l'autoréférentialité à travers la forme et ses conséquences.

« Le jardin aux sentiers qui bifurquent » (1941) et *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1969) ont été choisis pour représenter la métafiction conventionnelle en raison de la réalisation de la non-linéarité dans un format par ailleurs linéaire. En effet, la nouvelle de Borges introduit l'idée de la bifurcation en fiction et de la liberté de choix des lecteurs bien que la forme de l'histoire imprimée sur papier ne manifeste pas ces opinions révolutionnaires. L'histoire porte en fait sur un roman dans lequel les lecteurs choisissent toutes les options possibles en même temps et créent ainsi des réalités alternatives infinies. *La Maîtresse du lieutenant français* met cette idée en pratique dans un roman qui donne aux lecteurs le choix entre plusieurs fins et leur apprend à lire de manière critique afin de faire le bon choix. Fowles a employé plusieurs techniques pour atteindre les objectifs mentionnés, la plus efficace étant les interruptions constantes d'un alter ego loquace fictionnel qui intervient pour discuter du processus d'écriture, souligner l'importance du contexte historique et montrer comment le roman doit être lu. Comme dans « Le jardin des sentiers qui bifurquent », l'expérimentation de l'idée de non-linéarité et de la participation du lecteur a lieu au niveau de la langue, et le contenu non séquentiel n'affecte pas l'aspect continu des mots imprimés.

Ces exemples d'« autoréférentialité par la forme » ont été choisis pour montrer comment la métafiction révèle sa nature fragmentaire en utilisant des outils et des techniques autres que le langage, à savoir la surface graphique, ou le livre lui-même. La métafiction qui ne repose pas uniquement sur la langue pour raconter l'histoire et impliquer les lecteurs mais préfère explorer les autres options offertes par le support imprimé, présente les plus grandes similitudes avec l'hyperfiction. La chronologie des livres de B. S. Johnson qui sont les œuvres étudiées dans cette

section, correspond également à l'émergence des premières hyperfictions (milieu des années 1960) ainsi qu'à la publication de *La Maîtresse du lieutenant français* (1969). Cependant, la principale raison du choix des romans expérimentaux de Johnson était la façon dont tous les éléments du livre sont utilisés pour attirer l'attention sur ses composantes et encourager la participation des lecteurs.

Les livres de B. S. Johnson oscillent entre autoréférentialité par le langage et autoréférentialité par la forme. L'auteur intrusif de l'hyperfiction apparaît dans *Christie Marlry's Own Double Entry* (1973), mais il transforme le roman en une master class sur l'écriture et l'avenir du roman grâce à des conversations avec les personnages, pleinement conscients de leur fonctionnalité et de leur fonction dans le roman. Il cantonne les remarques de l'auteur dans un chapitre d'*Albert Angelo* (1964) et pourtant, ce roman utilise la disposition et les techniques telles que des fenêtres découpées et des pages vierges pour révéler le récit non séquentiel et concevoir des puzzles que les lecteurs doivent résoudre. Il fait un pas de plus dans *House Mother Normal*, où la typographie est de la plus haute importance dans le développement du personnage, et où l'histoire se coule tant dans l'espace vide ainsi que dans les phrases imprimées. La distribution des mots dans les espaces blancs, la narration répétitive par des personnages séniles aux capacités cognitives détériorées tout comme l'illisibilité et l'indéchiffrabilité de certaines sections dépeignent une image authentique de la décrépitude, de la démence et de la dégénérescence du cerveau. Enfin, *The Unfortunates* (1969), présenté dans une boîte contenant vingt-sept chapitres non reliés, défie le concept du livre, engage le support dans le développement de l'histoire et simule le processus de mémoire. Comme il ressort de ces exemples, la métafiction est largement à la hauteur de l'hyperfiction.

Pour souligner les similitudes entre hyperfiction et métafiction, la dernière partie du Chapitre trois, intitulée « Hyperfiction : la progéniture de la métafiction », étudie *Lies* de Rick Pryll (1992) en termes de non-linéarité à travers le langage et la surface graphique ; cette œuvre emploie le support dans la progression de l'histoire en impliquant les lecteurs dans le processus de création

de sens. La raison du choix de cette hyperfiction particulière est sa ressemblance frappante avec la fiction imprimée malgré son environnement interactif. Bien que le support permette la bifurcation du texte, l'hyperfiction encourage la participation du lecteur et attire l'attention sur le processus d'écriture en concevant un réseau linguistique complexe dans lequel les mots et les phrases ont des significations arbitraires. Les liens numériques existent, mais l'histoire repose sur le langage pour exposer sa structure non séquentielle. Si la typographie et la mise en page sont importantes pour la progression de l'histoire, elles ne sont pas liées au support et peuvent être facilement transférées de l'écran au papier. En bref, *Lies* a beaucoup de points communs avec la métafiction évoquée précédemment et peut être facilement reproduite sur papier.

Le quatrième chapitre, « De l'hypertexte à l'hyperfiction », propose une classification des différents types de réseaux hypertextuels afin de distinguer l'hyperfiction des autres entités hypertextuelles dans le but de parvenir à une définition claire. L'utilisation innovante du support dans la présentation du contenu, l'encouragement de la participation des lecteurs à l'expansion du réseau et la reconnaissance des textes de bifurcation comme faisant partie du canon figurent parmi les critères utilisés pour atteindre la classification mentionnée. Par conséquent, la première sous-partie de ce chapitre, « Mettre du texte en hypertexte : l'effet Bibliothèque de Babel », est consacrée aux prises de position des hypertextes concernant l'expansion de leur texte central.

L'expansion du texte se fait sous forme de pluralisation (la dissémination du sens comme l'entend Derrida) ou d'extension (la création de textes bifurqués). Le concept d'*Urtext* est d'une grande importance dans cette analyse, car l'inaccessibilité du texte est la source de la pluralisation et de l'expansion des hypertextes, qui, comme les textes imprimés, reposent sur l'inaltérabilité de l'*Urtext*. Cependant, alors que dans le texte imprimé l'*Urtext* est la représentation sur papier, les hypertextes refusent l'accès direct au texte sous-jacent et en présentent des fragments à l'écran pour permettre aux lecteurs de les assembler. Par conséquent, le texte imprimé rejette les variantes car la représentation est supposée être l'*Urtext* sacré, alors que les hypertextes déstabilisent le concept, de

sorte que les lecteurs peuvent analyser les fragments et les assembler de manière cohérente pour tenter d'atteindre le texte. Le résultat est une abondance de textes similaires, mais différents dans les détails. Cette fonctionnalité a été appelée « l'effet Bibliothèque de Babel » d'après la nouvelle du même titre de Borges. Les lecteurs qui participent activement à la pluralisation ou à l'élargissement du texte central utilisent leurs capacités d'analyse pour écrire de nouvelles représentations de l'*Urtext* et sont appelés « wreaders » (écri-lecteurs) dans cette étude.

La deuxième sous-partie, « Réseaux hypertextuels : les extensions de la mémoire et de l'imagination », se concentre sur deux aspects responsables de l'extension du texte central, l'intertextualité et l'intermédialité, et compare leur usage dans les hypertextes numériques et les textes imprimés. La reconnaissance de l'intertextualité place généralement le texte dans un réseau de sens déjà étendu. Les allusions aux textes constitutifs mettent en jeu le contexte historique, la tradition littéraire et d'autres forces qui ont façonné le texte et exigent des lecteurs qu'ils (re)lisent et (ré)interprètent le texte en relation avec ce réseau exposé. Par conséquent, l'intertextualité se traduit généralement par la pluralisation du texte à travers le processus d'interprétation. L'intermédialité accélère en revanche l'expansion du réseau, car cette qualité assure le transfert du texte entre les média et crée la possibilité de textes bifurqués. Bien que tous les textes aient le potentiel de se multiplier et de s'étendre jusqu'à un certain point, les réseaux hypertextuels varient selon l'acceptation de leur extension par les utilisateurs / lecteurs.

La troisième partie du Chapitre quatre, « Réseaux ouverts, réseaux fermés » propose quatre classes d'hypertextes : les réseaux ouverts, les réseaux semi-ouverts, les réseaux semi-fermés et les réseaux fermés. Les œuvres étudiées, *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog*, *Sherlock*, *Memento*, et *Patchwork Girl*, permettent d'examiner attentivement les caractéristiques de chaque type de réseau afin de les définir. Il convient de noter que cette section a pris en compte la perception hypertextuelle du texte en tant qu'entité multimédia. Cette définition étendue est la raison pour laquelle les textes centraux de ces réseaux hypertextuels appartiennent à différents médias.



Les réseaux hypertextuels ouverts consistent en un texte central hautement intertextuel et intermédial qui catalyse à la fois la pluralisation et l'expansion. Ces réseaux prennent pleinement en charge la participation des lecteurs et reconnaissent comme canoniques les textes de bifurcation, qu'ils soient créés par le groupe d'auteurs ou par les utilisateurs., *Dr. Horrible's Sing Along Blog* appartient à cette catégorie. La fusion des genres et des traditions littéraires dans cette mini-série crée un potentiel d'expansion, et le texte central multimédia catalyse le transfert entre les médias. *Dr. Horrible* utilise Internet, son support de distribution, comme méta-niveau virtuel pour accueillir dans le réseau les textes de bifurcation émanant aussi bien du groupe d'auteurs que du public et établir un contact direct entre les créateurs et ce dernier. En outre, la série, qui se voulait un commentaire sur l'industrie de la télévision, a suivi les mêmes principes dans toutes ses variantes. Le commentaire du DVD, par exemple, reconfigure le concept de commentaire, et l'introduction de la bande dessinée remet en question le concept d'introduction. Inutile de dire que le réseau s'est très largement étendu depuis la distribution de la série en ligne en 2008. Bref, en tant que réseau ouvert *Dr. Horrible* profite de son caractère multimédia pour encourager l'expansion du groupe de production et du public. L'analyse de *Dr Horrible* a pour but de démontrer comment la série initie des processus d'interprétation ainsi que la création de textes de bifurcation.

La série de la BBC *Sherlock* servira d'exemple pour les réseaux semi-ouverts, car elle résulte d'une écriture-lecture (*wreading*) exceptionnelle de *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* de Sir Arthur Conan Doyle et fournit un cas remarquable de texte bifurqué. Cette section vise à atteindre deux objectifs : premièrement, étudier comment *Sherlock* réalise le potentiel de son texte central pour étendre le réseau et engager le support dans le développement de l'histoire et, deuxièmement, analyser la relation unilatérale entre la série et le public. Les discussions concernant ce dernier objectif nous aident à définir des réseaux hypertextuels semi-ouverts en fonction de la restriction qu'ils imposent à l'expansion du réseau. Un réseau semi-ouvert fait la distinction entre l'extension du texte central par le ou les auteurs et par les utilisateurs. Bien que le réseau accepte la

multiplication du texte et son expansion à travers les médias à la fois par le groupe d'auteurs et par les utilisateurs, il tient les textes de bifurcation des auteurs à l'écart de ceux des utilisateurs. En d'autres termes, le réseau ne reconnaît pas les textes de bifurcation créés par les utilisateurs comme faisant partie du canon. Le premier texte bifurqué de *Sherlock*, par exemple, est apparu sous la forme de blogs sur les sites de la BBC. Cependant, ces blogs sont utilisés pour clarifier les ambiguïtés des épisodes et donner au public un aperçu des personnages. Les publications et la section des commentaires servent toutes les fins de l'histoire et le public n'est pas autorisé à commenter les articles. Le réseau s'étend, mais les frontières du texte central et des textes de bifurcation officiels ont déjà été définies.

Au fur et à mesure que nous nous rapprochons des réseaux plus fermés, le réseau exerce un plus grand contrôle sur le texte central et restreint la contribution des lecteurs aux processus d'interprétation. *Memento*, qui représente les réseaux hypertextuels semi-fermés dans cette section, a été choisi pour montrer comment un tel réseau tend à favoriser la multiplication des significations par rapport à l'expansion du texte central. Étudier les possibilités et les restrictions du support ainsi que la manière dont le texte central les utilise à son avantage sont les principales raisons du choix de ce film. *Memento*, tout comme *Sherlock*, est un texte bifurqué d'une nouvelle intitulée « Memento Mori » au sujet d'un homme atteint de perte de mémoire à court terme cherchant le meurtrier de sa femme. *Memento* a réussi à transférer l'histoire sur un nouveau média. De plus, le film utilise le support avec brio pour simuler les mêmes circonstances, briser l'illusion de la continuité et faire vivre aux spectateurs la même expérience que le personnage principal. De cette façon, le film améliore l'impact de son propre texte central. La forme, le rythme et la narration en chronologie inversée ont été utilisés pour intensifier l'expérience et, plus important encore, le texte central crée un casse-tête compliqué qui déclenche des hypothèses et, par conséquent, des interprétations multiples. Bien que le réseau exige la participation des spectateurs, leur contribution a été limitée à la génération de sens en raison du support de présentation et de la forme circulaire du texte central

méticuleux. La création de textes de bifurcation n'est pas déconseillée, mais la ligne qui sépare le texte central de ses descendants est nette et la contribution du spectateur ne sera jamais reconnue comme faisant partie du canon.

La dernière partie de ce chapitre étudie les réseaux hypertextuels fermés, y compris l'hyperfiction. La classification du réseau hypertextuel rend plus claire les caractéristiques propres à l'hyperfiction, ce qui nous aide à la distinguer de l'hypermédia. *Patchwork Girl* de Shelley Jackson est l'œuvre prise comme exemple de cette section non seulement parce qu'il s'agit d'une hyperfiction pionnière, mais aussi parce que l'hyperfiction et son fonctionnement font partie des thèmes présentés dans le texte central.

Le texte central des réseaux hypertextuels fermés est extrêmement protégé par rapport aux autres classes d'hypertextes. Le texte central choisit généralement un média dominant comme support de présentation. La supériorité d'un média sur les autres restreint l'expansion du texte malgré la texture multimédia et intertextuelle du texte central. Ainsi, l'extension du texte sera limitée aux processus d'interprétation et à la dissémination du sens. C'est-à-dire que l'hyperfiction et les réseaux hypertextuels fermés de manière générale consistent en un texte central intertextuel qui reconnaît sa parenté avec d'autres textes et accueille favorablement les contributions des lecteurs sous forme d'hypothèses et d'interprétations. La métafiction manifeste des qualités similaires.

Malgré une expansion restrictive, le texte central encourage toujours la participation des lecteurs en créant un réseau bien pensé de textes fragmentaires, dont les connexions ont déjà été planifiées. L'auteur de l'hyperfiction prédit généralement des stratégies de lecture possibles et recense les relations entre les fragments pour orienter les lecteurs vers les chemins de lecture souhaités. Cependant, le texte central accueille toujours la participation du lecteur en concevant un réseau complexe et codé où le langage prédomine, comme dans la métafiction. En résumé, le texte central repose sur l'activation des fonctionnalités latentes du langage par les lecteurs. Le texte central contrôle et accélère généralement le processus en apprenant aux lecteurs comment lire un

texte de manière analytique et en tirant parti du support numérique et de sa propre nature multimédia. Par conséquent, l'hyperfiction suit les traces de la métafiction (autoréférentialité à travers le langage et à travers la forme). La différence est que l'hyperfiction fonctionne comme une métafiction présentée sur support numérique.

L'étude de *Patchwork Girl* de Shelley Jackson montre comment l'hyperfiction utilise le support pour exposer son intertextualité et former les lecteurs. Juxtaposant la fille en patchwork au corps d'un hypertexte, Jackson aborde les problèmes de crise d'identité, d'objectivation du corps féminin et de construction d'un soi bigarré, ainsi que la réflexion sur la création d'un hypertexte. Elle utilise le support pour exposer le réseau intertextuel sous-jacent et montrer comment un texte bifurquant (*Patchwork Girl*) est façonné à partir de ses textes centraux constitutifs (*Frankenstein* et *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*).

L'hypermédia, en revanche, est un réseau semi-ouvert qui, bien que restrictif, permet aux utilisateurs de choisir des fragments de différents médias pour construire leur interprétation. Le texte central a été conçu et délimité avec précision, mais les chemins ne sont pas guidés et les utilisateurs peuvent prendre n'importe quelle direction. L'émergence de nouveaux textes de bifurcation est improbable et pourtant, les utilisateurs ont toute liberté d'interpréter et de d'étendre le texte central. Une brève étude de *Pieces of Herself* de Juliet Davis montre comment le texte central encourage et initie des compréhensions infinies, car les utilisateurs sont libres de réorganiser les fragments, de soulever de nouvelles questions et de formuler des hypothèses. Ce processus est beaucoup plus guidé dans l'hyperfiction.

Toutes les analyses mentionnées dans les pages précédentes nous amènent à la dernière question soulevée par ce projet : l'hypertexte peut-il apparaître sur support imprimé ? Le Chapitre cinq, « Hypertexte sur papier » répond à cette question en examinant les livres de Mark Z. Danielewski. Depuis son premier roman, Danielewski, s'efforce de revitaliser le roman, de modifier notre perception traditionnelle des livres et de reconfigurer leurs éléments. Ses romans

expérimentaux, qui sont la jonction entre fiction et support numérique, sont étudiés en termes de non-linéarité, de conscience du support utilisé et de centralité du lecteur, les trois caractéristiques principales des hypertextes, afin de mettre en évidence leur ressemblance avec l'hyperfiction numérique. Il est à noter que les romans ne sont pas présentés en ordre chronologique. Au lieu de cela, l'approche créative dans le développement de l'histoire par le support imprimé et la reconfiguration des éléments de l'écriture déterminent l'ordre dans lequel les romans apparaissent dans ce chapitre. Ainsi, *House of Leaves*, le plus expérimental parmi les quatre romans, a été choisi pour clore l'analyse des hypertextes sur papier malgré sa date de publication.

Tous les livres de Danielewski manifestent des tendances hypertextuelles dans une certaine mesure. Ils intègrent le support dans le développement de l'histoire afin de créer une expérience dynamique et un puzzle captivant et irrésistible pour les lecteurs. *Only Revolutions* utilise la typographie, la mise en page et, plus important encore, la matérialité du livre pour réaliser les tâches mentionnées. La répétition de l'Histoire, par exemple, est l'un des thèmes majeurs, qui se concrétise par deux récits distincts racontés en parallèle. La circularité et la répétitivité des récits sont dues à deux débuts différents aux extrémités opposées du livre. La mise en page mérite également l'attention, car quatre textes, deux narrations et deux colonnes historiques, apparaissent sur la même page. Bien qu'il n'y ait pas de point de passage visuel, les indices laissés dans la typographie guident les lecteurs pour localiser les connexions et leur apprendre à lire l'événement dans le contexte historique. De plus, le livre contrôle le processus de lecture en offrant les mêmes événements à partir de deux points de vue différents dans chaque section de huit pages. La rotation du livre pour atteindre le deuxième récit après chaque section de huit pages ajoute du mouvement au processus de lecture et crée le même impact vertigineux que subit le personnage. En bref, *Only Revolutions* utilise la matérialité du livre à son avantage afin de simuler une expérience pour les lecteurs et joue avec la surface graphique afin de les former à la lecture. Les lectures de *Only Revolutions* montrent comment les lecteurs suivent les indices pour parvenir à une interprétation.

*The Fifty Year Sword* est une autre master class en lecture de fiction. Le roman concerne le potentiel caché du langage ainsi que la fonctionnalité des différents éléments du livre pour suggérer des théories nouvelles. La deuxième section du Chapitre cinq présente deux lectures de ce roman. Le premier montre comment il forme les lecteurs à relier l'histoire aux illustrations, qui renferment la clé de certains mystères du texte. La seconde partie étudie les idées originales de Danielewski sur les mots et leur fonctionnement. Ses opinions sur les caractéristiques latentes du langage s'expriment à la fois par la fiction et par la typographie. L'iBook augmenté de *The Fifty Year Sword* est également mentionné brièvement pour défendre l'idée de mots en tant que centres de signification. Ce roman est un exemple remarquable qui attire l'attention sur le livre et la fiction en utilisant le support pour matérialiser les métaphores, au lieu de s'adresser directement aux lecteurs. Bien que le roman ait un aspect habituel, il fonctionne comme un hypertexte numérique.

*House of Leaves* est la preuve ultime que l'hyperfiction n'est pas un concept attaché au support, car toutes les caractéristiques distinctives des hypertextes peuvent être recréées sur papier. *House of Leaves* défie notre perception du livre et reconfigure ses éléments et le support imprimé. Cette approche de l'écriture, aussi révolutionnaire soit-elle, n'est pas une simple exploration des possibilités. Les expériences avec la typographie et le support imprimé participent à l'histoire, point non abordé dans les livres et articles critiques concernant ce roman. Les innovations du livre, ses ambitions formelles et leur impact sur l'avenir de la fiction ont été examinées à plusieurs reprises. Cependant, l'impact de la typographie sur le processus de lecture et la manière dont les irrégularités formelles du roman aident les lecteurs à justifier les événements et à découvrir les mystères de l'histoire sont restés inexplorés. Par conséquent, l'objectif principal de cette section est de montrer comment *House of Leaves* réussit à diriger le processus de lecture, créer une expérience enrichissante et initier des processus d'interprétation infinis grâce à l'utilisation créative des constituants habituels d'un livre. Son utilisation novatrice des notes de bas de page, par exemple,

facilite l'émergence de récits parallèles sur une seule page. Ils fonctionnent également de la même manière que les liens dans l'hyperfiction numérique.

Afin de comparer *House of Leaves* à un hypertexte numérique, cette section étudie également *Tube Lines* de Joseph Chris pour examiner comment l'hyperfiction numérique utilise les possibilités du support dans le développement de l'histoire et si *House of Leaves* est en retrait à cause du support utilisé. Ce roman prouve également que l'expansion est possible dans les deux formes, la pluralisation du texte central et la création d'un texte de bifurcation. Le livre crée un grand potentiel pour des interprétations continues à travers son expérimentation avec la surface graphique. En outre, le livre fournit même à ses lecteurs des exercices supplémentaires dans les annexes. Le matériel supplémentaire cache des indices et renvoie généralement les lecteurs au texte afin de construire et de prouver leurs hypothèses. Cette section se concentre uniquement sur les lettres de Pelafina. Cependant, le potentiel que les annexes créent pour la relecture et la réinterprétation est immense. L'extension du texte central, ailleurs que sur les sites et forums officiels de Danielewski qui sont habituels à tous ses livres, a également eu lieu dans *Haunted*, un disque d'Anne Danielewski, également connue sous le nom de Poe. L'examen de ce disque en tant que texte de bifurcation constituera la dernière section du Chapitre cinq.

Un bon texte de bifurcation peut étendre son texte central tout en étant autonome. Une brève étude de *Haunted* montre que l'album a accompli les deux tâches avec succès. La perspective d'Anne Danielewski incite les lecteurs à relire le roman et à le réinterpréter. Elle se concentre sur les relations familiales, qui n'ont pas été développées dans *House of Leaves*, afin de mettre en lumière la signification de la maison et de ses aberrations. Cependant, *Haunted* raconte sa propre histoire. L'album explore le chagrin et la perte. Les dix-sept morceaux présentent également la relation compliquée d'une fille avec son père et les tensions que cela implique dans sa vie. La formation de l'identité féminine par la famille et la société est un autre thème. Pour ceux des auditeurs qui ne connaissent rien à *House of Leaves*, la maison n'existe pas du tout. En résumé,

*Haunted* montre comment une écriture originale du texte aboutit à l'extension du réseau hypertextuel. La relation réciproque entre *Haunted* et son texte central prouve que les auteurs assureront la renaissance et la multiplication de leur fiction s'ils laissent « à l'imagination de ceux qui [la] lisent, un aliment propre à la soutenir dans une activité qui égale la [leur] ». Malgré la désapprobation du Dr Johnson,<sup>712</sup> *Tristram Shandy* est toujours populaire et a donné lieu à des textes de bifurcation récents aussi bien méta- qu'hyperfictionnels. L'hyperfiction s'inscrit dans la lignée de *Tristram*.

## **Conclusion**

### **L'hyperfiction**

L'inadéquation des définitions existantes pour l'hyperfiction a mis en marche ce projet. La fin de ce voyage nécessite donc un retour en arrière pour suivre l'évolution du concept en cours de route. À la jonction de la fiction, de la théorie critique poststructuraliste et des médias numériques, l'hyperfiction manifeste les traits distinctifs de ses parents. L'hyperfiction a sa genèse dans la position poststructuraliste envers le texte et ses composants. Les notions de textes idéaux, lisibles et scriptibles, de la mort de l'auteur et la dissémination du sens par le lecteur ont entraîné l'émergence de l'hypertexte sur le support numérique ainsi que de la métafiction sur le support imprimé. Les deux types de textes qui en résultent convergent dans l'hyperfiction pour donner naissance à une fiction non linéaire, consciente du support utilisé et orientée vers le lecteur, qui engage le support dans le développement de l'histoire afin de former des lecteurs avides. En tant qu'héritière des caractéristiques distinctives de l'hypertexte et de la métafiction, l'hyperfiction emploie soit un mélange des techniques propres à la métafiction lorsqu'elle est présentée sur support numérique, soit une adaptation de ses contrats hypertextuels quand son support est le papier. Semblable à

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<sup>712</sup>“Nothing odd will do long. Tristram Shandy did not last.” Samuel Johnson, “The Romantic Notes.” Oxbridge Notes, <[www.oxbridgenotes.co.uk/revision\\_notes/english-oxford-university-the-romantics/samples/nothing-odd-will-do-long-tristram-shandy-did-not-last-samuel-johnson.>](http://www.oxbridgenotes.co.uk/revision_notes/english-oxford-university-the-romantics/samples/nothing-odd-will-do-long-tristram-shandy-did-not-last-samuel-johnson.>)



l'hypertexte, l'hyperfiction définit le texte comme une entité non linéaire, intertextuelle et multimédia avec un potentiel d'expansion. Cependant, l'hyperfiction oscille entre hypertexte et métafiction au regard des concepts mentionnés.

L'hypertexte attribue la non-linéarité au support numérique, ce qui permet de créer des liens entre des fragments de textes. L'hyperfiction, en revanche, adopte la position de la métafiction sur la non-linéarité et considère les textes comme intrinsèquement non linéaires. N'importe quel texte est une compilation méticuleuse de divers fragments qui ont été assemblés avec compétence, de sorte que les lecteurs ignorent les lacunes et les incohérences. En plus de l'habileté de l'auteur à dissimuler les failles, le flux ininterrompu des mots sur la page crée l'illusion de la continuité. La métafiction dévoile les fissures sous-jacentes pour deux raisons. Premièrement, elle considère ces interstices comme des articulations plutôt que des fractures, comme des ouvertures où le sens peut se multiplier, à condition que les lecteurs trouvent les lacunes et établissent les connexions. En d'autres termes, ces nœuds fonctionnent de la même manière que les liens numériques. Deuxièmement, l'histoire gagne en autonomie dans l'esprit des lecteurs. Le souvenir qu'ils ont de l'histoire dépend d'innombrables variables telles que leur familiarité avec la tradition littéraire, leur état d'esprit et leur expérience personnelle. Il est peu probable que les lecteurs se souviennent de l'histoire exactement comme elle a été présentée. Par conséquent, la métafiction attire l'attention sur le processus d'écriture afin d'exposer la non-linéarité du texte dans l'espoir de former les lecteurs à repérer les connexions et initier différents processus d'interprétation. La métafiction dévoile la non-linéarité à travers le langage, comme cela a été analysé avec « Le Jardin aux sentiers qui bifurquent » et *La Maîtresse du lieutenant français*, ou bien à travers le support, comme l'ont montré les exemples de *Albert Angelo*, *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry*, *House Mother Normal* et *The Unfortunates*. L'hyperfiction fonctionne sur les deux niveaux.

En tant que texte multimédia qui a choisi la langue comme support dominant, une hyperfiction numérique affiche ses attributs non linéaires aussi bien à travers le langage que sur les

autres supports qui la constituent et, par conséquent, comprend à la fois les liens numériques des hypertextes et les liens virtuels de métafiction. Dans *Lies* de Rick Pryll, les liens numériques vers « la vérité » et les « mensonges » relient des morceaux de l'histoire et déterminent certains chemins de lecture. Cependant, les lecteurs peuvent facilement créer leurs propres liens en suivant les codes et les indices incorporés dans le langage. *Patchwork Girl* tend encore plus vers la métafiction en utilisant des liens numériques pour enregistrer la résurrection de son personnage éponyme. Une carte sous-jacente a même été incluse pour briser toute illusion de linéarité. Cependant, c'est au niveau linguistique que Jackson montre comment elle situe les jonctions des textes (le monstre féminin inachevé dans *Frankenstein* et les histoires derrière les pièces de tissu composant la poupée Scraps dans *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*) pour créer son propre texte en patchwork. Elle utilise le support pour dévoiler en un clic la toile intertextuelle sous-jacente. Un seul paragraphe de *Patchwork Girl* peut inclure des lignes de *The Patchwork Girl of Oz*, *Frankenstein*, *Coming to Writing*, etc., aux côtés de l'écriture de Shelley Jackson, chacune se distinguant de l'autre par une police de caractères différente. En résumé, l'hyperfiction numérique défie et fait évoluer la non-linéarité que la métafiction présentait pour la première fois. C'est l'une des fonctionnalités qui permet le retour de l'hyperfiction sur le support imprimé.

Bien que l'hyperfiction tende davantage vers l'hypertexte que vers la métafiction en ce qui concerne son caractère multimédia, elle adopte une approche différente pour servir le but de l'histoire. Le support numérique prend en charge l'inclusion de fragments audiovisuels et cinématiques dans un seul texte et laisse au lecteur le soin de déterminer la direction de la lecture. Aucun des supports constitutifs n'est favorisé par rapport aux autres et l'hypertexte se déroule lorsque cela est demandé. L'objectif est de fournir aux utilisateurs / lecteurs la liberté d'explorer le texte en suivant le chemin qu'ils désirent.

Comme dans l'hypertexte, le texte central de l'hyperfiction est un composite de textes fragmentaires produits sur divers supports. Cependant, l'hyperfiction se distancie de l'hypertexte en

choisissant le langage comme support dominant, ce qui, dans une certaine mesure, oriente le processus de lecture et impose des limites à l'extension du texte. L'histoire est de la plus haute importance pour l'hyperfiction. Par conséquent, les autres supports servent l'histoire. Le support numérique aide le groupe auteur à prédire les stratégies de lecture possibles et à cartographier les voies de lecture probables en reliant certains fragments. L'hyperfiction se déploie en effet sur demande, mais dans des directions bien pensées.

L'hyperfiction estime avec raison que le langage est le meilleur moyen de communiquer une histoire. Cependant, la prédominance de la langue dans l'hyperfiction ne signifie pas la redondance des autres supports. L'hyperfiction utilise sa nature multimédia pour raconter l'histoire efficacement, soit en créant une expérience exceptionnelle pour les lecteurs, soit en faisant allusion aux indices et aux ouvertures cachés. En résumé, le support est intégré à l'histoire au point que si l'histoire est relocalisée sur un nouveau support, elle risque de perdre partiellement de son impact. *Patchwork Girl* persuade les lecteurs de réfléchir à la construction de l'identité féminine lorsqu'ils assemblent les pièces et cousent au sens figuré la fille en patchwork. De plus, *Patchwork Girl* fait vivre aux lecteurs l'expérience de l'écriture et de la compilation, car ils repèrent les liens entre les fragments et décident comment les agencer. Ressusciter la fille en patchwork équivaut à l'acte d'écrire. Jackson a démontré comment elle a ressuscité ce personnage à partir des morceaux de Mary Shelley et des livres de L. Frank Baum et elle encourage les lecteurs à ramener la fille en patchwork à la vie. *Tube Lines* utilise les médias qui le composent pour simuler l'expérience d'un voyage en métro. Le mouvement constant, le sentiment de frustration, le détachement et la désorientation résultent des caractéristiques audiovisuelles et cinétiques ajoutées. Cette vision pratique du support et son implication dans la narration, aussi sporadique soit-elle, n'est pas nouvelle pour la métafiction. *The Unfortunates* de B. S. Johnson recrée la ruée des souvenirs, la confusion et la désorientation qui s'en suivent, et *House Mother Normal* simule les luttes liées à la démence et à la maladie d'Alzheimer. En résumé, la préférence du langage par rapport aux autres médias et l'intégration du support dans

le développement de l'histoire permettent à l'hyperfiction de trouver facilement son chemin vers le support imprimé.

La prise de conscience du support de présentation et de ses fonctions a donné lieu à de nombreuses hyperfictions numériques sur les thèmes de la construction, de la connexion, de l'interruption, de la désintégration, en bref, des thèmes et des sujets qui peuvent être réalisés sur un support qui fonctionne grâce à l'accumulation de fragments et de morceaux. *Patchwork Girl* est un bon exemple. Les thèmes principaux de cette hyperfiction comprennent la création d'une fille à partir des parties de son corps et ce que cela implique : la crise d'identité qui découle d'une telle procédure et la création d'une fiction originale qui réarrange constamment les écrits anciens parmi les nouveaux. De plus, cette hyperfiction célèbre le produit final pour son caractère fragmentaire et hétérogène. Le personnage de patchwork et l'hypertexte peuvent sembler difformes, non conventionnels et monstrueux d'un point de vue traditionnel. L'hyperfiction, cependant, les considère comme uniques, perturbateurs et originaux. Cette attitude est responsable de la création de différentes représentations du *Urtext* afin d'encourager la pluralisation du texte central.

L'idée que le support de présentation et les médias qui constituent le texte central devraient servir à développer l'histoire et intensifier son effet sur les lecteurs a abouti à une opinion libératrice de la relation entre l'histoire et le support. Il n'est pas nécessaire que l'histoire soit conforme aux règles du média et accepte les délimitations imposées. Il est préférable de contester les idées établies pour explorer les potentiels cachés et repousser les limites ou, mieux encore, de trouver un support adapté à l'histoire. Cette idée révolutionnaire libère la fiction des contraintes du média et prouve que l'hyperfiction n'est pas un concept lié au support. De plus, ce point de vue a déjà abouti à la création de nombreuses œuvres exceptionnelles, dont certaines s'avèrent impossibles à classer. *Skin, A Mortal Work of Art* (2003) de Shelley Jackson, par exemple, a été publié sur la peau de 2095 participants. *Skin* est une contemplation sur la peau, frontière entre nous et le monde extérieur, source de la vie à l'intérieur de nous, sur qui nous sommes, comment nous sommes en relation les

uns avec les autres et sur notre mort immanente. *Skin* remet également en cause notre perception du texte et le processus d'écriture. Les connexions entre les mots sont arbitraires et l'histoire est sujette à des changements constants. Les mots bougent avec les personnes qui les portent sur leur peau. Par conséquent, les mots ont été dispersés dans le monde entier. Le réarrangement des mots dû à la relocalisation ou à l'annihilation du porteur conduit à de nouvelles histoires. Il existe des possibilités infinies pour l'émergence de nouvelles histoires et, en même temps, l'histoire s'éteindra si des liens significatifs entre les mots ne sont pas détectés. L'histoire meurt sans lecteur qui donne vie aux mots.

L'hyperfiction oscille entre hypertexte et métafiction quant aux concepts de contribution du lecteur et d'expansion du réseau. L'hypertexte permet de choisir librement le chemin de lecture et d'étendre le texte central en l'interprétant ou en créant des textes de bifurcation. Le texte est conçu pour répondre aux demandes des lecteurs et répondre à leurs souhaits. Cette idée conduit à l'émergence de réseaux toujours plus nombreux et sans limites. La métafiction, en revanche, favorise la lecture guidée et la multiplication du texte par des processus d'interprétation. Comprendre l'histoire et en reconnaître les subtilités revêt une grande importance : la métafiction a pour but de former les lecteurs à la lecture analytique et à la découverte de strates de sens. Les deux démarches sont réalisées dans les hyperfictions en réseau fermé.

L'hyperfiction suit la métafiction en ce qui concerne l'histoire. L'hyperfiction s'intéresse principalement à l'histoire, à son mode de présentation et à sa perception. Le choix d'un support dominant lui permet d'exercer un plus grand contrôle sur son texte central que ne le ferait un hypertexte. Le texte central de l'hyperfiction est finalisé et protégé. Il ne changera pas. Les fragments sont connectés pour conduire les lecteurs vers certains chemins de lecture et inspirer des stratégies de lecture qui guident les lecteurs vers les destinations souhaitées. Ceci ne contredit pas la liberté des lecteurs de choisir le chemin que l'hypertexte favorise. La seule différence est que les lecteurs choisissent un chemin parmi les alternatives que l'auteur a déterminées.

L'hyperfiction ne commente pas directement le texte, ne s'adresse pas aux lecteurs, et ne les forme pas à lire analytiquement de la même manière que la métafiction. Au lieu de cela, elle encode le texte en utilisant certains mots clés et expressions puis connecte les morceaux dans des ordres particuliers afin d'essayer de guider les lecteurs à travers l'histoire. Grâce à tel contrôle du processus, l'hyperfiction forme les lecteurs à déchiffrer et à analyser le texte. Chaque hyperfiction a son propre mécanisme et personnalise ses stratégies de lecture particulières, auxquelles l'accès ne peut se faire que par la lecture et la relecture du texte. Ceux qui participent patiemment au jeu conçu par l'hyperfiction trouveront enfin un chemin compatible avec leurs goûts, leur connaissance de la littérature ou leurs antécédents personnels et initieront le processus d'interprétation. Il est à noter que, comme on pouvait s'y attendre, il est toujours possible que les lecteurs surpassent les auteurs et détectent les connexions que ceux-ci n'ont pas planifiées consciemment. C'est pourquoi les lecteurs sont en mesure d'élargir le texte central par la pluralisation des significations.

Il peut sembler que le support dominant, le texte protégé et le processus de lecture guidé contrastent avec le concept hypertextuel d'expansion. Bien que l'hyperfiction ne définisse pas l'expansion de manière exactement identique à l'hypertexte, sa perception générale de n'en est pas intrinsèquement différente. Le texte central de l'hypertexte est extrêmement protégé. Toute modification peut détruire le réseau méticuleusement conçu par le groupe d'auteurs. Cependant, le texte central est toujours une entité intertextuelle et multimédia. L'hyperfiction expose son intertextualité pour recontextualiser l'histoire à plusieurs reprises et inspirer des lectures diverses. De plus, la texture multimédia crée le potentiel pour que le texte central puisse bifurquer sur différents supports. Même si l'hyperfiction semble favoriser la pluralisation par rapport à l'extension, elle n'empêche pas l'émergence de textes bifurqués. Comme pour tout autre hypertexte, il est possible d'étendre l'hyperfiction à travers les médias sous la forme de textes de bifurcation. Cependant, le texte central définit des frontières fortes entre lui-même et ses bifurcations, distinguant les textes produits par le groupe auteur de ceux créés par les lecteurs. Les liens externes

qui relie les textes de bifurcation au texte de base provoquent la croissance du réseau. Le texte central ne rend jamais la pareille. Les frontières distinctes permettent au texte central de conserver son individualité tout en favorisant l'expansion du réseau.

La prédominance du langage en tant que média principal est un autre facteur important dans l'élargissement du texte central. Bien que le choix d'un support dominant guide le processus de lecture et limite dans une certaine mesure le processus d'interprétation, la possibilité de créer les trois caractéristiques hypertextuelles dans le langage ouvre le texte central à diverses lectures et interprétations. L'intérêt est que la langue aide le groupe d'auteurs à garder le contrôle du texte tout en créant un potentiel de multiplication du sens. *Lies* de Rick Pry, par exemple, guide les voies de lecture en limitant les choix des lecteurs à deux options de « vérité » et de « mensonges » qui donnent lieu à certaines combinaisons. Cependant, le réseau complexe de sens encodé dans le langage ouvre l'hypertexte à différentes lectures qui, à leur tour, inspirent une pléthore d'interprétations. De plus, le lecteur est la variable sur laquelle le texte central n'a aucun contrôle. La personnalité du lecteur, ses expériences passées, sa familiarité avec les traditions littéraires, sa connaissance du contexte historique et de nombreux autres facteurs vont jouer dès le début de l'acte de lecture. Le texte central dépend pour son expansion de la participation des lecteurs, tout autant que de ses caractéristiques intertextuelles et multimédia. C'est la raison pour laquelle la métafiction et l'hyperfiction tiennent le lecteur en haute estime.

Le processus guidé de lecture par l'utilisation du support semble entraver l'expansion du texte et limiter la liberté des lecteurs, alors qu'il s'agit plutôt d'une méthode pour attirer leur attention sur les points significatifs de la fiction, leur apprendre à faire des connexions et à lire analytiquement. L'idée de guider et de former les lecteurs trouve ses racines dans la métafiction, qui attire constamment l'attention sur le processus d'écriture et de composition afin d'apprendre aux lecteurs comment les éléments de l'écriture fonctionnent à la fois dans la création de la fiction et dans la génération du sens. Comme analysé précédemment dans cette thèse, la métafiction, peut

interrompre l'histoire pour expliquer et commenter, comme le fait Johnson dans *Christie Malry's Own Double Entry* et *Albert Angelo*, ou chercher une approche plus discrète comme dans *House Mother Normal* et *The Unfortunates* du même auteur. L'hyperfiction mélange les deux méthodes. La possibilité de guider le processus de lecture par le support élimine la nécessité d'une intervention directe de l'auteur et donne aux lecteurs la possibilité d'explorer eux-mêmes le texte, de découvrir les liens et de s'immerger dans le processus d'interprétation. Le processus auquel sont soumis les lecteurs pour rassembler les pièces et parvenir à des versions cohérentes du texte central en suivant les traces de l'auteur présente des similitudes avec le processus d'écriture. En bref, la participation du lecteur, qu'elle se fasse sous forme d'interprétation ou de textes de bifurcation qui entraînent l'extension du réseau, est une combinaison d'écriture et de lecture. Ainsi, les lecteurs qui élargissent le texte central par le biais de la pluralisation et de l'extension méritent le titre d'écri-lecteurs (*wreaders*).

En résumé, en tant que descendante de la métafiction et de l'hypertexte, l'hyperfiction manifeste les principales caractéristiques des deux pour créer un type unique de fiction qui puise dans son texte central multimédia et intertextuel pour encourager la participation des lecteurs sous la forme soit de textes de bifurcation soit de nouvelles interprétations. L'hyperfiction présente trois caractéristiques hypertextuelles principales : la non-linéarité, la conscience du support utilisé et la centralité du lecteur. Cependant, la prédominance d'un seul support sur les autres implique un texte central protégé et une participation contrôlée des lecteurs. L'objectif principal de l'hyperfiction est de raconter l'histoire de manière efficace. Par conséquent, elle utilise sa texture intertextuelle et multimédia pour impliquer les lecteurs et créer une expérience de lecture stimulante. Rien n'est plus important pour l'hyperfiction que l'histoire. Ces attributs, qui permettent de classer l'hyperfiction parmi les réseaux hypertextuels fermés, présentent un certain nombre de similitudes avec la métafiction et facilitent le retour de l'hyperfiction sur le support imprimé à la manière d'une métafiction augmentée. L'hyperfiction est à la fois une métafiction et un hypertexte et pourtant,



aucun d'entre eux. C'est un mélange, peu familier, difforme et différent. En d'autres termes, original, unique et incomparable.

## **La créativité**

Le support et la manière dont il est intégré dans le développement de l'histoire ont été au centre des débats concernant la créativité dans cette étude. Le flux interrompu de l'histoire sur le support numérique constitue un défi considérable pour l'hyperfiction informatique, qui doit adapter le contenu au média de présentation. Au contraire, le défi pour l'hyperfiction imprimée, telle les œuvres de Johnson et de Danielewski, est d'adapter le livre aux caractéristiques hypertextuelles de l'hyperfiction. L'hyperfiction numérique a surmonté les obstacles en se concentrant sur les sujets qui sont intrinsèquement fragmentaires ou qui ont un impact plus important s'ils sont présentés de manière interrompue. Les romans hyperfictionnels, en revanche, tentent de transformer la page en écran multimédia et de recréer sur le papier la non-linéarité, la conscience du support utilisé et la centralité du lecteur. Ces livres utilisent la forme, la surface typographique et la matérialité du livre comme terrain d'expérimentation afin de matérialiser leurs caractéristiques hypertextuelles sur un support qui n'accepte traditionnellement pas la discontinuité. Tant l'hyperfiction numérique que ses équivalents imprimés poursuivent deux objectifs majeurs dans leur exploration des possibilités offertes par le support. Premièrement, ils ont l'ambition de trouver des moyens novateurs de présenter l'histoire de manière efficace et d'intensifier l'expérience de lecture. Deuxièmement, ils tentent d'impliquer les lecteurs, de les former à localiser et à analyser des données importantes, puis d'initier le processus de création de sens.

Les hypertextes et hyperfictions étudiés montrent que la nature fragmentaire du support a été une source importante de créativité et a abouti à un certain nombre de textes dont le choix du sujet et l'exploration du support ont généré des expériences extraordinaires pour les utilisateurs / lecteurs. Chaque fois que les lecteurs de *Patchwork Girl* rassemblent les pièces, un nouveau texte en

patchwork est né. Il peut être difforme et étrange, mais il est sans aucun doute original. La section sur les membres de la fille en patchwork, par exemple, s'appuie sur la structure fragmentaire pour soulever des questions importantes sur la perception de la beauté féminine et la construction de l'identité féminine en fonction des attentes sociales. Jackson utilise les morceaux fragmentaires au profit de l'histoire et réfléchit à la manière dont les normes de beauté se concentrent sur des parties prises séparément plutôt que sur un corps complet. Ces directives, si elles sont suivies, façonnent une femme très inhabituelle, un patchwork qui sera considéré comme une monstruosité selon les principes de beauté. L'histoire de chaque membre et de son ancienne propriétaire développe l'idée de l'identité féminine en tant qu'entité assemblée et souligne que chaque femme est l'héritière des désirs insatisfaits et des voix suffocantes des femmes qui l'ont façonnée. *Patchwork Girl* attire l'attention sur ces problèmes en demandant aux lecteurs d'assembler littéralement le corps de la fille en patchwork. *Tube Lines*, un autre exemple, utilise le support pour simuler l'expérience de désorientation et de détachement. Les récits parallèles, qui se déroulent sans cesse dans différentes directions, matérialisent les lignes de métro. De plus, le mouvement constant amène les lecteurs à se concentrer sur quatre récits différents et, finalement, les laisse confus et frustrés. La déconnexion entre les récits reflète la solitude et l'inaccessibilité des personnes qui se croisent et amène ainsi les lecteurs à s'identifier au narrateur distant de l'histoire d'amour. *Memento*, comme exemple d'un hypertexte plutôt que d'une hyperfiction, utilise les analepses et les prolepses pour reproduire une expérience intense de perte de mémoire et les difficultés subies par le protagoniste souffrant de perte de mémoire à court terme.

L'hyperfiction réalisée sur papier, au contraire, tente d'ajuster le support d'impression aux exigences de l'histoire. Parmi les exemples étudiés dans cette thèse, *The Unfortunates*, *House Mother Normal*, *Only Revolutions* et *House of Leaves* se distinguent. *The Unfortunates*, l'un des précurseurs légitimes de l'hyperfiction sur papier, imite le processus de la mémoire dans un livre présenté sous la forme d'une boîte contenant des chapitres non reliés de différentes longueurs.

Comme les souvenirs, les chapitres ne suivent aucun ordre. Chacun peut déclencher une ligne d'intrigue qui se poursuit dans un autre, mais la ligne peut ne pas aboutir. Cependant, les souvenirs / chapitres seront stockés jusqu'à la prochaine fois qu'une image, une odeur ou un son déclencheront la réaction en chaîne. Pleinement conscient de l'impact troublant des espaces vides dans un livre, *House Mother Normal* teste la surface graphique pour entraver le processus de lecture. Les lecteurs se débattent avec les mots éparpillés sur l'étendue vierge de la page et luttent pour les comprendre. L'utilisation de la typographie et de la mise en page par Johnson aide les lecteurs à percevoir la détérioration des facultés mentales. *Only Revolutions* expérimente avec la matérialité du livre ainsi que la typographie pour dynamiser l'histoire. La conception du livre impose un mouvement circulaire aux récits pour contempler la répétition de l'Histoire et ses conséquences sur la vie des personnages. La typographie a été utilisée pour mettre en évidence les liens dans des récits par ailleurs parallèles et former les lecteurs à analyser l'histoire dans son contexte historique. *House of Leaves* utilise le texte, la typographie, la mise en page et la matérialité du livre pour rendre son étrange sujet accessible aux lecteurs. La direction et la disposition des différentes strates de texte sur la page aident Danielewski à faire percevoir sa maison labyrinthique et ses épisodes turbulents et à inspirer la peur, la claustrophobie et la désorientation que vivent les personnages. La reconfiguration d'éléments familiers tels que les notes de bas de page et leur fonction attire l'attention sur les clés des mystères de la maison et mettent en évidence les liens qui guideront les lecteurs. *House of Leaves* utilise même les annexes pour donner aux lecteurs les bases de lectures ultérieures et d'interprétations futures afin de commenter l'extensibilité du texte, créant ainsi une maison de feuilles qui défie les règles établies.

Ainsi, l'intégration créative du support dans le développement de l'histoire, l'intensification de l'expérience de la lecture et la formation d'écri-lecteurs attentifs ont été le fil conducteur de cette thèse. L'étude de l'emploi novateur du support dans l'hypertexte, l'hyperfiction et les romans qu'ils ont inspirés a révélé plusieurs points. Tout d'abord, en tant que texte intertextuel, non linéaire et

multimédia, l'hyperfiction n'est pas un concept lié au média et peut réaliser ses tendances hypertextuelles sur tous les supports. Elle en cherche généralement un approprié aux exigences de l'histoire et bouscule les fonctions habituelles du support et les idées que l'on s'en fait. Cette attitude entraîne généralement la découverte d'un potentiel caché et l'adaptation du support aux besoins de l'histoire. Par conséquent, l'hyperfiction trouve généralement des moyens d'ajuster le support dans une certaine mesure, afin de répondre à ses besoins. Les analyses concernant l'hyperfiction sur papier ont exploré cette caractéristique. Deuxièmement, l'idée que le média devrait répondre aux exigences de la fiction a facilité la remise en cause des perceptions établies au sujet des supports, ce qui a conduit à la découverte d'aspects inexplorés et, par conséquent, à la flexibilité et parfois même à la polyvalence de certains d'entre eux.

L'expérimentation avec le support de présentation a inspiré un certain nombre d'œuvres remarquables qui défient aussi bien le média que la classification. *Romeo and/ or Juliet :A choosable-path adventure* (2016) de Ryan North, par exemple, prouve que l'hypertexte morcellé peut être recréé dans un livre. *Romeo and/or Juliet* présente l'histoire célèbre en 476 extraits à la deuxième personne ; les lecteurs doivent choisir un avatar et s'impliquer dans le récit. Plusieurs choix proposés à la fin de chaque extrait leur permettent de déterminer leur parcours, ce qui donne 46 012 475 909 287 476 aventures possibles parmi lesquelles figure le texte original. Le changement de police de caractères et les illustrations aident les lecteurs à naviguer dans l'histoire et à connecter les fragments. *Romeo and/or Juliet* de Ryan North peut être facilement publié en tant qu'hyperfiction numérique.

La reconfiguration des supports a également donné lieu à de nouveaux réceptacles de fiction. *Skin, A Mortal Work of Art* (2003) a choisi le corps comme support de présentation. *TOC: A New Media Novel* (2009) de Steve Tomasola a été publié en DVD et *Tout* (2015) de Sophie Calle, traduit en anglais sous le titre de *Sophie Calle: My All*, a été publié sur 54 cartes. Ces cartes contiennent les images de l'artiste et l'histoire qu'elle a choisie pour chacune. Elles ne suivent aucun ordre

particulier et peuvent être interprétées séparément ou dans le cadre de la collection. C'est au public d'imposer un ordre. De plus, les histoires personnelles, les autoportraits parmi d'autres photos et les réflexions de l'artiste sur sa vie et son art ont transformé le livre, à défaut de meilleur terme, en mémoires peu conventionnels. Chaque image déclenche un souvenir et provoque un effet domino. En bref, les œuvres originales inspirées de l'utilisation novatrice du support par l'hyperfiction promettent l'émergence d'une fiction novatrice.

### **Et le roman (postmoderne) . . .**

Le suivi de l'évolution de l'hyperfiction et son impact sur le roman a été l'une des principales préoccupations de cette thèse. L'étude des romans écrits aux débuts de l'hyperfiction dans le troisième chapitre a montré une relation réciproque entre l'hyperfiction et le roman traditionnel et a envisagé la possibilité de manifestations hypertextuelles dans les livres imprimés. Si oui, comment et par quels moyens la fiction peut-elle adapter ces qualités à ses exigences et produire plus que de simples répliques ? L'étude des romans de Mark Z. Danielewski au chapitre cinq montre comment l'hyperfiction et ses dérivés ont incité à la création de romans expérimentaux uniques qui surpassent facilement leur dignes adversaires numériques. La question est maintenant de savoir si les romans de Danielewski sont des phénomènes isolés ou les premiers instigateurs qui catalyseront l'émergence d'une nouvelle fiction expérimentale. La réponse complète à ces interrogations dépasse le cadre de cette étude. Cependant, une recension des principaux impacts de l'hyperfiction sur le roman, analysés dans la section « Hyperfiction sur papier », et la mention de certaines œuvres expérimentales récentes semblent appropriées pour mettre un terme à cette thèse.

La non-linéarité mise en avant par l'hyperfiction a rendu la fiction fragmentaire courante et prouvé que les lecteurs sont pleinement compétents pour suivre une écriture non séquentielle. Trois types de non-linéarité peuvent être réalisés dans un roman. La forme la plus commune contient des fragments de textes tels que dans *House of Leaves*. La seconde forme concerne la surface

graphique, y compris la typographie, le solécisme intentionnel et les illustrations qui coupent littéralement le texte ou interrompent le processus de lecture en attirant l'attention des lecteurs. *Only Revolutions* et *The Fifty Year Sword* reflètent ce type de non-linéarité. Le troisième type se retrouve à des degrés divers dans tous les livres de Danielewski, et particulièrement dans *House of Leaves* et *The Whalestoe Letters*.

Récemment, la fiction semble vouloir embrasser sa non-linéarité intrinsèque. *This Is Not A Novel* (2001) de David Markson, par exemple, présente l'histoire d'un auteur appelé Writer (L'Écrivain) en phrases simples ou en courts paragraphes isolés. L'écrivain, qui en a assez d'inventer des histoires, entend simplement persuader les lecteurs de tourner la page. Writer prétend ne pas avoir de destination en tête et compte pourtant sur les lecteurs pour donner un sens au texte en suivant les fils et arriver « quelque part ». Le résultat est une réflexion originale sur la vie créative, à condition que les lecteurs fassent leur part. *The Selected Works of T.S. Spivet* de Reif Larson fournit un bon exemple du deuxième type de non-linéarité. Le roman utilise une combinaison de texte et d'illustrations pour suivre les aventures de T. S. Spivet, un cartographe de génie âgé de douze ans, qui utilise ses diagrammes détaillés et ses cartes à code couleur pour donner un sens à sa vie. Les cartes reflètent le caractère et les intérêts de T. S. Spivet. De plus, ces graphiques, cartes et illustrations font partie intégrante de l'intrigue et développent également le récit. En résumé, bien que le roman préfère toujours l'aspect homogène du livre, il ose maintenant produire un récit non linéaire lorsque l'histoire l'exige.

Le positionnement pris par l'hyperfiction envers son support a déclenché des explorations et des expérimentations formelles avec le livre en tant qu'objet et ses composants. L'hyperfiction numérique utilise le support pour développer l'histoire, guider le processus de lecture et élargir son réseau. L'intégration du support dans le développement de l'histoire a donné lieu à des romans expérimentaux qui remettent en question le livre et cherchent des moyens d'adapter le support imprimé aux exigences de l'histoire. *House Mother Normal*, *The Unfortunates* et *House of Leaves*,

déjà été longuement évoqués, comptent parmi les meilleurs exemples de fiction qui explore et réalise le potentiel caché des livres. *The Familiar* et *Kapow!* peuvent également être mentionnés parmi les exemples les plus récents. *The Familiar*, un livre en vingt-sept tomes de Mark Z. Danielewski, en cours de publication volume par volume, suit les traces de ses précédents en testant la surface graphique et en repoussant les limites du livre. *Kapow!* (2012) d'Adam Thirwell explore la signification de la mise en page. Présentée sous la forme d'une compilation de clips de presse en patchwork, *Kapow!* recrée le sentiment d'être bombardé par ou enterré sous les nouvelles du jour. La disposition intensifie l'impact du monologue sans fin du narrateur qui tente de donner un sens aux événements actuels en temps réel pendant le Printemps arabe. L'hyperfiction et les romans qu'elle a inspirés ont modifié notre perception du support imprimé rigide et ont démontré sa flexibilité inattendue. Le potentiel caché mis au jour par des romans tels que *House of Leaves* et *Only Revolutions* promet davantage dans les années à venir et souligne qu'il reste encore beaucoup à dire sur le livre.

L'idée des textes multimédia pouvant se développer en réseaux et se répandre sur plusieurs supports a également donné lieu à différents types de fiction interdisciplinaire, ainsi qu'à de la fiction élargissant consciemment son réseau. L'étude de *Haunted* en tant que texte de bifurcation dans le dernier chapitre a illustré l'échange entre les textes d'un même réseau. Les livres de Sophie Calle constituent un autre exemple de cette réciprocité. Il faut mentionner que Sophie Calle n'est pas un écrivain de fiction au sens général du terme. Cependant, elle s'est rendue célèbre pour avoir recréé sa propre vie en suivant des étrangers, en prenant des photos et en écrivant des histoires sur les photos. Ainsi, elle aborde le domaine de la fiction dans une certaine mesure. Ses travaux et collaborations récents peuvent illustrer le concept de réseaux hypertextuels livresques. *Des histoires vraies* (2016) relie l'art conceptuel, montré dans des expositions, et des textes écrits, soulignant ainsi le caractère multimédia du texte. De plus, le livre est constitué des photos des œuvres de l'écrivaine (statues, tableaux, etc.), chacune accompagnée d'une courte histoire qui attire l'attention

des lecteurs sur des aspects particuliers de l'œuvre ou explique ce qui l'a inspirée. Les histoires ont rendu possible le transfert des œuvres d'une exposition d'art au papier. En outre, les histoires révèlent indirectement au public ce qu'il faut rechercher et le guident vers les conclusions souhaitées. En résumé, en considérant les œuvres d'art comme le texte central dont la nature multimédia crée un potentiel d'expansion, on peut en conclure que le livre fonctionne comme un texte de bifurcation qui interprète le texte central et élargit le réseau sur un nouveau support.

La relation réciproque entre *Leviathan* (1992) de Paul Auster et *Doubles-jeux : De l'obéissance, livre I* (1998) de Sophie Calle est un autre exemple de réseau et de textes bifurqués. Paul Auster a créé Maria Turner, un personnage qui suit des étrangers pour les photographier, d'après Sophie Calle. La représentation du roman de Calle et de son art a inspiré l'artiste à revendiquer son alter ego fictif dans une œuvre de son cru. Pour ce faire, elle a décidé d'échanger sa place avec Maria et a persuadé Auster d'écrire l'année suivante de sa vie. L'expérience de Calle interprétant le script d'Auster, « Instructions personnelles pour SC sur comment améliorer la vie dans la ville de New York (parce qu'elle a demandé ...) », a été publiée plus tard sous le titre de *Double-jeux : Gotham Handbook, livre VII* par les deux auteurs, et est devenue la base de *Double-jeux* dans lequel Calle réfléchit à sa double vie de personnage de fiction et de personne réelle, et au double jeu que le roman d'Auster a initié. Les projets mentionnés et les livres qui en résultent offrent un aperçu de l'élargissement du texte central et des résultats possibles dans un roman.

Le support numérique crée l'illusion que le texte n'existe que si le programme est géré par les lecteurs. Cela fait de celui-ci un facteur important dans la création du texte. Ce sont les lecteurs qui rassemblent les pièces et assemblent le texte. Ainsi, l'hyperfiction utilise le support pour former les lecteurs à sa lecture et tente de créer une expérience agréable en utilisant ce dernier. De plus, les lecteurs d'hyperfiction sont également responsables de l'expansion du réseau, soit par l'interprétation, soit par la création de textes de bifurcation. En bref, la formation d'écri-lecteurs est l'un des principaux objectifs de l'hyperfiction.



Bien que ce ne soit pas nouveau pour le roman, et encore moins pour la métafiction, certaines œuvres telles *Tristram Shandy*, *House Mother Normal* ou *The Unfortunates* défient vraiment les lecteurs. Cependant, le succès de romans tels que *House of Leaves* et *Only Revolutions*, qui exigent une attention et une participation totales, semble changer la vision traditionnelle du lecteur en tant que simple destinataire. Les textes multimédia et interactifs ont conduit à un niveau élevé de littéracie visuelle et les textes non séquentiels ont amélioré les capacités des lecteurs à repérer les connexions et à les interpréter. De plus, l'hyperfiction a affecté le processus de lecture. Le fait que chaque hypertexte définisse ses propres règles et propose ses propres directives pour être lu et interprété a fait de la lecture une expérience unique et a appris aux lecteurs à adopter différentes stratégies de lecture face à un nouveau texte. En bref, les supports numériques et l'expérience de l'hyperfiction ont préparé les lecteurs contemporains à relever tous les défis et le roman expérimental contemporain s'y prête volontiers.

Enfin, malgré les prédictions cyniques sur l'avenir du roman lors de la première apparition de l'hyperfiction, ce type de fiction ne pourrait pas remplacer les livres pour deux raisons. Tout d'abord, l'hyperfiction est le résultat naturel de l'évolution du roman conjointement aux dernières technologies. Bien que réalisée sur supports numériques, l'hyperfiction, en tant que descendant direct de la théorie critique poststructuraliste et du roman postmoderne, inspiré par la même théorie, manifeste un certain nombre de similitudes avec la fiction traditionnelle. Deuxièmement, la volonté des écrivains de suivre la révolution numérique a conduit à un échange entre le roman et l'hyperfiction. Cette conversation, à son tour, a abouti à la création de certaines fictions des plus extraordinaires. L'avenir du roman tel que l'annoncent les romans expérimentaux étudiés est plutôt prometteur.

**Baharak DAROUGARI**

## **Hyperfiction, Creativity and Postmodern Novel**

### **RÉSUMÉ**

Depuis l'invention du terme hypertexte par Ted Nelson en 1965, il y a eu des débats fréquents à propos des mérites et des dangers des textes numériques, pour savoir si le développement des technologies informatiques causerait l'obsolescence des supports imprimés. Les prophéties étaient apocalyptiques et l'avenir des livres semblait sombre. Environ cinquante ans plus tard, tant les supports imprimés qui étaient condamnés que les hypertextes numériques qui semblaient être leurs exécuteurs existent encore. Les romans sont toujours populaires et les hypertextes aussi. Nul n'est dépassé ou éradiqué par l'autre. Au contraire, la coexistence des livres et leurs homologues numériques a affecté notre perception des textes, des lecteurs, des auteurs et de l'expérience de lecture. Plus important, l'échange entre les deux médias a eu comme résultat l'apparition d'une fiction expérimentale exceptionnelle à la fois sur écran et sur papier. La conjonction entre la fiction et les technologies numériques est au centre de ce projet qui vise à d'étudier l'hyperfiction, ses racines dans la fiction traditionnelle et ses descendants imprimés.

**MOTS CLÉS:** centralité du lecteur, écri-lecteur, hyperfiction, hypertexte, intertextualité, intermédiaire, conscience du support utilisé, niveau méta, réseau hypertextuel, non-linéarité, texte central

### **ABSTRACT**

Since Ted Nelson coined the term "hypertext" in 1965, there have been frequent debates on the merits and dangers of digital texts and whether the development of digital technology would outdate the print-based medium. The prophecies were apocalyptic and the future of books seemed bleak. About fifty years later, the doomed print-based medium and the digital hypertexts, their would-be-executioners, both still exist. Novels are still popular and so is hyperfiction. Neither outdated or eradicated the other. Instead, the coexistence of books and their digital counterparts has affected our perception of text, reader, writer and the reading experience. More importantly, the exchange between the two media has resulted in exceptional experimental fiction both on screen and on paper. The conjunction between fiction and digital technology is of concern to this project which attempts to study hyperfiction, its roots in fiction and its printed descendants.

**KEY WORDS:** core text, hyperfiction, hypertext, hypertextual networks, intertextuality, intermediacy, medium-consciousness, meta-level, non-linearity, reader-centrality, wreader,