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Postmodern Narrative Techniques in the Novel *House of Leaves* by Mark Z. Danielewski

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INTRODUCTION

Postmodernist fiction is known to vary greatly across catalogues of postmodernist writers and their work. To be classified as postmodernist, a literary work must share with other works of postmodernist fiction a common feature—the use of postmodern narrative techniques; which, with their experimental nature, make the study of postmodernist fiction intriguing. In this thesis I analyze the best-selling novel *House of Leaves*, published in 2000 by American writer Mark Z. Danielewski, with regard to such techniques.

In the first chapter, I introduce the theory of postmodern narrative techniques. I define postmodernism and its ideas in literature; I continue by describing the approaches to literary ontology in the context of postmodernist fiction; and finally, I focus on the techniques of postmodernist fiction in more detail. First, I introduce techniques of world-making—strategies of Chinese-box worlds, strategies of self-erasure and strategies of temporal disorder. Second, I describe techniques of words and style—strategies related to topological worlds, styled worlds and worlds of discourse. Finally, I explain techniques of text, which foreground the book's textual and material dimension in various ways.

In the second chapter, I provide a short summary of the novel; and in the third chapter, I analyze the specific techniques in the novel, while following a structure, which mirrors that of the first chapter. First, I focus on the world-making techniques. I describe the structure of narrative levels in the Chinese-box world structure and the way they are foregrounded by specific strategies. I focus on techniques of self-erasure, which overwrite narrated events and create open or multiple endings. I finish the section with techniques of temporal disorder with mapping the relation between the world in *House of Leaves* and the real world. Second, I deal with techniques of words and style. I choose not to focus on strategies of topological worlds in separate chapter, as their presence is closely related to all strategies. I briefly deal with the stylistic devices in the novel—lexical exhibitionism, catalogues and back-broke sentences. Following that, I explore the discursive techniques, mapping the features of carnivalized fiction in the novel. Third, I analyze the textual techniques and the way they fragment, as well as connect the narrative. I start with the exploration of spatial displacement through blank space; and the closely-related concrete prose. I follow with the analysis of spacing through headlines, numbers and other symbols; while further focusing on the manner, in

which the symbols contribute to the content. I continue by analyzing the strategies of typography with focus on the function of fonts, colors and other formatting. After that, I explore the different forms of parallel texts and their function; and finish the section with exploring the illustrations to discover, if the author connects the images with the text, or if he also exploits anti-illustrations. The strategy of different axis is included in various sections focusing on textual techniques. Finally, I close the thesis with the conclusion of important findings.

Thus, in this thesis I explore the postmodern narrative techniques by finding relevant and recurring examples and linking them with the novel's content to reach a conclusion about the manner, in which the author uses them. While doing so, I use the term technique interchangeably with strategy and device. Throughout the thesis, I reference the Full-Color edition of the novel but I also mention the British Black & White edition, when talking about the front page of the book, since in postmodernist fiction the material book and its illustrations are part of the narrative as well. Therefore, I choose to include both versions written in English language. To distinguish between them, I state the title present on their front pages—*House of Leaves* for the US version and *Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves* for the UK edition. Aside from the presence of colors and minor details, the editions are identical with regard to page numbers.

1 POSTMODERN NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES – AN OUTLINE

In this chapter I explain the postmodern narrative techniques on a theoretical level. First, I define postmodernism, its ideas in postmodernist fiction and what the shared feature is in the large spectrum of postmodernist writers and their work. Second, I introduce the approaches to literary ontology. Finally, I focus on postmodern narrative techniques from strategies of Chinese-box world to concrete prose. To do so, I divide the techniques, similar to Brian McHale, into techniques of world-making, techniques of words and style and techniques of text—the material book.

1.1 Defining Postmodernist Fiction

Barry Lewis, in his chapter in *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, describes postmodernism as a dominant mode of literature between 1960 and 1990, starting with essay “Writing American Fiction” (1961) by Philip Roth, which encouraged writers to “experiment with fantasy and self-consciousness.”¹ Lewis also mentions William Burroughs’ *Naked Lunch* (1962) as another possible starting point since, upon its French release in 1959, the book “challenged every norm of narrative unity and decorum.”² Patricia Waugh, in *Practising Postmodernism, Reading Modernism*, states that at first the term postmodernism was used to describe its “range of aesthetic practices involving playful irony, parody, parataxis, self-consciousness, fragmentation” but by early 1980s, there was a “general shift in thought” to “pervasive cynicism,”³ which Stuart Sim describes as “skepticism about authority, received wisdom, cultural and political norms.”⁴

Postmodernism, like post-structuralism, reject structuralist ideas of determinacy, as “structuralism seems to allow little scope for . . . chance, creativity or the unexpected.”⁵ Poststructuralists, on the other hand, commit themselves to “finding, and dwelling on, dissimilarity, difference, and the unpredictability of analysis.”⁶ Poststructuralist Jacques Derrida emphasized the inherent indeterminacy of meaning; since, as Stuart Sim reiterates, “there was never any perfect conjunction of signifier and signified to guarantee unproblematic communication . . . words always contained

¹Stuart Sim, ed., *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 2001), 121.

²Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 121.

³Patricia Waugh, *Practising Postmodernism, Reading Modernism* (London: Edward Arnold, 1992), 5.

⁴Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 3.

⁵Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 5.

⁶Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 5.

echoes and traces of other words.”⁷ The “emphasis on difference, on what fails to conform to the norm or to system-building,” present in Derrida’s deconstruction is shared in postmodern philosophy.⁸ Jean-François Lyotard compares postmodernism to an essay form, as it “can be seen to offer opinions like a speaker in a conversation; the essayist does not set out to offer total explanations,”⁹ which further demonstrates the presence of indeterminacy in postmodernist fiction and writer’s creative freedom to experiment.

Lyotard’s rejection of “‘grand narratives’ of Western history,” as well as the idea that “history itself becomes a plurality of ‘islands of discourse;’”¹⁰ gave rise to the idea that “‘truth’ cannot be distinguished from ‘fiction’ and . . . the aesthetic, rather than disappearing, has actually incorporated everything else into itself.”¹¹ Contrary to grand narratives; which claim to be universal, and according to Lyotard, authoritarian; “little narratives” are created by small groups of people with a specific goal and “do not pretend to have the answer to all society’s problems.”¹² He supported his claim by the fact that events, such as Auschwitz, could not have been predicted and understood by any universal theory, thus showing the limits of grand narratives and the indeterminacy of the future.¹³

As the notions of difference and little narratives provided postmodernist writers with freedom to experiment, it is not surprising that postmodernist literature is heterogeneous. Raymond Federman does not consider postmodernism to be a unified movement with coherent formulated theory, because the works of postmodernist writers vary to a great extent,¹⁴ thus it is difficult to create a single definition of postmodernism. Many also have an issue with the term postmodernism itself. Waugh states that “‘Post’ implies after but with no indication of whither next,” which gives rise to “the feeling that we are at the end of an era”—nearing the apocalypse.¹⁵ Brian McHale in *Postmodernist Fiction* considers the prefix “post” to mean follow *from* modernism rather than following *after* modernism, as its “logical and historical *consequence* rather than sheer temporal *posteriority*,” since future is always unknown and everything is

⁷Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 5.

⁸Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 6.

⁹Waugh, *Practising Postmodernism, Reading Modernism*, 25.

¹⁰Waugh, *Practising Postmodernism, Reading Modernism*, 5.

¹¹Waugh, *Practising Postmodernism, Reading Modernism*, 5-6.

¹²Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 9.

¹³Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 10.

¹⁴Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 123.

¹⁵Waugh, *Practising Postmodernism, Reading Modernism*, 9.

“*post* some other moment, just as it is *pre* some other moment.”¹⁶ He also considers the prefix to have a scope over the word “modernism” and not only “modern,” which enables him to further elaborate on the definition of postmodernist fiction as “poetics which is the successor of, or possibly a reaction against, the poetics of early twentieth-century modernism.”¹⁷

Although postmodernist fiction is heterogeneous; according to McHale, it is possible to define it by what its writers have in common—something to achieve systematicity—and that is the foregrounding of ontological issues of text and world.¹⁸ The ontological concern is also what distinguished postmodernist fiction from modernist fiction. McHale considers the concern (or dominant) of modernist fiction to be epistemological, dealing with questions of how to interpret the world, in which we live and of our place in it—questions about the world and knowledge. The theme of accessibility and circulation of knowledge is achieved by devices, such as the multiplication and juxtaposition of perspective, focalization of the evidence through a single character, or variants on internal monologue.¹⁹

The postmodernist ontological concern, on the other hand, deals with questions about “the ontology of the literary text itself or on the ontology of the world which it projects.”²⁰ McHale’s examples of such questions are as follows: “What is a world?; What kinds of world are there, how are they constituted, and how do they differ?; What happens when different kinds of world are placed in confrontation, or when boundaries between worlds are violated?; What is the mode of existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds) it projects?; How is a projected world structured?”²¹

Epistemological questions often evolve into ontological questions, and the same applies in reverse. One of the questions must be postponed or backgrounded, while the other is asked first or foregrounded. In postmodernist fiction the foregrounded questions are ontological.²² Steve Connor in *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism* also defends the approach: “This distinction has been troublesome for those who have failed to see that the latter is an intensification of the former, rather than a clean break with it.”

¹⁶Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1989), 5.

¹⁷McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 5.

¹⁸McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 27.

¹⁹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 9.

²⁰McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 10.

²¹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 10.

²²McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 11.

The move from epistemology to ontology is a move “from world-witnessing to world-making and world-navigation.”²³

McHale also warns that, even though “typically, critics have characterized postmodernism in terms of its ontological instability or indeterminacy, the *loss* of a world that could be accepted;”²⁴ ontological concerns can also be realized by a theme of acceptance of the world.²⁵

1.2 Theory of Literary Ontology

The rejection of grand narratives and determinacy gave postmodernist writers creative freedom—a chance to free oneself from labels of genres and style, which caused the heterogeneity of postmodernist fiction. Due to the diversity, there have been opposing views on using the label. The heterogeneous catalogues of postmodernist writers and their work, however, can be covered by the term postmodernist fiction, because they have in common the foregrounding of ontological issues. To achieve this, postmodernist writers choose from the same repertoire of themes or attitudes, and strategies. Such techniques exploit “general ontological characteristics shared by *all* literary texts and fictional worlds,” and can be identified and understood only against the background of general theories of literary ontology.²⁶

McHale, influenced by Thomas Pavel’s definition of the term, defines ontology as “a description of *a* universe, not of *the* universe; that is, it may describe *any* universe, potentially a *plurality* of universes.” He also notes that the universe does not have to be grounded in “*our* universe; it might just as appropriately involve describing *other* universes, including ‘possible’ or even ‘impossible’ universes.”²⁷

Already common to Renaissance poetics, is the view of ontology as heterocosmic, defined by “the *otherness* of the fictional world, its separation from the real world of experience.”²⁸ That, however, does not entail an absence of any relationship between the real and the fictional world. Such relation can be based on mimetic theory, thus imitating the real world. Since the fictional world can include an appearance of people, who exist or have existed in the real world; the heterocosm theory had to be modified to

²³Steven Connor, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 66.

²⁴McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 26.

²⁵McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 27.

²⁶McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 27.

²⁷McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 27.

²⁸McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 27.

admit an existence of certain overlap between the fictional and the real world.²⁹ Therefore, literary texts “inevitably refer *outside* their internal field to an external field of reference: the objective world, the body of historical fact or scientific theory, an ideology or philosophy, other texts, and so on.”³⁰

Another theme common in Renaissance related to ontology is that of author as a God or maker, as “the *real* artist always occupies an ontological level superior to that of his projected fictional self, and therefore *doubly* superior to the fictional world” with a possibility of infinite regress—“puppet-master behind puppet-master *ad infinitum*.” Since author is a maker of the fictional world, the fictional world becomes a “*made* thing,” presented as an artwork. Fiction can thus describe not only a world but also a fiction itself, as is the case of romantic irony.³¹

Until the twentieth century, the ontology was analyzed as a whole—its nature and relation to the real world and an author. Then the “shift of attention to internal ontological structure” came with Roman Ingarden and his view of literary artwork as “*heteronomous*, existing both autonomously, in its own right, and at the same time depending upon the constitutive acts of consciousness of a reader.”³² Contrary to previous ontologies of fiction, Roman Ingarden emphasizes the interaction between a reader and an artwork over the relation of the author and his fiction.³³ He distinguished four layers, or strata, of literary artwork’s ontological status: the stratum of word-sounds, of meaning-units, of presented objects and that of schematized aspects.³⁴

The word-sounds are more essential than ontological, as they create the possibilities of word-meanings realized by graphic signs and eventually by the typography of the physical book itself. The meaning-units, such as nouns, verbs, modifiers and sentences themselves, create concepts of objects and states of affairs. That is possible only if they become “intentional objects of reader’s consciousness.”³⁵ The presented objects “project objects and worlds.” Since they are presented by the meaning-units, they are partly indeterminate—they have “ontological *gaps*,” as they are

²⁹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 28.

³⁰McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 29.

³¹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 30.

³²McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 30.

³³McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 31.

³⁴McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 31-3.

³⁵McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 31.

partly specified and partly vague,³⁶ which gives space to reader's imagination. The schematized aspects deal with the indeterminateness of presented objects and the fact that they can never be like real objects. They can however duplicate "aspectual nature of our experience of objects, for instance by choosing one sensory channel through which to present an object, or by restricting the point of view."³⁷ Ingarden considers such objects to have "metaphysical qualities."³⁸ While Ingarden doesn't consider the ontological structure of text to be of any aesthetic value or interest, according to McHale "it is precisely by foregrounding the skeleton of layers . . . that postmodernist fiction achieves its aesthetic effects and sustains interest, in the process modeling the complex ontological landscape of our experience."³⁹

The theory of possible worlds views fictional text as being "neither true nor false, suspended between belief and disbelief."⁴⁰ Possible worlds are dependent on someone's propositional attitude: "in order for them to *be* possible, they must be believed in, imagined, wished for etc., by some human agent,"⁴¹ who then abandons the real world and adopts "the *ontological perspective* of the literary work."⁴² Such human agent can be a reader or even a character of fictional world. Umberto Eco calls such worlds "subworlds," while Thomas Pavel uses the term "narrative domain."⁴³

With possible worlds there is not a radically sharp boundary between the real and the fictional world, as is the case with mimetic theory. Eco emphasizes the conventionality of borrowing "entities and properties from the ready-made world of reality," and considers such entities to have a "transworld identity," as they exist in two and more worlds and differ only to such an extent, so that they can be taken as identical.⁴⁴ If the difference is that of essential properties, then the entity is a case of what Eco calls "homonymy," which is frequent in parodies. While entities travel into and between fictional worlds, they are unable to travel into the real world, thus the relation between the real and fictional world is that of "asymmetrical accessibility."⁴⁵

³⁶McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 31-2.

³⁷McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 32.

³⁸McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 33.

³⁹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 39.

⁴⁰McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 33.

⁴¹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 34.

⁴²McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 33.

⁴³McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 34.

⁴⁴McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 34-5.

⁴⁵McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 35.

While Eco rejects the existence of impossible worlds, Lubomír Doležel is accepting of the idea of worlds, which at the same time exist and do not exist. Ingarden calls such worlds “opalescent.”⁴⁶ Foregrounding the aforementioned themes and differences from traditional genres is used by postmodernist writers to create what Thomas Pavel calls pluralistic ontological landscape of culture,⁴⁷ which mirrors the reality with its complex plural nature.⁴⁸

In the context of postmodernist ontology, the term zone is used. According to Foucault, the zone consists of disparate worlds that occupy different, incompatible spaces.⁴⁹ While in the fiction of realist and modernist writers, the space is organized around a subject—a character or the view of disembodied narrator; this is not true for “the heterotopian zone of postmodernist writing,” as the postmodernist space “is less constructed than *deconstructed* by the text, or rather constructed at the same time.”⁵⁰

Postmodernist writers use various strategies to construct a zone. First, a zone can be created by juxtaposing two unrelated spaces.⁵¹ Another possible strategy is that of interpolation, which can be defined as “introducing an alien space *within* a familiar space, or *between* two adjacent areas of space where no such ‘between’ exists,” as is the case with topos of imaginary country. A zone can also come to existence with the use of superimposition, when “two familiar spaces are placed one on top of the other . . . creating through their tense and paradoxical coexistence a third space identifiable with neither of the original two.”⁵² Finally, writers use misattribution “to displace and rupture . . . automatic associations, parodying the encyclopedia and substituting for ‘encyclopedic’ knowledge their own *ad hoc*, arbitrary, unsanctioned associations.”⁵³

Contrary to Foucault’s definition of the zone, “there is a sense in which the worlds of the zone *do* . . . occupy the same *kind* of space,” which implies that the zone can be considered “*homotopian*.” That is the case of intertextual zone.⁵⁴ Such zone exists in “the physical space of the material book, in particular the two-dimensional space of the *page*.”⁵⁵ Another examples is “the conceptual space of language itself,” where the zone

⁴⁶McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 33-34.

⁴⁷McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 37.

⁴⁸McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 39.

⁴⁹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 56.

⁵⁰McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 45.

⁵¹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 45.

⁵²McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 46.

⁵³McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 48.

⁵⁴McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 56.

⁵⁵McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 56.

is created by the gaps between the signifier and the signified.⁵⁶ The intertextual space, or zone, also comes to existence “whenever we recognize the relations among two or more texts, or between specific texts and larger categories such as genre, school, period.”⁵⁷

On the basis of such intertextuality, science fiction borrows some of postmodernist motifs and postmodernist fiction does the same but focuses on different aspects.⁵⁸ Rather than adapting the motif of spatial displacement, postmodernist writers prefer the motif of temporal displacement—“projecting worlds of the future rather than worlds in distant galaxies.”⁵⁹ Postmodernist writers create future worlds of Dystopias and Utopias with “‘the zero degree’ of temporal displacement, projecting a future time but without making any particular provision for bridging the temporal gap between present and future.”⁶⁰ Although postmodernist writers also deal with new technologies they “are more interested in the social and institutional consequences of technological innovation . . . rather than in the innovations themselves.”⁶¹

Postmodernist writers also borrow from what Rosemary Jackson calls Gothic enclosure, which “draws upon the fantastic for motifs and *topoi*.”⁶² Other names for the theme from gothic novel include Haunted house or World next door and describe a confrontation between worlds, which is typical for science fiction, compressed into a space of a house. “*dual* ontology, on one side our world of the normal and everyday, on the other side the next-door world of the paranormal or supernatural.”⁶³ Such invasion of paranormal creates a resistance by characters and makes their effort to return the normalcy into “an agonistic struggle.” Writers can also choose to give characters no reaction, which makes the reader the only entity, who feels the resistance.⁶⁴

1.3 Techniques of Postmodernist Fiction

Postmodernist fiction is defined by the foregrounding of ontological concerns, which is achieved by various techniques. Because of experimenting with such techniques,

⁵⁶McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 56.

⁵⁷McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 57.

⁵⁸McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 65.

⁵⁹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 66.

⁶⁰McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 67.

⁶¹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 66.

⁶²McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 74.

⁶³McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 73.

⁶⁴McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 77.

postmodernist writing is compared to and shares features with insanity—schizophrenia with “the collapse of traditional socio-economic structures”, mental breakdown with a contemporary moment.⁶⁵ Modernist writers also experimented with temporal disorder, pastiche or fragmentation, but their motivation was “to protect culture against the chaos of technological change and ideological uncertainty.”⁶⁶ After Holocaust, postmodernist writers lost faith in recovering the old cultural values and “delighted in delirium.”⁶⁷

In this section, I focus on techniques used in postmodernist fiction, in more detail. First, I deal with the techniques related to the construction of fictional worlds. I focus on Chinese-box worlds and their layered structure of narrative levels with techniques, such as frequency, infinite regress, trompe-l’oeil, metalepsis and mise-en-abyme; together with the role of the author in the structure and the subsequent paranoia. Next, I mention the strategies of self-erasure, which include different types of endings; and finish with strategies of temporal disorder—apocryphal history, creative anachronism and blending of history and fantasy.

Second, I exploit techniques of words and style. I focus on strategies of tropological worlds—metaphor and allegory; strategies worlds of style—lexical exhibitionism, catalogues, and back-broke sentences; and strategies of worlds of discourse, which include carnivalized fiction and terms related to it. Finally, I focus on the techniques of text. The strategies include spatial displacement through blank space, headlines, numbers and other symbols; different typography and axis of the text; illustrations and anti-illustrations; parallel texts; and concrete prose.

1.3.1 Techniques of World-Making

In constructing fictional worlds, postmodernist writers choose from strategies of Chinese-box worlds, strategies of worlds under erasure and strategies of temporal disorder, among others. Narrative levels of postmodernist fiction can be structured into worlds resembling a “set of Chinese boxes or Russian *babushka* dolls.”⁶⁸ Any change of such narrative level “also involves a change of ontological level, a change of world.”⁶⁹ There exist various strategies to foreground the ontological dimensions of the Chinese-box fiction. The simplest of them is the strategy of frequency, which entails

⁶⁵Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 133.

⁶⁶Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 133.

⁶⁷Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 133.

⁶⁸McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 112.

⁶⁹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 113.

“interrupting the primary diegesis not once or twice but *often* with secondary, hypodiegetic worlds, representations within the representation . . . novels-within-the-novel, films-within-the-novel, still-photographs-within-the-novel.”⁷⁰ The movies and television often appear in postmodernist fiction and are regarded as a separate ontological level—“world-within-the-world, often one in competition with the primary diegetic world of the text, or a place interposed between the level of verbal representation and the level of the ‘real.’”⁷¹

Furthermore, there are more complex foregrounding strategies “involving logical paradoxes of various kinds.” First, there exists a strategy of infinite regress, which is achieved, when the structure of narrative levels has its “complexity increasing to the point where levels collapse . . . into a single level of diegesis.” Another possible strategy is to lead the reader into “mistaking a representation at one narrative level for a representation at a lower or (more typically) higher level.”⁷² This strategy is called *trompe-l’oeil*. “Typically, such deliberate ‘mystification’ is followed by ‘demystification,’ in which the true ontological status of the supposed ‘reality’ is revealed and the entire ontological structure of the text consequently laid bare.”⁷³ Jean Ricardou calls it a “strategy of ‘variable reality,’” since “supposedly ‘real’ representation is revealed to have been merely ‘virtual.’”⁷⁴

Moreover, there exist strategies involving various transgressions in the logic of narrative levels, which short-circuit the recursive structure.⁷⁵ That is the case of what Douglas Hofstadter calls *Strange Loops* or *Tangled Hierarchies*, while Gérard Genette prefers *metalepsis*,⁷⁶ which is defined as “violation of the hierarchy of narrative levels that occurs whenever a nested representation slips from still to animation, or vice versa.” In this way, characters emerge at the wrong narrative level; the story that is descending, or ascending, through narrative levels is back at the starting point.⁷⁷ The strategy can give rise to “paradoxical continuity,” which occurs, for example, when a character reads a story about his death.⁷⁸ Moreover, even characters “can become

⁷⁰McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 115.

⁷¹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 128.

⁷²McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 115.

⁷³McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 115-116.

⁷⁴McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 116.

⁷⁵McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 114.

⁷⁶McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 120.

⁷⁷McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 119.

⁷⁸McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 120.

aware of their own fictionality.”⁷⁹ Finally, when a representation is embedded within itself, “transforming a recursive structure into a structure *en abyme*,”⁸⁰ it is a case of *mise-en-abyme*, or abysmal fiction.⁸¹

In the structure of Chinese-box worlds, the author occupies level superior to that of fictional world, going back to the Renaissance concept of author as a God. To reveal his superiority, he must be introduced into the fiction. The author enters his fiction in “metafictional gesture of frame-breaking,”⁸² often by means of “postmodernist *topos* of the writer at his desk,” foregrounding the process of writing itself.⁸³ “Whenever some element of ontological structure or some ontological boundary is foregrounded, the author’s role and activity is inevitably foregrounded along with it.”⁸⁴ Contrary to modernist writers, postmodernist writers foreground author’s traces to bring him “back to the surface.”⁸⁵ Through such traces, the writer flickers in and out of existence, never fully present or absent.⁸⁶ Rather than an entity, Foucault consider postmodernist author to be a function in texts; an institution protected by copyright laws; “a *construct* of the reading-process, rather than a textual given, a *plural* rather than unitary.”⁸⁷

Postmodernist authorial role appears at different ontological levels through various types of authorial personas, or authorial subjects: “a protagonist, who acts and suffers, a narrator who tells his story, a ‘recorder’ who relays the narrative and takes responsibility for the typographical arrangement of the text,” and the fourth type, the author, who regulates the previous three.⁸⁸ He can also break the frame through “the *topos* of the face-to-face interview between the author and his character.”⁸⁹ Moreover, he can figure as a character in the fictional world.⁹⁰ Other people from author’s superior reality are also able to enter the fiction through his writing and in a special case of such transworld identity, called *Roman-à-clef*, postmodernist writers tell a story of real-world people without using their real proper names.⁹¹

⁷⁹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 121.

⁸⁰McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 114.

⁸¹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 124.

⁸²McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 197.

⁸³McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 198.

⁸⁴McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 199.

⁸⁵McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 199.

⁸⁶McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 202.

⁸⁷McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 200.

⁸⁸McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 201.

⁸⁹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 213.

⁹⁰McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 204.

⁹¹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 206.

Furthermore, the author as a God can give rise to the motif of paranoia in the postmodernist fiction, which can be defined by “threat of total engulfment by somebody else’s system.”⁹² The postmodernist protagonists often become anxious, as they try to defend against being controlled by outside forces. They may be imprisoned; they often suspect that they are targeted by intrigues and conspiracies of various scales; or they feel constricted by their position in the ontological structure, which entails that their every action is controlled by the author.⁹³

Ontological flicker between worlds can also be caused by strategies of self-erasure: “Narrated events . . . can be un-narrated . . . projected *existents* – locales, objects, characters, and so on – can have their existence revoked.”⁹⁴ Therefore, postmodernist writers create “mutually-exclusive lines of narrative development at the same time” by writing two identical scenes with different outcomes.⁹⁵ This can be applied in the outcome of larger scale with alternative or multiple endings.⁹⁶ Writers can also create “a *loop*, in which one and the same event figures as both antecedent and sequel of some other event.”⁹⁷ The notion of multiple endings is considered to be a type of fragmentation, and even an open ending is possible, since the “postmodernist writer distrusts the wholeness and completion associated with traditional stories and prefers to deal with other ways of structuring narrative.”⁹⁸

To further fragment the story, postmodernist writers may choose to introduce “chance into the compositional process” to freely combine various sections.⁹⁹ They use “the cut up” technique and pick pieces of paper from a container to create a story similar to that of a “cinematic montage;” or “the fold-in” technique, which involves folding two pages in half and aligning them next to each other. The outcome can be situated on a page between the actual two pages in the book, providing readers with previously-present, as well as upcoming phrases.¹⁰⁰

According to Linda Hutcheon, “postmodernist writing is best represented by those works of ‘histographic metafiction’ which self-consciously distort history.” Such

⁹²Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 129.

⁹³Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 130-131.

⁹⁴McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 103.

⁹⁵McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 108.

⁹⁶McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 107-109.

⁹⁷McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 108.

⁹⁸Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 127.

⁹⁹Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 128.

¹⁰⁰Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 129.

technique is called temporal disorder.¹⁰¹ With the tendency to distort and fictionalize history postmodernist writers “imply that history itself may be a form of fiction.”¹⁰² Hrushovski points out the impossibility of a fictional character entering a real world, however the opposite—real figures entering the fictional world—is possible. “When such migrations occur,” says McHale, “an ontological boundary between the real and the fictional . . . has been transgressed.” Historical fiction tries to achieve this without anyone noticing “by introducing pure fiction only in the ‘dark areas’ of the historical record: by avoiding anachronism.” Postmodernist fiction, however, “seeks to foreground this seam by making the transition from one realm to the other as jarring as possible.”¹⁰³ The boundary between the real and fictional world becomes blurred.

Strategies of temporal disorder include apocryphal history, anachronism, and blending of history and fantasy. Apocryphal history creates a contradiction to “the public record of ‘official’ history,” which can be achieved by supplementing the history in its ‘dark areas,’ yet in comparison to historical fiction, its main purpose is to parody the events¹⁰⁴—creating “bogus accounts of famous events.”¹⁰⁵ Another way to apply apocryphal history is by displacing the official history altogether and violating “the ‘dark areas’ constraint.”¹⁰⁶ The strategy of creative anachronism is also in contradiction with this constraint, and creates “glaring inconsistencies of detail or setting,” such as the existence of technology, which has not yet been invented.¹⁰⁷

1.3.2 Techniques of Words and Style

To aid the structure of constructed worlds, postmodernist fiction exploits the dimension of words and style with strategies of tropological worlds, styled worlds and worlds of discourse. To foreground ontological themes postmodernist writers use strategies of tropological worlds¹⁰⁸—metaphors and allegories. Hrushovski defines metaphorical expressions as belonging to two frames of reference at the same time—in one of them they function literally, while figuratively in the second (fictional) frame.¹⁰⁹ “The frame within which the expression functions literally is nonexistent from the point of view of

¹⁰¹Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 124.

¹⁰²McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 96.

¹⁰³McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 90.

¹⁰⁴McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 90.

¹⁰⁵Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 124.

¹⁰⁶McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 90.

¹⁰⁷Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 124.

¹⁰⁸McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 141.

¹⁰⁹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 133.

the text's world, absent where the other frame is present."¹¹⁰ Such tension between present and absent, "an 'existent' and a 'nonexistent,'" gives rise to a metaphor on a bigger scale to allegory.¹¹¹ The objects of metaphor at the same time exist, since "the reader may partially concretize (visualize, 'realize') them," and do not exist "in the sense that they are excluded from the presented world, 'denied existence.'" Such ontological duality is sought to be foregrounded in postmodernist fiction.¹¹² Larger scale of such duality is present in allegory, as it "projects a world and erases it in the same gesture, inducing a flicker between presence and absence of their world, between tropological reality and 'literal' reality"—the textuality on the page.¹¹³

Other than strategies of tropological worlds, postmodernist writers exploit strategies of styled worlds. Going back to Ingarden's definition of strata, it is possible to divide them into lowest strata, consisting of the sound-formation and small-scale semantic units, and higher strata, which include the stratum of presented objects and stratum of projected world. In the ontological structure of literary work, the division between the lowest strata and the highest strata is that between the strata of words and the strata of world. "The differing ontological statuses of words and world are brought into sharp focus, the words being made to appear more 'real,' more present, than the world they project."¹¹⁴

Like the earliest modernist writers, postmodernist writers foreground the style of a literary work.¹¹⁵ They do so with the use of various stylistic strategies: lexical exhibitionism, catalogue structure, and back-broke and invertebrate sentences. The strategy of lexical exhibitionism introduces highly conspicuous, self-foregrounding words, such as "archaic, neologistic, technical, foreign words . . . which many readers will need to look up."¹¹⁶ The goal of the catalogue structure strategy is to create "words disengaged from syntax,"¹¹⁷ which Gertrude Stein considers a necessary step for detaching the stratum of words and the stratum of world. With the use of the strategy such detachment is brought to the foreground. When the catalogue of words is created, it emphasizes the world's richness of objects. The postmodernist writers, however, more

¹¹⁰McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 133.

¹¹¹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 133.

¹¹²McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 134.

¹¹³McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 145-146.

¹¹⁴McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 148.

¹¹⁵McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 148-9.

¹¹⁶McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 151.

¹¹⁷McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 162.

often choose to rid the words of context into bare word-lists—“a mere exhibition of words.”¹¹⁸

Finally, there exists a strategy of back-broke sentences, which are constructed in an awkward, even ungrammatical, manner; causing the structure itself to get the attention over any possible content of the sentence. The strategy is also called “the device of deliberate nonfluency.”¹¹⁹ In its most extreme case, back-broke sentences become “*invertebrate* sentences, rambling, apparently interminable, shapeshifting constructions.”¹²⁰ The strategies create obstacles in reconstructing from the text continuum, making the reconstruction difficult but also more visible. This visibility of reconstruction can be intensified by taking the words and the letters literally—“*à la lettre*”—with the use of alliteration or letter shapes to signify meaning.¹²¹

Last but not least, postmodernist writers use strategies of discursive world. Just as the heterotopian zone with its juxtaposed or superimposed spaces, there are heterotopian worlds of discourse with different discursive orders—different modes or genres of discourse.¹²² The postmodernist “polyphonic novel, unlike monological genres, acknowledges and embraces a plurality of discourses.” Mixail Baxtin compares the polyphonic novel to Galilean theory, which perceives the universe as plural—comprising of many coexisting worlds. Postmodernist writer, by intensifying “the polyphonic structure and sharpening the dialogue in various ways, foregrounds the ontological dimension of the confrontation among discourses, thus achieving a polyphony of *worlds*.”¹²³ Heteroglossia, or “plurality of discourse,” is defined by “the interweaving of different registers in the text of the novel,”¹²⁴ and provides “means of breaking up the unified projected world into a polyphony of worlds of discourse.”¹²⁵

Heteroglossia, together with the recursive structure of postmodernist worlds, gives rise to carnival practices, which combine different styles and registers. Such practices were taken from the Menippean satire as a response to “the consolidation of . . . monological literary genres.”¹²⁶ Compared to traditional unitary genres, “carnivalized literature interrupts the text’s ontological ‘horizon’ with a multiplicity of inserted genres

¹¹⁸McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 153.

¹¹⁹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 154.

¹²⁰McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 155.

¹²¹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 156.

¹²²McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 163-164.

¹²³McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 166.

¹²⁴McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 166.

¹²⁵McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 167.

¹²⁶McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 172.

– letters, essays, theatrical dialogues, novels-within-the-novel, and so on.”¹²⁷ Baxtin sees a parallel in “the formal heterogeneity of carnivalized literature with a repertoire of *topoi* at the level of the projected world – characteristic plot-types, character-types, locales, and motifs – which both motivate and mirror the text’s formal heterogeneity.”¹²⁸ The typical plot of carnival literature is that of picaresque adventure stories, where the picaro sets out on a journey and “seeks . . . answers to ‘ultimate questions.’” To do so, he tests limits of space and human experience: “he experiments with extreme states of mind and body – hallucination, madness, sexual excess – and deliberately violates social norms through scandalous or criminal behavior.” The picaro seeks a perfect social order—Utopia.¹²⁹ What is also typical for the genre is the “grotesque imagery of the human body.”¹³⁰

In postmodernist fiction, carnival context can also be represented by circuses, fairs, sideshows, amusement parks, as well as parodies of official ceremonies, or carnivals as, often sexual, revolution.¹³¹ Carnival fiction emerges from the use of pastiche, which postmodernist writers apply as “an anagram, not of letters, but of the components of style.” The technique “arises from the frustration that everything has been done before”¹³² and entails borrowing any existing features of style “higgledy-piggledy from the reservoir of literary history.” They take some features from the western, the scifi and the detective tales, to name a few.¹³³

1.3.3 Textual Techniques

According to Ingarden, “all the ontological strata of the literary work of art ultimately rest on the material book and its typography.” The material book is a foundation to the text’s ontological structure, which is dependent on the material book. There exists a “basic ontological boundary, the one between the real-world object, the book which shares our world with us, and the fictional objects and world which the text projects.” It is thus possible to think of books’ ontology as plural.¹³⁴

The postmodernist notion of experimenting with the material book was inspired by Christopher Isherwood and Edward Upward, who wanted to create a book, which

¹²⁷McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 172.

¹²⁸McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 172.

¹²⁹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 172.

¹³⁰McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 173.

¹³¹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 174-5.

¹³²Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 125.

¹³³Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 126.

¹³⁴McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 180.

would contain “oil paintings, brasses, and carvings . . . firework displays, recorded music, even appropriate odors, and would contain gifts for friends and booby-traps for enemies.” William Gass’s *Willie Masters’ Lonesome Wife* (1968), for example, is printed on blue, green, red and glossy white paper.¹³⁵ The novel also contains different typefaces, such as bold or italic; fonts; characters, such as musical symbols; miscellaneous arrangements, such as columns or footnotes; as well as “some visual jokes (coffee-cup stains, huge asterisk).”¹³⁶ Using such experiments allows the material book to intrude “upon its readers’ real-world existence.”¹³⁷

One of the strategies focusing on text is that, for which Raymond Federman uses the term spatial displacement of words. Passages of text can be divided “into short fragments or sections, separated by space, titles, numbers or symbols;” or into differently formatted or oriented texts. The strategy can also be used to a bigger extent by fragmenting “the very fabric of the text with illustrations, typography, or mixed media.” Raymond Federman mentions quotations, pictures, diagrams, charts, designs and pieces of other discourses.¹³⁸ Experimenting with text can also give rise to parallel texts and concrete prose.

Postmodernist writers, inspired by poetry, use spacing, which is common in breaking the stanzas of verse. The use of blank spaces foregrounds the book as an object, “disrupting the reality of the projected world” in the process.¹³⁹ Spacing in postmodernist fiction is used on literal, as well as figurative level, and it is common for postmodernist texts to comprise of “extremely short chapters, or short paragraphs separated by wide bands of white space.”¹⁴⁰ The blank space in postmodernist fiction has a mimetic function, and can vary in intensity; leaving even whole pages blank. This can be a gradual process of text disappearing and “ending with a sequence of empty pages.”¹⁴¹

Furthermore, postmodernist texts are fragmented by devices other than blank space, as is the case with the use of different textual formats. Passages of text can be separated by differently formatted, most commonly boldfaced, headlines or head

¹³⁵McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 179.

¹³⁶Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 127-8.

¹³⁷McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 179.

¹³⁸Sim, *The Routledge Companion to Postmodernism*, 127.

¹³⁹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 181.

¹⁴⁰McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 182.

¹⁴¹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 183.

letters—using the spacing-with-headline format.¹⁴² The strategy is not exclusive to small amounts of differently formatted letters and words: “Entire passages or blocks of text may be printed in boldface or upper-case type . . . or . . . alternating between two type-faces or type-sizes.” This applies to the whole pages of the material book, which can be printed in different colors. Aside from letters, the text can also be fragmented by numbers and other symbols.¹⁴³ The spacing-with-headline format and the progressively spaced-out texts deal with horizontal space of the text, as does tampering with the margins. However, for postmodernist text, it is not uncommon to be “read *upward* vertically or diagonally, or . . . printed around a square or circle . . . upside-down or sideways.” There may be differently oriented texts even on a single page and the reader has to “manipulate the book, turning it sideways or completely around.”¹⁴⁴

Moreover, the text can be fragmented by illustrations and anti-illustrations. The use of illustrations functions “to eliminate the necessity for description,”¹⁴⁵ thus allowing writers to leave more aspects of their work to reader’s imagination. They integrate “*other modes of discourse* – visual discourse”—into the structure to foreground polyphony of the text.¹⁴⁶ Drawings and photographs unrelated to the narrative—anti-illustrations—are more typical for postmodernist fiction, since “it has learned more from the surrealists’ playfulness and parody.”¹⁴⁷ The lack of relation foregrounds the “*visuality*” of illustrations, and “the three-dimensionality and materiality, of the book.”¹⁴⁸

Ideally, when dealing with dual-media approach in literature, its “visual and verbal components should be ‘read’ simultaneously.”¹⁴⁹ In postmodernist fiction, the condition of simultaneity also occurs in case of “parallel texts, forcing the reader to decide on some arbitrary order of reading.”¹⁵⁰ The structure of such texts is typically inspired by the scholarly gloss or the newspaper page.¹⁵¹ In case of scholarly gloss, the text proper is accompanied by marginal gloss, or footnotes. While gloss in its traditional use “ought to be accessory or supplemental to the text proper,” gloss in postmodernist

¹⁴²McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 182.

¹⁴³McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 182-3.

¹⁴⁴McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 183.

¹⁴⁵McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 189.

¹⁴⁶McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 190.

¹⁴⁷McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 189.

¹⁴⁸McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 190.

¹⁴⁹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 190.

¹⁵⁰McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 180.

¹⁵¹McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 191.

fiction can be irrelevant to the text or it can function as an equal to the text proper.¹⁵² The strategy of scholarly gloss leads to “reader’s eye skipping across the page” or “flipping from the main text in the front . . . to the commentary at the end.” Another strategy of parallel texts is that of imitating the newspaper page or printing of multiple-column texts.¹⁵³ It is possible to create an alternative reading order with “numbering the division of the text (books, chapters) out of order,” thus providing reader with the chronological and printed order.¹⁵⁴

Finally, the texts can be formed into a “‘concrete prose,’ shaped into icons of their own contents” or into “abstract typographical shapes which appear to have no illustrative or mimetic function.”¹⁵⁵ Concrete prose, derived from concrete poetry, is realized by “‘verbal icons,’ imitating through their shapes the shapes of objects or processes in the real world”, as is the case of Apollinaire’s calligrammes, “where the text is shaped into a visual representation of an appropriate object.” The imitation can be that of objects but also that of concepts, where the relation is dependent on the interpretation of reader. Some shaped texts “illustrate or imitate nothing, except their own existence,” thus further foregrounding the two separate ontological dimensions: that of “worlds projected by the words” and “the physical reality of inkshapes on paper.”¹⁵⁶

¹⁵²McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 191.

¹⁵³McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 192.

¹⁵⁴McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 193.

¹⁵⁵McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 180.

¹⁵⁶McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, 184.

2 SHORT SUMMARY OF *HOUSE OF LEAVES*

Mark Z. Danielewski's first novel *House of Leaves* tells a story of Johnny Truant, an apprentice at a tattoo shop in Los Angeles, who discovers pages of manuscript written by an old blind man Zampanò, after visiting the recently deceased man's apartment with his friend Lude in January 1997. Being incapable of abandoning anything, Johnny starts to assemble the text, which is revealed to analyze a 1993 documentary film *The Navidson Record*, which does not exist, according to Johnny. The film tells of events in the house on Ash Tree Lane in Virginia, where the family of a photojournalist Will Navidson, which includes his girlfriend Karen Green and their children Chad and Daisy, settles down in April 1990. Navidson equips the house with cameras in an attempt to capture the family's everyday life. One day, however, the family returns from a wedding to find an appearance of a closet-like space between two bedrooms. Navidson, with help of his fraternal twin brother Tom and a paraplegic friend Billy Reston, measures the house to discover that it is bigger from the inside than the outside.

During this time, an entrance to a dark hallway appears in one of the house's walls, and can be seen and entered only from the inside of the house. After Navidson tries to explore the space and almost gets lost in it, he calls three explorers—Holloway Roberts, Jed Leeder and Kirby "Wax" Hook—to do the task, instead. The explorers find an infinite number of rooms and hallways, which constantly change its properties, and reach the Great Hall with a top of a spiral staircase. Once they start to explore the staircase and the space below, they lose contact with the people in the house. Gradually, the eerie nature of the labyrinth awakens Holloway's paranoia and he shoots Wax in the shoulder and later kills Jed. Meanwhile, Tom, Navidson and Billy set forth on a journey and manage to save Wax. Navidson, who stays entrapped by the house's changing space and loses his way, emerges from the hallway few days later. Once Holloway commits suicide, the properties of the real house start to change, and while the family tries to escape, Tom is swallowed by the house, as the kitchen floor disappears under him. Few months later, Navidson decides to return to the house and disappears in the hallway. His journey leads him to a dark abyss, which engulfs and disorients him, as he waits for his death.

Johnny, who assembles Zampanò's retelling of the film and his analytic commentary, starts to become obsessed with the film and Zampanò's life. He meets women, who the blind man hired to read for him; describes his sexual encounters with various women; and gradually starts to isolate himself like the old man did. As he continues reading, his memories start to haunt him and he experiences anxiety attacks and paranoia. He travels in search of the house but is unsuccessful. Eventually, he remembers repressed fragments of his childhood—his mother's abuse and, from one of her letters, rediscovers her attempt to strangle him, when she was being taken to the Whalestoe Institute.

In the end, both Johnny and Navidson reach closure. Johnny remembers that his mother did not try to strangle him but embrace him, and is finally able to leave Los Angeles for good. Navidson is saved by Karen, who overcomes her fears and enters the hallways; the dark space dissolving around the couple. Although Navidson loses his right hand, left eye and a tip of his ear to frostbites; he decides to marry Karen and finds comfort in creating photographs of his loves ones.

3 ANALYSIS OF POSTMODERN NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES IN *HOUSE OF LEAVES*

In this chapter I analyze the specific postmodern narrative techniques used in the novel. First, I explore the techniques, which deal with the construction of the book's ontology—strategies of Chinese-box worlds, strategies of self-erasure and strategies of temporal disorder. Second, I focus on techniques of words and style—stylistic devices and discursive strategies. I do not focus on strategies of tropological worlds in a separate section and mention recurrent themes and metaphors throughout the analysis as a whole. Finally, I explore the textual techniques—spacing through blank space, which gives rise to concrete prose; spacing through headline format, numbers and other symbols; as well as strategies of typography, parallel texts, and illustrations and anti-illustrations.

3.1 Techniques of World-Making

This section deals with the creation of ontological structure in *House of Leaves*. First, I explore the strategies of Chinese-box worlds. I briefly introduce the structure of narrative levels and analyze effects of strategies, such as mise-en-abyme or metalepsis, hierarchy of such levels; as well as relation between the levels going as far as the ontological level of the reader through metafiction. Moreover, I focus on the presence, or absence, of author as a God, as well as the role of authorial subjects. Second, I focus on strategies of self-erasure, especially on narrative level of Johnny Truant, who frequently erases events; and a possible notion of an open-ending. Finally, I explore the strategies of temporal disorder in the novel. I deal mostly with the strategy of apocryphal history and find variation of connections with the real world.

3.1.1 Chinese-Box Worlds

The ontological structure in *House of Leaves* is that of Chinese-box worlds with narrative levels being connected by embedding, from the point of higher levels; and by remediation, from the point of lower levels. The seemingly lowest narrative level, or the core of the novel, is the haunted house story of the Navidson family on Ash Tree Lane, which is depicted in a documentary film *The Navidson Record* released in 1993.¹⁵⁷ The

¹⁵⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 539.

film is retold by Zampanò throughout his critical analysis, which is then revised and commented upon by Johnny, who goes even further and intrudes the novel's footnotes with his own autobiographical narrative. Another narrative level exists with the Editors, who make scarce comments throughout the novel. Furthermore, there is another narrator—Johnny's mother Pelafina and her letters in the book's second appendix¹⁵⁸—whose narrative can be considered as yet another superior level.

According to Julius Greve, the narrative levels can be separated into categories of Marxist theorist Frederic Jameson with the film *The Navidson Record* being the "Cultural artifact," Zampanò's dissertation functioning as "The artifact's reception in history," Johnny assembling Zampanò's manuscript as "The interpretation" and the role of the Editors' text being that of "Auto-interpretation."¹⁵⁹ Moreover, these interpretations explore the authenticity of artworks, common to the postmodernist doubt about history. While Zampanò to an extent comments on the authenticity of the events depicted in the film,¹⁶⁰ Johnny does the same with the existence of both the film and events depicted in it, as he is unable to find the house¹⁶¹ and states that "Zampanò's entire project is about a film which doesn't even exist."¹⁶² The reader is then encouraged to do the same with the addition of Johnny's existence. However, the division of levels is not as simple, since the Chinese-box worlds' strategies, such as mise-en-abyme or metalepsis, make the narrative structure and the superiority or inferiority of levels into an indeterminate notion.

The novel contains a rare case of mise-en-abyme, that of complete self-embedding, and gives rise to strange loops between narrative levels. When Navidson gets lost during his final exploration with his flashlight slowly dying, he decides to read *House of Leaves*,¹⁶³ a 736-page-long book,¹⁶⁴ same as Danielewski's novel in the reader's hands. This creates a logical paradox of Navidson reading the book, in which he functions as a character; and paradoxical continuity, as the book contains events, which have yet to happen. The presence of the book at Navidson's level undermines the hierarchy of narrative levels in the novel, as it implies that Navidson inhabits a level superior to the author, thus giving rise to an infinite strange loop.

¹⁵⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 586-644.

¹⁵⁹Sascha Pöhlmann, ed., *Revolutionary Leaves: The Fiction of Mark Z. Danielewski* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 83-85.

¹⁶⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 6.

¹⁶¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 499.

¹⁶²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xix.

¹⁶³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 465.

¹⁶⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 467.

As Navidson lights matches and later the pages of the book, the dual meaning of a page is foregrounded, since burning one page of the book equals two pages of the text. The superior amount of content compared to its physical container—the page, the book—creates a parallel with the space of the house, which is much bigger inside than outside. According to Mark B. N. Hansen, by burning the book, Navidson erases the mise-en-abyme technique and foregrounds “the equivalence between the two forms of consumption—reading and material destruction.”¹⁶⁵ Brian McHale, on the other hand, considers the mise-en-abyme to still be present; as, in his essay, he compares the destruction of the pages with the abyss, in which Navidson is lost: “leaf by leaf, he both reads and destroys the book: black hole, within black hole, abyss within abyss.”¹⁶⁶

Johnny’s narrative contains mise-en-abyme as well, but not in its full sense. In his diary entry with the latest date—August 28, 1999—Johnny describes meeting a band, whose members find *House of Leaves* on the Internet, which inspires the lyrics of their song. At this point the reader feels a great logical and temporal paradox, as he or she reads the same book as the band; only for the effects to dissolve, when it is revealed that the version of the book on the Internet is its first edition;¹⁶⁷ while the book the reader holds is the second edition, which newly contains Chapter XXI, as well as Appendix II and III.¹⁶⁸ The logical explanation is further emphasized, when the members of the band wonder, if Johnny went to Virginia and found the house,¹⁶⁹ which he writes about in this added chapter prior to the diary entry about meeting the band.¹⁷⁰

As the presence of the book is explained with logic and chronology, the self-embedded books are not identical. However, what does create a logical paradox is the presence of the novel on the Internet, since Johnny burns the book after coming to terms with his past,¹⁷¹ though it is not explicitly mentioned, if the book is *House of Leaves* or a metaphorical burning of Johnny’s past. Nevertheless, the presence of pure mise-en-abyme, which gives rise to strange loops, undermines the notion of clear hierarchy of narrative levels.

¹⁶⁵Mark B. N. Hansen, “The Digital Topography of Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*,” *Contemporary Literature* 45, no. 4 (Winter 2004): 606.

¹⁶⁶Brian McHale, “En Abyme: Internal Models and Cognitive Mapping,” in *A Sense of the World: Essays on Fiction, Narrative, and Knowledge*, ed. John Gibson, Wolfgang Huemer, and Luca Poggi (Routledge: New York, 2007), 191.

¹⁶⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 513.

¹⁶⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, vii.

¹⁶⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 514.

¹⁷⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 499.

¹⁷¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 518.

The theme of echo, which is also the topic of Chapter V,¹⁷² can be applied to narrative levels, since there is interconnectedness between the levels as they echo through each other. Finn Fordham considers the narrators in the novel as separate with “little chance of any joining or resolution between them,”¹⁷³ which is true, since they cannot meet each other. Although there is a separation between narrators, the boundary between their narrative levels is not as sharp. Nicoline Timmer argues that the narratives are connected and dependent on each other, as each of them is “constructed upon this background text and is thoroughly entangled with it.”¹⁷⁴ While Zampanò’s text depends on the existence of the film, the fact that the film does not exist reverts the dependency, since the film exists only in Zampanò’s text. Such logic is applicable on all levels, which is why Timmer states that it is “impossible to talk about Johnny as a separate fictional existent.”¹⁷⁵

The non-sharp boundary is further emphasized by the narratives influencing each other in both directions, and creating an ontological flicker with inspiring and revising. Johnny echoes Zampanò’s narrative in his with similar text fragmentation in Chapter VIII,¹⁷⁶ and in return influences Zampanò’s narrative with his revisions.¹⁷⁷ The echoing of the film at Johnny’s narrative level is even more prominent with both Johnny and Navidson being haunted by their respective ghosts—Johnny by his mother, and Navidson by Delial¹⁷⁸ and the house’s structure—as well as their happy endings, with Navidson escaping the house and Johnny finding closure about his past.

The similarities in the development do not go unnoticed by Johnny. At first, he considers the connection to be a mere coincidence,¹⁷⁹ yet later such links make him fear being erased from existence: “There’s just too much of it anyway, always running parallel . . . to the old man and his book, briefly appearing, maybe even intruding, then disappearing again.”¹⁸⁰ In this manner, he hints at noticing his own fictionality and an existence of the real author in “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 for that matter

¹⁷²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 41-79.

¹⁷³Joe Bray and Alison Gibbons, ed., *Mark Z. Danielewski* (Manchester University Press, 2011), 44.

¹⁷⁴Nicoline Timmer, *Do You Feel It Too?* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 247.

¹⁷⁵Timmer, *Do You Feel It Too?*, 247.

¹⁷⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 97-106.

¹⁷⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 99.

¹⁷⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 17.

¹⁷⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 25.

¹⁸⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 106.

Zampanò.”¹⁸¹ In an attempt to rebel, he shows his superiority through revisions of the text; as he echoes Zampanò’s “Muss es sein?,”¹⁸² which precedes *The Navidson Record* section of the text, with “This is not for you,”¹⁸³ which precedes Johnny’s Introduction; and thus makes Zampanò appear to be the one to echo Johnny’s text. In a similar manner, Johnny reaches his closure in Chapter XXI,¹⁸⁴ which consists entirely of his text, thus postponing the last two chapters, which contain Navidson’s happy ending.¹⁸⁵ Therefore, Johnny attempts to be the first. His paranoia-induced defiance is further emphasized by “I pick up the sedatives, these Zs without Z, and one by one crush them between my fingers;”¹⁸⁶ symbolizing Johnny’s attempt to destroy the author with “Z” standing for “Zampanò” or Danielewski’s middle initial.

Although Johnny suspects his own fictionality, he does not know the author’s identity,¹⁸⁷ since Danielewski’s presence is almost nonexistent in the novel. Part of the Braille epigram in Chapter XX translates as “You will never find a mark here”¹⁸⁸ with the “mark” possibly referring to Danielewski, which further emphasizes his absence. The only other time that his name is mentioned, aside from the front page and the page preceding the inner title page,¹⁸⁹ is in the famous coded footnotes 27 to 42,¹⁹⁰ whose first letters spell out the author’s name; ironically, with help of Johnny’s footnotes, thus making Danielewski the superior author. Danielewski’s superiority is put to the fore front even further by Johnny’s inability to translate a line, which says “whoever sees God dies.”¹⁹¹ Therefore, Danielewski leaves only subtle traces of his presence in a postmodernist take on author as a God. Furthermore, the absence fuels to the reader’s interest in the author’s existence in the real world.

Because of the author’s near nonexistence in the novel, the metafictional focus is on the process of reading rather than writing (with exception of Johnny’s commentary on the assembling process). Johnny constantly addresses the readers and encourages their engagement—“Hopefully, you’ll be able to make sense of what I can represent,

¹⁸¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 326.

¹⁸²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xxv.

¹⁸³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, ix.

¹⁸⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 518.

¹⁸⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 527.

¹⁸⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 180.

¹⁸⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 326.

¹⁸⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 423.

¹⁸⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 2.

¹⁹⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 22-37.

¹⁹¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 388.

though still fail to understand.”¹⁹²—while also warning about the effects of reading the novel.¹⁹³ Such contradiction is also present in Johnny’s first line—“This is not for you.”¹⁹⁴—through which, according to Alison Gibbons, he both invites and prohibits the reader’s entrance to the book.¹⁹⁵ Moreover, Johnny is able to engage in face-to-face conversation with the book’s readers, when he meets the band in Chapter XXI. As he sees the copy of the book and the band’s own added text with interpretation,¹⁹⁶ his narrative level becomes inferior to theirs. According to Hansen, this leads to “the merging of author and reader functions” and Johnny recognizing the singularity of individual readings, thus defining the novel as both complete and incomplete at the same time.¹⁹⁷ Similarly, Zampanò addresses the reader with “one simple word—perhaps your word,” which causes Johnny to react, thus further connecting their narratives.

With the amount of dependency between levels, it becomes unclear, which authorial persona plays which role. Johnny, for example, is a protagonist, a narrator and to a bigger extent a recorder of his narrative, with the recorder role being shared between him and the Editors and the author role belonging to Danielewski, Pelafina or even Zampanò. Zampanò, on the other hand, is a protagonist in parts of Johnny’s narrative, and a narrator and a recorder of Navidson’s film. The film narrative consists of multiple protagonists and narrators, such as Navidson, Karen, Tom or Reston; with the recorder, who edits the final version of the film, being Navidson; although because of the film’s nonexistence, the narrator and recorder is actually Zampanò.

The roles are shared to such extent that, according to Timmer, the amount of links puts doubt on the authenticity throughout the levels¹⁹⁸ to the point, where any of the authorial subjects can be considered as the one superior author, who creates the other personas; the most common theories mentioning Johnny, Pelafina or Zampanò as candidates for real authors.¹⁹⁹ Zampanò, in one his journal entries in the Appendix, mentions that he “could create a son who is not missing,”²⁰⁰ while first letters of a passage in one of Pelafina’s letters spell out “my dear Zampano who did you lose.”²⁰¹

¹⁹²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xv.

¹⁹³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xxii-xxiii.

¹⁹⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, ix.

¹⁹⁵Bray and Gibbons, *Mark Z. Danielewski*, 24.

¹⁹⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 514.

¹⁹⁷Hansen, “The Digital Topography of Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*,” 620.

¹⁹⁸Timmer, *Do You Feel It Too?*, 245.

¹⁹⁹Timmer, *Do You Feel It Too?*, 248.

²⁰⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 543.

²⁰¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 615.

These two lines give rise to various possibilities: Pelafina as a mother and Zampanò as a father creating Johnny's narrative together; Pelafina creating both, Johnny and Zampanò, and echoing her intention in Zampanò's fragment; or Zampanò as the real author, hiding his existence in Pelafina's letter through code like Danielewski does in the novel. With the same logic the reverse might be true with Johnny as the real author. However, such theories only fuel to Danielewski's superiority; as, through his absence, he manages to create a chance for the readers to theorize about the "real" author behind the novel without saying "Danielewski, obviously." Even though a fictional character being the real author is impossible, such theories can exist because of postmodernist indeterminacy. Timmer considers conclusions of "Pelafina wrote it all" type to be unreachable, as the narrative levels in the novel are too entangled.²⁰² The indeterminacy thus leaves the final interpretative choice to the reader, even with features of the impossible.

Because of the mutual interconnectedness between narrative levels, Timmer names the novel's ontological structure as that of "sharing experience worlds;"²⁰³ and Johnny, who came to accept such dependency and even find comfort in it,²⁰⁴ further emphasizes the connection, from the house on Ash Tree Lane to the reader of the novel and back, with: "Just as you have swept through me. Just as I now sweep through you."²⁰⁵ The looped ontological structure further foregrounds the theme of labyrinth in the house, with the hallway standing for "the relationship between the authors and between their texts," according to Mel Evans.²⁰⁶ Similarly, Nathalie Aghoro considers the Editors to be guides in the labyrinth, who offer possible interpretation with cross-references to "connect different parts of the novel, thus producing new meaning."²⁰⁷ Additionally, Aleksandra Bida compares the construction of narrative levels to the construction of the room, emphasizing the extended meaning of "house" to the "book" of leaves.²⁰⁸

Thus, the strategies of Chinese-box worlds function to undermine the hierarchy of the novel's narrative levels, creating strangle loops with help of mise-en-abyme. The constant links between the individual levels create blurred boundaries and reach out to

²⁰²Timmer, *Do You Feel It Too?*, 248.

²⁰³Timmer, *Do You Feel It Too?*, 344.

²⁰⁴Timmer, *Do You Feel It Too?*, 346.

²⁰⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 518.

²⁰⁶Bray and Gibbons, *Mark Z. Danielewski*, 80.

²⁰⁷Pöhlmann, *Revolutionary Leaves: The Fiction of Mark Z. Danielewski*, 71.

²⁰⁸Pöhlmann, *Revolutionary Leaves: The Fiction of Mark Z. Danielewski*, 43.

the diegesis through metafictional addressing of the reader. The author leaves very scarce traces, which renders him almost nonexistent in the novel and fuel the interest in his existence in the real world. That, together with an ambiguous allocation of the roles to authorial subjects, undermines the authenticity of levels and gives rise to many theories about one of these personas being the “real” author. The interconnectedness of ontological levels emphasizes the themes of the novel: echo with the narratives echoing in each other, labyrinth with its unclear chaotic structure, and the house extending its meaning to the book.

3.1.2 Self-Erasure

The strategies of self-erasure are used throughout the novel mostly at Johnny’s narrative level in different manner. First, he establishes himself as an unreliable narrator in Chapter II by confessing to adding his own words to Zampanò’s narrative.²⁰⁹ In the same chapter, he tells an autobiographical story to impress girls, which he erases in the following chapter by admitting that “they’re only stories, the way I tell them I mean. I actually have a whole bunch,” to which he adds that he creates them to protect himself from his past.²¹⁰ For the same reason he used to lie about his mother’s death, while she was still alive.²¹¹

As the story progresses, Johnny extends the technique to present events by imagining different scenarios. One such occasion arises, when his boss implies that Johnny’s drawings are not good, after which there follows a detailed description of Johnny twisting and tearing off the boss’s head. The murder is erased with “My boss smiled. Said hello,” which, however, exists only to comfort Johnny’s feelings or to project his wishes for acknowledgement, since the passage is erased as well: “But he wasn’t smiling or saying hello to me.”²¹²

Similarly, Johnny uses erasure to emphasize his feelings, as he follows the phrase “Of course I was fine”²¹³ with the description of being hit by a truck, the gas catching on fire and people screaming, only to change the gas into milk, and later erase everything altogether into a tree falling on him, which, in the end, ceases to exist with

²⁰⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 16.

²¹⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 20.

²¹¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 129.

²¹²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 51.

²¹³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 107.

the phrase “There are no trees on my block.”²¹⁴ The story echoes his father’s death in a truck accident,²¹⁵ and his grief over it. The tree falling on him might then represent the story of house on Ash Tree Lane, which made his memories resurface. Even though the events are erased, they function as a representation of Johnny’s feelings and foreground the motif of emotional and physical injuries being comparable, which can be found at Zampanò’s level—a footnote with a fictional quote about emotional deprivation²¹⁶—and at Johnny’s level: “Not seeing the rip doesn’t mean you automatically get to keep clear of the Hey-I’m-Bleeding part.”²¹⁷

The erasure also comes to existence to emphasize the terror of Johnny’s haunting memories and paranoia. One such case occurs after his first anxiety attack, as he feels the presence of a beast, only to turn around and see nothing in the corridor.²¹⁸ The strategy is used to a bigger extent during Johnny’s full-fledged anxiety attack in Chapter V. He perceives the light as sharp enough to cut him, which it does and he starts to bleed; only for the bleeding to be erased with “Except I’m not bleeding though I am breathing hard.” After describing the creature that he sees and the scream that he hears, its presence is erased again: “Except I’m only looking at shadows and shelves. Of course, I’m alone;” followed immediately by the door closing on its own to be erased with “The door is open.”²¹⁹ During both attacks, Johnny tries to hold on to his common sense with fantastic hesitation followed by erasure: “Something’s behind me. Of course, I deny it. It’s impossible to deny;”²²⁰ and later with: “Impossible. Not impossible.”²²¹

Moreover, Johnny uses erasure for a hyperbolic effect in reaction to the terror: “Don’t look. I didn’t. Of course I looked. I looked so fucking fast I should of ended up wearing one of those neck braces for whiplash.”²²² Such effect also occurs with an exaggeration of his experience through emotions: “This is what it feels like to be really afraid. Though of course it doesn’t. None of this can truly approach the reality of that fear.”²²³ The reaction of his body to experiencing terror also falls under erasure:

²¹⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 108.

²¹⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 585.

²¹⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 22.

²¹⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 49.

²¹⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 27.

²¹⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 71.

²²⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 26.

²²¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 70.

²²²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 27.

²²³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 71.

“I’ve shit myself. Pissed myself too . . . But now I see that I haven’t. Except for the ink blotting my threads, my pants are bone dry.”²²⁴

Similar case of erasure caused by terror of memories and paranoia comes to existence in Johnny’s room. His senses are attacked with walls cracking, windows shattering, and floor disappearing; the scream and the stench being present again; and then erased: “The walls have remained, the glass has held and the only thing that vanished was my own horrors.”²²⁵ In his paranoid state, Johnny mistakes one sound for a different one on few occasions. That includes hearing gunshots, which are revealed with erasure as fireworks in celebration of Independence Day;²²⁶ and hearing the roar again, only to realize his neighbor is hosting a party.²²⁷ Similar case of confusion arises, when Johnny hears someone’s radio, which turns out to be a live band,²²⁸ which foregrounds the postmodernist theme of blurred boundary between fiction and reality. By erasing the medium, the entire possible zone of a Chinese-box world is erased, as it is not a radio-inside-novel but the same level.

The most significant cases of erasure are present in Johnny’s last chapter—Chapter XXI—which consists of diary entries. This erasure stems from Johnny’s confused memories and from his attempt to protect himself, which he emphasizes in the Introduction: “Ever see yourself doing something in the past and no matter how many times you remember it you still want to scream stop, somehow redirect the action, reorder the present?”²²⁹ Throughout the novel, his childhood memories begin to resurface with the presence of a growl and a presence, which tries to strangle him, as he compares the sweat on his neck to being “cold as hands. Hands of the dead,”²³⁰ while consistently referring to “ragged claws slowly extending,”²³¹ long fingers, slashes on his neck as well as premonition of asphyxiation.²³² Similarly, in one of his diary entries, he remembers details of the story of how the scars on his hands trying to catch the burning oil, when he was four years old.²³³ This time, however, he hears his father growl, as he covers Johnny in an attempt to protect him from Pelafina, followed by another growl,

²²⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 71-72.

²²⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 150.

²²⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 180-181.

²²⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 327.

²²⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 512.

²²⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xiv.

²³⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 70.

²³¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 27.

²³²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 71-72.

²³³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 129.

when he remembers “long polished nails” that are reaching for him,²³⁴ thus implying that his mother was the one, who caused the burns on his arms in addition to trying to strangle him.

The resurface of this memory triggers Johnny’s coping mechanisms, thus erasure. In an attempt to make himself feel better, Johnny tries to erase reality by describing his fictional recovery, which he confesses to with “Did you really think any of that was true? September 2 thru September 28: I just made all that up. Right out of thin air. I don’t have any friends who are doctors, let alone two friends who are doctors.”²³⁵ The fictional entries are followed by even more prominent erasure of events. One of the previous entries mentions Johnny becoming a murderer with “Gdansk Man dies. Soon Kyrie will too,”²³⁶ which is erases after the series of fictional entries.²³⁷ This is followed by erasing the events of his childhood memories, as he describes the moment of Pelafina being taken away by his father to the Whalestoe Institute as her reaching out to kiss and stroke his face: “She hadn’t tried to strangle me and my father had never made a sound.”²³⁸ Johnny disregards his mother’s letter, in which she confesses to trying to strangle him,²³⁹ and erases its content with “her fingers never closed around my throat. They only tried to wipe the tears from my face.” Furthermore, Johnny replaces his father’s scream with the mother’s voice screaming his name and refusing to leave him.²⁴⁰

It is implied that Johnny creates these memories in order to protect himself from the truth of his mother’s abuse, as after he erases the murder of the Gdansk Man, he starts “to run, trying to find a way to something new, something safe.”²⁴¹ The terms “new” and “safe” imply that what follows is fictional. The fake diary entries further prove this, as they follow immediately after he first remembers that his mother hurt him in the past. They thus function as a coping mechanism, since he states: “I was trying to trick myself.”²⁴² The fictional diary entries also have a scope over the final story, which describes a mother hoping for her infant son to breathe and live.²⁴³ As a direct contrast

²³⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 506.

²³⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 509.

²³⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 497.

²³⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 516.

²³⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 517.

²³⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 629-630.

²⁴⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 517.

²⁴¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 516.

²⁴²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 509.

²⁴³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 519.

to Johnny and his mother, the story adds to the list of Johnny's coping mechanisms and possibly inspires him to conclude Zampanò's text with his own ending with the same theme of love, or the other was round—with Johnny being inspired by the film's ending. Coming to terms with his real—or rewritten—past then makes him capable of abandoning the city and his crush,²⁴⁴ though he was “a sucker for abandoned stuff”²⁴⁵ and incapable of abandoning things before: “I can't do it. Get rid of it, I mean.”²⁴⁶

On bigger scale, the techniques of erasure are implied throughout the novel with open endings. The strategy comes to exist through the addition of Chapter XXI, which takes place exclusively at Johnny's narrative level, like the Introduction of the novel. Since Johnny starts the novel, it is expected of him to end it, which gives rise to an assumption that the passages preceding it are the last of Zampanò's and the film's narrative levels. The open ending is alluded to at the end of chapter XX with Navidson dying and seeing blue light, followed by the screen of the film turning black, as it runs out and ends with “the name of the processing lab,”²⁴⁷ which implies the end of the film in the same manner the presence of Chapter XXI implies the end of the novel. At the film level, there is another open-ending focused on Karen, since Chapter XVIII ends mid-sentence, as she turns to face “the horror looming up behind her.”²⁴⁸ Since Chapter XXI postpones the last two chapters, the reader is left to wonder about Navidson's and Karen's fate, indicating an open-ending. However, the story is finally resolved, as Chapter XXII starts with the second half of the sentence, following directly after Chapter XVIII. The reader gets a closure, as Karen enters the darkness and saves Navidson, her flashlight revealing itself as the blue light present at the end of Chapter XX. Thus, the postponement of the closure creates false expectation of open-ending, common to postmodernist fiction, only to end with the twist of closure.

Similar postponement is present at Johnny's narrative level, as the reader awaits its closure since the Introduction, because of its foreshadowing: “I haven't even washed the blood off yet. Not all of it's mine either.”²⁴⁹ The foreshadowing takes place in a fragment, which describes the time of writing the Introduction—October 31,

²⁴⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 510-511.

²⁴⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 21.

²⁴⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 31.

²⁴⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 489.

²⁴⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 417.

²⁴⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xix.

1998²⁵⁰—which is then accurately placed between the diary entries of Chapter XXI with “I just completed the intro,”²⁵¹ after which we reach the closure at Johnny’s level.

The fragmentation of the chapter, which disrupts the chronology of entries, first leaves the reader to wonder about the events preceding Lude’s death,²⁵² and later about the event, which lead to Johnny coming to terms with his past and learning to leave things behind.²⁵³ Similar foreshadowing through fragmentation is present at the film level with the two short films released prior to *Navidson Record* as its teaser and trailer—“The Five and a Half Minute Hallway” and “Exploration #4.”²⁵⁴ The short films are presented at Zampanò’s level during Chapter I after a foreshadowing of his own, which follows Navidson’s quote of warning to ignore the house, should anyone come to its vicinity: “Considering how the film ends, it is not surprising that more than a handful of people have decided to heed his advice.”²⁵⁵

The strategy of self-erasure in *House of Leaves* is used prominently at Johnny’s narrative level. He uses erasure to foreground the terror, which echoes the events in the house, and his paranoia; to compare his mental and physical state by imagining events of physical injuries, which symbolize his emotional ones; and to the biggest extent to protect himself from past memories. With the strategy of erasure, Johnny is able to replace the abusive memories with ones of love, which he possibly extends to the endings of the film’s narrative. Johnny’s storytelling further implies his unreliability as a narrator and foregrounds the possibility of interpreting the novel in different ways without one ultimate answer. The strategy is also present through an illusion of an open-ending, since the closure of the film is postponed by Johnny’s final chapter; similar postponement being present throughout the beginning of the novel with foreshadowing the events of its end. Although the ending is closed in the end; its content provides more questions than answers for it to be truly close-ended.

3.1.3 Temporal Disorder

The world in *House of Leaves* projects the real world, which creates an illusion of the reader being part of the same world. Similar to Johnny, who tries to explore the authenticity of the narrative levels hypodiegetic to his, the reader is tempted to do the

²⁵⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xxiii.

²⁵¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 515.

²⁵²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 491.

²⁵³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 510-511.

²⁵⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 4-6.

²⁵⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 4.

same for all levels in the novel. Situating the house in Virginia, Johnny and Zampanò in California, Navidson and Karen watching Letterman on television, or the children having a nightlight in the shape of Star Ship Enterprise; further foregrounds the connection with reality. The sense that “the rest of the world is still out there”²⁵⁶ emphasizes the parallel between the house and the book *House of Leaves*, as both the building and the object are hinted to be surrounded by the same world.

The connection to the real world is further foregrounded by its intertextuality, which is prominent in the use of footnotes. Although “a good portion of them are fictitious,”²⁵⁷ focused on exploring Navidson’s nonexistent documentary film,²⁵⁸ the rest of them is real, and according to Irmtraud Huber “such continual merging of fact and fiction eventually casts all the historical references in doubt,”²⁵⁹ thus foregrounding the postmodernist skepticism toward the official history.

Moreover, real people are present in the novel outside the footnotes. Karen edits the film footage into her own short version and shows it to well-known personalities, such as Stephen King, David Copperfield, or Jacques Derrida, and documents their opinions in “What Some Have Thought.”²⁶⁰ Johnny tries to contact the personalities with no success, except for Douglas R. Hofstadter, who has no knowledge of the film, the house or the people involved.²⁶¹ Though Johnny cannot be trusted, it is logical to assume the fictionality of the personalities projected in the novel, using the strategy of apocryphal history in the “dark areas” of their lives to add to the illusion of the film’s authenticity.

The prominent use of exploring the “dark areas” of someone’s life, comes to existence with the photograph of “Delial”—“a Sudanese child dying of starvation, too weak to move even though a culture stalks her from behind”—which the Editors identify as a 1994 Pulitzer Prize-winning photograph by Kevin Carter, who committed suicide on July 27, 1994.²⁶² Kevin Carter can thus be considered part of the novel through Will Navidson, a transworld identity with fake name—a Roman-à-clef—and the story an alternative story about Carter on his path to redemption. The fact that the

²⁵⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 29.

²⁵⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xx.

²⁵⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 6.

²⁵⁹Irmtraud Huber, “Leaving the Postmodernist Labyrinth: Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*,” in *Literature after Postmodernism: Reconstructive Fantasies* (Croydon: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 157.

²⁶⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 354-365.

²⁶¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 354.

²⁶²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 368.

real photograph is absent in the novel;²⁶³ while fictional illustration, which attempt to provide the film with authenticity,²⁶⁴ are present; gives rise to irony. The photograph's absence also denies giving the reader a clear answer, thus each reader has a chance to choose their own interpretation.

Furthermore, the strategy of apocryphal history is used prominently in a diary, which tells a story of three men from Jamestown Colony; who, in January 1610 left to search for food and found stairs. The discovery of stairs is the last entry and leaves an open ending; although, when introducing the diary, Zampanò states that two of the men were found dead. Danielewski thus fills the dark areas of Jamestown Colony with a story, which alludes to the spiral staircase in the Great Hall of the house's impossible space. With Johnny's revision, the story changes into a parody of Zampanò's retelling, as he mistakes a long "s" for "f" and humorously changes every "s" for "f," even mirroring such speech defect mimicry in parts of his narrative.²⁶⁵ The three men thus find "ftaires."²⁶⁶

Furthermore, there are autobiographical elements present in the novel, even though Danielewski tries to erase traces of his existence. The most prominent case inspired by reality is the "first edition" of Johnny's *House of Leaves* that the band in Chapter XXI "found on the Internet,"²⁶⁷ which is parallel to the alleged first edition of Danielewski's *House of Leaves*, which circulated on the Internet²⁶⁸ in a similar manner before being printed for the first time as a second edition. Another such connection to Johnny can be found in the back bookplate of the British edition, which reads "Mark Z. Danielewski live in Los Angeles;"²⁶⁹ same as his authorial persona.²⁷⁰ Additionally, the film in the core of his novel seems to pay homage to his avant-garde film-maker father Tad Danielewski, according to Paul McCormick.²⁷¹ Mel Evans emphasizes the presence of Danielewski's sister Ann Danielewski, who as a singer goes by Poe,²⁷² with her appearance in "What Some Have Thought" as "A. Poe."²⁷³ According to Evans, such connections to Danielewski's life; as well as the intertextual links with Danielewski's

²⁶³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 421.

²⁶⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 658-662.

²⁶⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 410-414.

²⁶⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 414.

²⁶⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 513.

²⁶⁸Bray and Gibbons, *Mark Z. Danielewski*, 54.

²⁶⁹Danielewski, *Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves*, back plate.

²⁷⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xxiii.

²⁷¹Bray and Gibbons, *Mark Z. Danielewski*, 55.

²⁷²Bray and Gibbons, *Mark Z. Danielewski*, 75.

²⁷³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 360.

Whalestoe Letters and his sister's album *Haunted*, both released simultaneously with *House of Leaves*;²⁷⁴ reestablish Danielewski as the real author of the novel.²⁷⁵

Through strategies of temporal disorder, Danielewski places all narrative levels of his novel in a world, which projects the real world. The reader is thus under an illusion of being part of the same world. With references to real and fictional footnotes, as well as the presence of real personalities, the novel attempts to create an illusion of authenticity and to parody dark areas of official history. The novel is further connected to the real world through its author; as, even though he tries to erase himself from the novel, there are autobiographical traces, by which he can be considered present.

3.2 Techniques of Words and Style

In this section, I explore techniques of words and style. First, I focus on stylistic techniques—the lexical exhibitionism, the catalogue structures, and back-broke sentences. Second, I deal with discursive techniques. I explore the novel's different registers and genres, which define the postmodernist carnivalized fiction. I focus on elements of picaresque adventure story in the novel, as well as features of other genres introduced through the technique of pastiche.

3.2.1 Stylistic Techniques

Stylistic techniques in the novel emphasize the presence of objects in the projected world, as a further connection to the real world. The lexical exhibitionism is present mostly with the use of technical terminology and foreign words. In the narrative of the film the technical terms include film terminology and descriptions of an equipment, such as cameras—"Hi 8s . . . 16mm Arriflexes"²⁷⁶ or "35mm Nikon"²⁷⁷—guns—"HK .45"²⁷⁸—fishing lines—"anything from braided Dacron to 40 lb multi-strand steel"—and other equipment, such as a "dynamic kernmantle cord."²⁷⁹ Zampanò's analysis includes literary and syntactical terms such as "metaphors, puns and the suffix,"²⁸⁰ and biological terms—"larynx" and "auditory cortex,"²⁸¹ among others; to create ground for an accurate and objective academic writing. The foreign words are translated, as is the

²⁷⁴Bray and Gibbons, *Mark Z. Danielewski*, 54.

²⁷⁵Bray and Gibbons, *Mark Z. Danielewski*, 74.

²⁷⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 10.

²⁷⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 102.

²⁷⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 208.

²⁷⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 301.

²⁸⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 44.

²⁸¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 47.

case of the scientific animal names,²⁸² and technical terminology explained or defined, as in the Chapter XVI's glossary²⁸³ with syntactic, physical and chemical terminology. Contrary to Zampanò, whose foreign words are translated by himself, Johnny or the Editors; Johnny and his use of Latin words gives rise to true lexical exhibitionism, as the lack of translation forces the reader to search for terms, such as "nom de plume," "nom de guerre,"²⁸⁴ "camera lucida,"²⁸⁵ or "ignis fatuus."²⁸⁶ Johnny's use of Latin gives rise to irony, as he writes: "Latin's way out of my league."²⁸⁷ The statement hints at the possible influence by Zampanò or Pelafina's narrative, and therefore even at his own fictionality.

The strategy of catalogues in *House of Leaves* is used in various ways to detach the words from their syntax and situate them in the fore front or to create exhaustive word-lists as a base for textual techniques. First, there are catalogues created in order to emphasize the words and provide more information about them; such as the list describing Lude's sexual partners in November,²⁸⁸ list providing the reader with more background information on the women,²⁸⁹ list of all facts discovered about the house,²⁹⁰ the glossary of technical terms in Chapter XVI and their definitions,²⁹¹ or the structure of the film, its release history, and the possible titles of the chapters.²⁹² Other such lists are enriched by dividing the words into steps or scale numbers; as is the case of the eight criteria of describing the changing space,²⁹³ and the "Post-exposure effects rating" table, which evaluates effects of the house on people exposed to it before²⁹⁴ and after²⁹⁵ Navidson enters the hallways for the last time.

Second, there are exhaustive word-lists, which function to support textual techniques and have a weak or no link to the content of the text. Such is the case of the list of written materials about Navidson's dreams²⁹⁶ and, more visibly, the list of

²⁸²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 47.

²⁸³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 383.

²⁸⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xii.

²⁸⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 27.

²⁸⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 297.

²⁸⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 34.

²⁸⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 262-263.

²⁸⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 265.

²⁹⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 370-371.

²⁹¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 383.

²⁹²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 539-540.

²⁹³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 120.

²⁹⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 396.

²⁹⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 406.

²⁹⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 398.

photographers.²⁹⁷ Both lists are part of footnotes, work hand in hand with strategy of parallel texts and contain a link of meaning to the text proper. Moreover, the revelation that Zampanò chose the names of photographers randomly “out of some books and magazines”²⁹⁸ foregrounds the cut-up method of postmodernist writing process.

The most striking cases of word-lists, which support the technique of parallel texts, are present in Chapter IX with lists of buildings, whose architectural style does not apply to the house;²⁹⁹ different architects;³⁰⁰ films³⁰¹ and literature,³⁰² which contain a theme of haunting; or documentary filmmakers.³⁰³ The various lists are lengthy so that the multiple footnotes, which they are part of, create a labyrinth of text, which forces the reader to turn pages back and forth and get trapped in the space of the material book (discussed in more detail in Chapter 3.3.4 Parallel Texts). Nathalie Aghoro considers the lists to intrude upon the text proper to an extent, where the footnotes become the main text.³⁰⁴ The lists, though exhaustive, are still related to the chapter’s topic. Ironically, the end of the chapter includes a bibliography, which does not list any referenced film, as there are “too numerous to list here.”³⁰⁵ Pelafina’s letters also include word-lists, as her letters become more chaotic and lose their structure with the use of textual strategy of spacing. One such letter includes a page, which obsessively repeats Johnny’s name, followed by a string of seemingly random words,³⁰⁶ thus taking on a status of a bare word-list.

Moreover, the word-list in Pelafina’s letter with its lost structure and meaning can be considered an example of a back-broke sentence. The film narrative also contains word-list-like sentences to mimic the changing film frames.³⁰⁷ However, true back-broke sentences are more prominent at Johnny’s narrative level, such as “Known some call is air am,” which is, with its pronunciation, similar to a Latin sentence for “I am not what I used to be.”³⁰⁸ Another back-broke sentence is present in Johnny’s last story, where a fragment of a mother’s speech—“Etch a Poo air”—is interpreted by nurses as

²⁹⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 64-67.

²⁹⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 67.

²⁹⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 120-134.

³⁰⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 121-135.

³⁰¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 130-134.

³⁰²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 131-135.

³⁰³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 139-142.

³⁰⁴Pöhlmann, *Revolutionary Leaves: The Fiction of Mark Z. Danielewski*, 68.

³⁰⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 152.

³⁰⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 632-633.

³⁰⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 5.

³⁰⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 72.

“an etching of Pooh Bear,”³⁰⁹ even though the first interpretation that comes to the reader’s mind in the context of a dying newborn baby, unable to breathe on its own, is “fetch a poof of air.” These sentences thus function to fuel the indeterminacy present in the novel, as well as to foreground the importance of interpretation.

Furthermore, Johnny’s narrative contains passages, which exhibit features of stream of consciousness mode, such as the two sentences spanning over approximately fifty lines of text,³¹⁰ which hint at the memories of the death of Johnny’s father and Johnny’s inability to find sense in it; similar to the reader, who attempts to find sense in the lengthy sentences and even the entire novel. Aside from their length and lack of clear core, the two sentences are constantly intruded by embedding, even in the middle of a word: “still tumbling in rem–, dying and –embered.”³¹¹ Similarly, Johnny loses string of his thoughts, on which he comments in a metafictional manner: “and you know what? I’ve lost this sentence, I can’t even finish it, don’t know how—”³¹²

The strategy of lexical exhibitionism strengthens the connection to the real world, as well as the connection between the narratives. The strategy of catalogues functions as a support for textual techniques, especially parallel texts. While catalogues and back-broke sentences mostly share a link of meaning with the text, they further contribute to the notion of postmodernist indeterminacy and the variety of the reader’s possible interpretation. Johnny’s use of lengthy stream of consciousness-like sentences mimics the labyrinth structure of the house and the novel, in which the reader attempts to find sense.

3.2.2 Discursive Techniques

The discursive techniques in the novel further support the ontological structure constructed by techniques of world-making. Heteroglossia, or the use of different registers, is present in the novel to distinguish between the narrative levels and specific characters. Zampanò and the Editors’ objective narratives with formal register are in direct contrast with characters, who are part of the story through direct speech or first-person narrative, which tends to be informal. The biggest indicator of informal language can be found in the use of obscene words. The F-word, for example, is used by majority

³⁰⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 520.

³¹⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 48-49.

³¹¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 48.

³¹²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 43.

of characters throughout the novel, such as Navidson,³¹³ Reston,³¹⁴ Holloway,³¹⁵ Tom,³¹⁶ and even Karen, though in a more literal sense of the word.³¹⁷ The formal language of Zampanò, on the other hand, “always steers clear of such questionable four-letter language.”³¹⁸

The character, who exploits such words most prominently, is Johnny with the frequent use of the F-word as an adjective,³¹⁹ an infix adjective,³²⁰ or an exclamation,³²¹ among others. Johnny himself feels that his identity is closely related to his profane language, as the reaction to a more poetic use of language is as follows: “Holy fuck, what was that all about . . . Who the hell is thinking up this shit?”³²² The poetic language, which is more prominent in Pelafina’s letters, can be considered an intrusion upon Johnny’s narrative. Being thus threatened by another narrative, the only way to escape his isolation and paranoia is an even more striking use of profanities: “Fuck. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck you. Fuck me. Fuck this. Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.”³²³ This case gives rise to irony, because it follows right after Johnny’s own intrusion upon Zampanò’s narrative with “he would never walk up stairs again and he would never fuck,” which he defends by Zampanò’s manuscript containing both “make love” and its vulgar counterpart.³²⁴ Johnny’s choice further emphasizes his preference of profanities in his own narrative, which is then foregrounded even more with his fictional diary entries, as the revelation is followed by addressing the reader with: “the lack of expletives should have clued you in.”³²⁵ Thus the informality of language with obscene words is a source of identity for Johnny and his narrative, like the formal language is to Zampanò. The expletives represented through the medium of radio in the novel are substituted by symbols to mimic the censoring, which is common to broadcasting, as in “other crazy %&#@”³²⁶ or “give it a rest @\$shole,”³²⁷ hinting at a superiority and freedom of textual media.

³¹³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 83.

³¹⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 55.

³¹⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 126.

³¹⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 272.

³¹⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 62.

³¹⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 99.

³¹⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 25.

³²⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 26.

³²¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 57.

³²²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 100.

³²³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 100.

³²⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 99.

³²⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 509.

³²⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 149.

The various registers correspond to the polyphony of genres at different narrative levels. Johnny's autobiographical commentary to Zampanò's critical analysis of *The Navidson Record's* gothic enclosure, as well as Pelafina's epistolary passages, creates a structure common to the postmodernist strategy of carnivalized fiction. However, the genres are not as straightforward as they appear. At first, Navidson's documentary film, which is at the core of the novel, intends to be a "pastoral take"³²⁸ on the family's everyday life. With the fantastic intrusion of an impossible space, the genre changes into a "supreme gothic tale"³²⁹—a world-next-door—which echoes throughout the other levels of the novel's ontological structure.

The resonance is the most visible at Johnny's narrative level, as he gradually isolates himself in his apartment in an attempt to concretize his internal struggle.³³⁰ According to Huber, Johnny's level is haunted by his mother Pelafina.³³¹ In Navidson's narrative the role of the ghost belongs to the image of Delial, as well as to, what Hanjo Berressem identifies as, the house's "non-Euclidean, or also 'projective' geometry," which is more subjective and perceptual.³³² In a similar manner, Zampanò's level is intruded upon both from the inside and the outside. The internal intrusion is a detailed retelling of the film, which has no place in an academic writing as a PhD candidate in comparative literature emphasizes that "all those passages were inappropriate for a critical work, and if he were in my class I'd mark him down for it."³³³ The external intrusion is then caused by Johnny's first-person narrative in the analysis' footnotes, which are similarly inappropriate to Zampanò's genre. Therefore, Zampanò's text, like the house, is intruded upon by phenomena, which should have no place in its space. The echo of the haunted house reaches as far as the reader's level; as the line preceding the Introduction—"This is not for you"³³⁴—functions as a door into the house and book of leaves; which, according to Alison Gibbons, forbids the reader from entering and gives rise to discomfort typical to the horror and gothic genre, which ironically leads to tempting the reader to continue.³³⁵

³²⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 349.

³²⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 10.

³²⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 147.

³³⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xviii.

³³¹Huber, "Leaving the Postmodernist Labyrinth: Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*," 98.

³³²Pöhlmann, *Revolutionary Leaves: The Fiction of Mark Z. Danielewski*, 209.

³³³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 55.

³³⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, ix.

³³⁵Bray and Gibbons, *Mark Z. Danielewski*, 30.

The genres of separate narrative levels are further connected by the echo of authenticity, as Nathalie Aghoro argues that Navidson's visual medium of documentary about exploration, Johnny's autobiographical writings, and Zampanò's academic treatise contain a similarity in "their claim to convey facts."³³⁶ According to Aghoro, the narrators focus on actuality—Navidson attempting to preserve the image of the house, Zampanò doing the same with the film and Johnny with Zampanò's manuscript—shifts to the authenticity,³³⁷ as they try to discredit the topic of the artwork they try to preserve—Zampanò deals with the authenticity of the film's impossible house, Johnny does the same with the film that Zampanò analyzes and the reader doubts the existence of Zampanò and his manuscript.

The features of picaresque adventure story, which is typical for postmodernist carnivalized fiction, are also present throughout the novel. Both Navidson and Johnny set out on a journey to look for ultimate truths; Navidson with his journey through the hallways and Johnny within his traumatic memories: "It's like there's something else, something beyond it all, a greater story still looming in the twilight, which for some reason I'm unable to see."³³⁸ Finn Fordham considers the journey to be that to adulthood, which with its sexual encounters and substance experimentation applies more to Johnny, and that of mid-life crisis with its attempt "to relive the openness and suppleness of adolescence," which fits with Navidson's exploration.³³⁹ Huber has a similar approach, as she compares Johnny's narrative to Bildungsroman with the "trajectory of increasing self-knowledge and maturity."³⁴⁰ Though they begin their journey of self-exploration and exploration, they are met with dead-ends. Aleksandra Bida compares the characters in their internal and external labyrinths to "quest-seeking Theseus," who tries to reach his goal but in the end, they are trapped in a "Minotaur-like isolation."³⁴¹

Paradoxically, both Johnny and Navidson's failure to reach their intended ultimate truths leads them to adulthood, since Zampanò writes: "Maturity, one discovers, has everything to do with the acceptance of 'not knowing.'"³⁴² Johnny and Navidson both find salvation in art and its fictional aspect. Johnny haunted by a possibility of being

³³⁶Pöhlmann, *Revolutionary Leaves: The Fiction of Mark Z. Danielewski*, 65.

³³⁷Pöhlmann, *Revolutionary Leaves: The Fiction of Mark Z. Danielewski*, 65.

³³⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 15.

³³⁹Bray and Gibbons, *Mark Z. Danielewski*, 38.

³⁴⁰Huber, "Leaving the Postmodernist Labyrinth: Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*," 87.

³⁴¹Pöhlmann, *Revolutionary Leaves: The Fiction of Mark Z. Danielewski*, 53.

³⁴²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 34.

strangled by his mother, decides to fictionalize the moment of his mother leaving with an alternative story, where she only strokes his face;³⁴³ while Navidson haunted by the grief of his twin brother's death and by not knowing, whether he could have saved Delial, finds salvation in the permanency of photographs, with which he fills the walls of his home.³⁴⁴ Navidson will never know, if he could have saved the real Delial but the fictional Delial will exist forever in the image. The same applies to the people in the photos on the walls, which include his deceased brother Tom. Both characters thus come to terms with their past struggles, and reach adulthood by the lack of knowledge, which allows them to utilize fictionality. Paul McCormick compares the failure of the house's explorers to obtain the truth to the failure of the readers to reach the ultimate truth of the novel,³⁴⁵ which resists an ultimate interpretation due to the postmodernist indeterminacy.

Johnny fits with the role of picaro, as he experiments with the substances; which, together with the possibility of hereditary mental illness, lead to the hallucinations. He does not experience only extreme states of mind but also extreme states of his body, as he indulges in an excess of sexual activities. In his text, Johnny describes everything from wet dreams³⁴⁶ to explicit descriptions of the intercourse.³⁴⁷ The most striking case of such occurrence is a scene described in great detail by sounds only,³⁴⁸ which echoes the blind Zampanò, hinting at Johnny being influenced by his narrative or at Zampanò's authorship of Johnny's text. The extreme experiences reach the peak in Johnny beating, and possibly killing, the Gdansk man;³⁴⁹ which is in agreement with the criminal behavior common to picaresque adventure story.

Another picaresque motif, recurrent in *House of Leaves*, is that of human body described with grotesque imagery, which is the most prominent in description of death and, to a lesser extent, injury. One such case occurs when the paramedics compare prostitute's blood to a red paint—"She had been torn to pieces . . . parts of her used to paint the walls and ceiling red."—upon which they reach a conclusion that the discovery of Zampanò's body is "almost . . . pleasant."³⁵⁰ Another example is that of

³⁴³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 517.

³⁴⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 527.

³⁴⁵Bray and Gibbons, *Mark Z. Danielewski*, 64.

³⁴⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 69.

³⁴⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 108-109.

³⁴⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 89.

³⁴⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 497.

³⁵⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xiii.

Johnny imagining killing his boss by turning his head to the point of detachment;³⁵¹ the tortuous death in Perilius' devilish chamber, during which the screams of the tortured travel through pipes to create melody, as he or she is cooked alive;³⁵² or Johnny's dream about changing properties of his body and being chopped to death with an axe.³⁵³ Tom's death also features such elements, as the walls that try to crush him are with their speed compared to the shutter of a camera, while the floor moves in a way similar to a treadmill every time he tries to run.³⁵⁴

In comparison, the deaths of animals are treated with less or no grotesque imagery, as in the gory death of cats in the vicinity of Zampanò's apartment³⁵⁵ and the absurdity of the Pekinese dog thrown from the car window to its death.³⁵⁶ Other than the ones of death, description of injuries is presented with grotesque imagery, as Reston's accident, which rendered him paraplegic, uses the comparison of power cables that he tries to outrun to cobras.³⁵⁷ The imagery is further emphasized by its capture by Navidson's camera. With the journey to search for ultimate truths, extreme experiences of its picaro and grotesque imagery of human body, the novel includes the genre of picaresque adventure story, typical to the postmodernist carnivalized fiction.

Moreover, there are elements of other genres borrowed through pastiche. The most prominent is Johnny's borrowing of elements typical to poetry, with rhyming, as in "what's real or isn't real doesn't matter here"³⁵⁸ or "though dug out later with a safety pin, I swear still fester beneath my skin, reminding me in a peculiar way of him,"³⁵⁹ repetition—"receiving all of it, and even more of it, though still only beholding some of it"³⁶⁰—zeugma—"Don't worry, Lude didn't buy it either but at least he bought a couple of rounds."³⁶¹—or homophony, such as "just plain hay, golden hay, where—Hey! Hey! Hey- hey! Hay days gone by, bye-bye, gone way way away."³⁶² Johnny also uses homophony with their foreign meaning, as he emphasizes saying "nine" with German

³⁵¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 51.

³⁵²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 337.

³⁵³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 403-406.

³⁵⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 346.

³⁵⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xv.

³⁵⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 267.

³⁵⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 37.

³⁵⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xx.

³⁵⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 78.

³⁶⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 77.

³⁶¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 48.

³⁶²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 77.

accent³⁶³ to indicate “no.” Zampanò’s retelling of the film also includes few poetic elements, the most striking one being the repetition of “He did”³⁶⁴ after two paragraphs, furthermore with different meaning, as in the first case it is negative answer, while in the second it is positive. Other borrowed elements come from drama; as the transcripts of interviews,³⁶⁵ Tom’s Story³⁶⁶ and “What Some Have Thought”³⁶⁷ consist of dialogue structure, with Tom’s Story also alternating with monologue passages, to mimic the film medium with the structure of screenplay.

The discursive techniques function to foreground the ontological structure of the novel and create further connection between narrative levels. The different registers separate objective narrators from characters. The informal language provides the characters with more personality and Johnny sees his identity in the use of expletive words. Such presence and absence of personality renders the medium of radio with its censoring, as an inferior to literature, which uses expletives freely. The various genres further separate the narrative levels but resonate and intrude within each other, thus breaking the boundaries of specific genres. The theme of finding the ultimate truth common to picaresque adventure story reaches a conclusion that the ultimate truth is better unknown, and thus agrees with postmodernist rejection of grand narratives. Instead of an ultimate knowledge the protagonists reach their goal through the permanence of art, which has the power to fictionalize reality. The impossibility of reaching an ultimate truth echoes in the reader’s inability to create an ultimate interpretation of the novel. The presence of experimenting with substances; sexual encounters; and grotesque imagery further contribute to the relevance of picaresque genre in the book. Other borrowed genres further contribute to the representation in the book, as is the case of dialogue structure, which foregrounds the presence of the film.

3.3 Textual Techniques

In this section, I explore textual techniques in the novel. First, I focus on the spatial displacement through blank space, which is closely connected to the strategy of concrete prose. I comment on most significant cases of the techniques and the manner, in which they connect the text with its content to create meaning through representation. Second, I explore the spatial displacement through headlines, number and other symbols

³⁶³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 503.

³⁶⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 523.

³⁶⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 524-525.

³⁶⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 253-273.

³⁶⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 354-365.

with a special focus on the added meaning of different symbols. Third, I deal with the effects of typography in the novel: the function of different fonts, colors and other typographical properties. Fourth, I explore the strategy of parallel texts and the manner, in which such texts appear. Finally, I comment on illustrations and anti-illustrations present in the novel and attempt to connect them to the book's content to prove their illustration or anti-illustration status. The strategy of differently oriented text is explored throughout multiple sections.

3.3.1 Blank Space and Concrete Prose

Other than the common use of blank space to fragment passages of different topics or times, Danielewski distributes the blank space in order for the text or the page to become a representation, creating a mimetic effect with features of concrete prose. The most striking examples of the technique appear in chapters X, XII and XX. The pages themselves are used to represent a space with the text indicating a placement or distance between two locations. At first, the text of Chapter X appears only in the upper half of pages, near the top.³⁶⁸ However, after Billy, Tom and Navidson reach the staircase and Navidson starts to descend it, later joined by Billy; the text is separated into two sections—one at the top, when focused on the people staying at the top of the staircase, and one near the bottom, when focused on the people downstairs.³⁶⁹ The relation between the page and the staircase is further emphasized, when Billy decides to join Navidson, who then goes back to the top for Billy's wheelchair, moving his section of the text upwards.³⁷⁰

Throughout his analysis sections in the chapter, Zampanò's text proper is situated at the top,³⁷¹ as if to imply that his objective analysis stays above the fantastic dimension, and foregrounds his position of a higher narrative level. Contrary to Zampanò, Johnny, who throughout the novel welcomes subjectivity into his narrative and who tries to connect himself with other narrative levels, uses whole pages but often ends in the lower region of the page, because of the footnote format.³⁷² While staying in the upper half of the page, Zampanò fragments the text further to mimic its content, when he writes about frames in the film. Throughout twelve pages, he uses a space of

³⁶⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 153-158.

³⁶⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 159.

³⁷⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 160.

³⁷¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 165-179.

³⁷²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 179-181.

one line in the upper half of the page, near the middle, using from one up to five words a page. As the text stays at the same line, it contains features of concrete prose with words, such as “The dark line,”³⁷³ which describe what the text of the section mimics.

The preceding line—“finished between / the space of / two frames”³⁷⁴—also contains mimetic features of concrete prose. The two words of “two frames” are aligned to opposite sides of the page—“two” to the left, “frames” to the right—thus emphasizing the number of frames with their separation by blank space. Moreover “the space of” on the previous page is situated in the center and fits between the words “two frames,” when the pages are put over one another. Furthermore, the words “finished between” on the preceding page use the same position as “two frames.” Therefore, the phrase foregrounds the place, where “the space of” is situated by both the previous and the following page.

The rest of the chapter³⁷⁵ takes place at the bottom of the stairs; so, to further mimic its content, the rules of the page change. The bottom of the page stays with Navidson and Billy with newly-found Jed and Wax, while the top of the page changes to represent the space, which is further away from the group, rather than above. Not a staircase, the page now represents a long corridor, which is separated by “what must be close to fifty doors.”³⁷⁶ The top of the page is then overtaken by the figure of Holloway, who stands in the center of the corridor, as does the text in the center of the page to mimic a shadow of a figure standing in the distance.³⁷⁷ The centered text prevails with other objects that are further away from Navidson’s group. That includes doors that are shutting one by one behind Holloway. The word “behind”³⁷⁸ is at the very top, further than the text describing Holloway’s figure, which further proves that the pages represent the corridor and the distance between Navidson’s group and other people and objects. As the doors that are being shut grow closer to the group, the text grows closer to Navidson’s text. The mimetic function is further emphasized by the phrase “one / after / another / after / another”³⁷⁹ being printed over five pages—one centered word of the phrase on each page getting lower and lower—to foreground the action of the individual doors closing continually.

³⁷³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 202.

³⁷⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 199-201.

³⁷⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 207-245.

³⁷⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 188.

³⁷⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 214-215.

³⁷⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 217.

³⁷⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 220-224.

After the doors make Holloway disappear,³⁸⁰ the centered text changes to represent holes from bullets shot at the doors³⁸¹ and ends with a scattered text, which represents splinters.³⁸² The technique is finished with a barrier of text as the group is separated from Holloway by more doors.³⁸³ The barrier is situated at the same line as the previously mentioned “dark line.” Only “the room” stands in the centre in two lines to mimic its space.

In Chapter XII, the dimension of the page reverts back to represent the staircase with Tom being above and Navidson’s group below. However, when Navidson lifts Billy to the top with rope, the concept of top and bottom ceases to exist with the text in odd pages being upside down. The distance of the staircase, which is rapidly growing, as well as the stretching rope, are mimicked by words with growing distance between the letters, words written in a staircase-like manner or vertically with the letters remaining horizontal,³⁸⁴ and cutting the word “snaps” into three parts over the three pages to mimic the rupture of the rope.³⁸⁵

The pages in Chapter XX mimic the changing nature of the rooms and corridors, as well as Navidson’s subsequent disorientation. The narrowing paragraphs represent Navidson’s vision narrowing with the speed of his bike increasing, as the floor tilts downwards in any direction he chooses.³⁸⁶ The confusing changes in the nature of the space are further mimicked with the ceiling and the text falling down and rising up again;³⁸⁷ the widening of hallway and a text;³⁸⁸ the words “left” and “right” situated on sides opposite to their meaning;³⁸⁹ vertical rotation of text,³⁹⁰ even with examples of reading from bottom to the top;³⁹¹ corridor gradually growing smaller with text mimicking its shape;³⁹² a diagonal text, throughout which the concept of gravity disappearing altogether, as each flashlight that Navidson drops falls in different direction;³⁹³ finished with a series of passages rotated in various directions, which

³⁸⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 227-230.

³⁸¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 231-232.

³⁸²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 233.

³⁸³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 234-238.

³⁸⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 287-293.

³⁸⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 264-266.

³⁸⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 424-425.

³⁸⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 427-429.

³⁸⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 431.

³⁸⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 433.

³⁹⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 427-429.

³⁹¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 440.

³⁹²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 443-458.

³⁹³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 465.

mimic Navidson's disorientation.³⁹⁴ Throughout the chapter, Zampanò's analysis manages to maintain its objective, as well as textual, direction.³⁹⁵

Though both the analysis and the retelling of the film are written by Zampanò, the spacing strategies foreground the difference between objective writing and the fantastic elements of the film, while mimicking the space of the house to aid reader's visual imagination. Irmtraud Huber states that the loss of "above" and "below" is caused by the absence of centre as "our perceptions are centered," and argues that Navidson's journey is a one in search for a centre.³⁹⁶ In a similar way, Pelafina's text also loses its centre in a series of letters,³⁹⁷ which follow after the coded letter about her rape and mimic her deteriorating state.³⁹⁸ She is able to regain the centre only after more than a year-long pause, caused by being "unresponsive,"³⁹⁹ both in her state of mind and in her letters.

The features of concrete prose are more striking in the novel through the shapes of calligrammes, which add meaning to various extents. The presence of a footnote in shape of a small circle inside of a bigger one during Navidson's reading of *House of Leaves*,⁴⁰⁰ mimics the mise-en-abyme of book inside itself; and contributes to the strange loops of narrative structure, where the reader becomes unsure, which level is superior and which represents the smaller of the circles.

The most prominent calligramme in the novel, however, is the T-shaped title of a poem "Yggdrasil" at the very end of the book.⁴⁰¹ Mark B. N. Hansen considers the presence of the enormous ash tree, which in Norse mythology holds the universe, as random and not adding any "new light on just what should be made of it" with regard to the novel's closure.⁴⁰² However, I argue that there exists an additional meaning, when taking into account the use of letter T throughout the novel. Huber considers the tree to be "a counter-image to the house, another house of leaves: one that does not destroy meaning and . . . supports a world."⁴⁰³ With the same logic, the house's T shaped corridor, which separates the path into two directions,⁴⁰⁴ is in direct opposition to the T

³⁹⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 468-483.

³⁹⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 466-467.

³⁹⁶Huber, "Leaving the Postmodernist Labyrinth: Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*," 83.

³⁹⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 623-634.

³⁹⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 620-623.

³⁹⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 635.

⁴⁰⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 466.

⁴⁰¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 709.

⁴⁰²Hansen, "The Digital Topography of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*," 598.

⁴⁰³Huber, "Leaving the Postmodernist Labyrinth: Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*," 111.

⁴⁰⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 68.

of the title of Yggdrasil poem, which in the poem is growing from the sky,⁴⁰⁵ and therefore connects the two paths of T into one, like the story of the house connects Karen and Navidson in finding each other, as well as in marriage. This is further emphasized by the alleged typo in Chapter X's "To begin with,"⁴⁰⁶ which alludes to a connection between Yggdrasil's letter T and the bold letter "O" at the end of the poem,⁴⁰⁷ as a path "TO" a new beginning, thus contrary to Hansen's opinion, the Yggdrasil poem adds a hopeful notion to the ending, while also foregrounding the novel's incompleteness and a possibility to add upon it with each reader's interpretations, thus creating an open ending.

Hansen considers the orthography in the novel to be an attempt to represent the digital forms,⁴⁰⁸ which is shown more prominently with the last line of Chapter XII, where the film runs out followed by white screen, mimicked by a blank page between the pages with words "white" and "screen."⁴⁰⁹ According to Hansen, "the blank page functions as a material analog of the blank screen and the word "blank," giving a sensory correlate to the abrupt cessation of visual information that occurs when a film runs out or when the meaning of the word "blank" sinks in."⁴¹⁰ Another such use of blank screen is present at the beginning of the novel after Johnny's "This is not for you"⁴¹¹ and Zampanò's "Muss es sein?" and "The Navidson Record"⁴¹² to mimic the fade in and fade out effects of film titles. The first case, according to Alison Gibbons, is a metafictional tool, which heightens the reader's need to read the novel after being denied the entry: "This 'emptiness' of the remainder of the page transforms the normally unremarkable operation of turning the page into a defiant performance of reactance"⁴¹³ The effect of the blank screen becomes more emphasized, while reading the book in its digital form, where the words with the blank page in between create a blinking effect.

Hansen reaches a conclusion that to represent the digital forms is impossible due to its "resistance to orthographic capture."⁴¹⁴ The same applies to the inability to capture

⁴⁰⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 709.

⁴⁰⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 205.

⁴⁰⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 709.

⁴⁰⁸Hansen, "The Digital Topography of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*," 618.

⁴⁰⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 309-311.

⁴¹⁰Hansen, "The Digital Topography of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*," 616.

⁴¹¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, ix-x.

⁴¹²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xxv-xxviii.

⁴¹³Bray and Gibbons, *Mark Z. Danielewski*, 27.

⁴¹⁴Hansen, "The Digital Topography of Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*," 618.

the impossible house.⁴¹⁵ In comparison, Finn Fordham, in his chapter in *Mark Z. Danielewski*, considers the novel to actually reveal “the limitations of the cinematic which the book . . . manages to transcend.”⁴¹⁶ Julius Greve, in his chapter in *Revolutionary Leaves*, states that the manner, in which Danielewski uses pages as frames together with the iconicity of Holloway’s shadow being captured by Navidson’s camera, gives rise to a competition between the digital forms of photography and film “for the hegemony of supreme narrative form,”⁴¹⁷ suggesting that the photography, at least, can be captured on paper in a more efficient way. Although opinions vary, it is never possible to perfectly represent a different media, as even appearance of literary text in films is usually accompanied by sound—the reading of the text. As no representation is one hundred percent accurate, it is more efficient to view it with a degree of acceptance or comparison than with a clear boundary of possibility and impossibility. Therefore, I agree with Julius Greve, since the novel does to a certain degree represent the digital forms.

To conclude, Danielewski uses blank space on larger scale to mimic the content of the novel and, to varying extents, visual aspects of photography and film. The experimentation with blank space, axis of the text and features of concrete prose foregrounds the illogical nature of the house and disorient the reader in a similar manner the house does Navidson, thus emphasizing the parallel between the house and the book, as well as the book’s physicality. The features of concrete prose are most striking in the presence of calligrammes, which further connect the book’s content with its visual dimension and add upon its meaning. The most striking examples lie in a stamp-like loop, which represents the metalepsis created by the mise-en-abyme strategy; and the T shape of Yggdrasil poem, which alludes to a new beginning and infinite possibilities to interpret the text. The orthographic representation of film and photography is source of varying opinions. I conclude that the book is able to represent such media to a certain degree, which is sufficient for the readers to recognize.

3.3.2 Headlines, Numbers and Other Symbols

Aside from using the spacing through blank space, text in *House of Leaves* is fragmented by different titles, headlines, numbers and other symbols. In other cases

⁴¹⁵Hansen, “The Digital Topography of Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*,” 612.

⁴¹⁶Bray and Gibbons, *Mark Z. Danielewski*, 44.

⁴¹⁷Pöhlmann, *Revolutionary Leaves: The Fiction of Mark Z. Danielewski*, 92.

symbols function as signifiers of additional meaning, creating a connection between the text and its content. To foreground the structure of a lengthy *House of Leaves*, the author uses whole pages with titles for major segments, such as *The Navidson Record*—mirroring the film format with a title followed by a black or white screen represented by a blank page⁴¹⁸—the title of the Exhibits⁴¹⁹ and the Appendix⁴²⁰ with Johnny’s comments; the titles of Appendix II⁴²¹ and Appendix III⁴²² with commentary by the Editors; and the title of Index.⁴²³ Unlike the title of *The Navidson Record* the other titles are not followed by a blank page, since they are outside the scope of the film. The same spacing format applies to the individual sections in the appendices, which are marked with an upper-case letter starting with A, which is followed by the title of the section.

Other parts of the novel are fragmented by headlines, as is the case with Contents,⁴²⁴ Foreword,⁴²⁵ Introduction⁴²⁶ or Credits,⁴²⁷ among others. The spacing through headline is also visible in smaller fragments of Zampanò’s narrative focused on the film, such as the partial transcript of “What Some Have Thought”, with the individual thoughts fragmented by the name of the person that they belong to;⁴²⁸ or the transcript of Tom’s Story, which is further fragmented by the time of entries.⁴²⁹ In a similar way the Chapter XII is separated by prominent headlines, which indicate sections of the film, and small numbers on the left side, which separate such sections into smaller fragments.⁴³⁰

The individual chapters of *The Navidson Record* are marked by Roman numbers from I to XXIII and do not contain a name of the chapters, aside from Chapter XIII—~~The Minotaur~~.⁴³¹ Possible titles for the rest of the chapters can be found in the Appendix.⁴³² Each chapter number is followed by at least one epigraph. Chapters III, VI, and XX contain two epigraphs, and Chapter IX contains three. The epigraphs are in italics and the one in Chapter XIV is the only one with quotation marks. The epigraphs

⁴¹⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 1.

⁴¹⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 529.

⁴²⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 537.

⁴²¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 567.

⁴²²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 657.

⁴²³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 663.

⁴²⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, v.

⁴²⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, vii.

⁴²⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xi.

⁴²⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 707.

⁴²⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 354-365.

⁴²⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 253-261.

⁴³⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 313-346.

⁴³¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 313.

⁴³²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 540.

same size, but does not mimic the length of paragraphs. He also chooses to echo the incomplete code, which ends Zampanò's retelling of Navidson's film in the chapter, and uses "So?" to emphasize how the events in Alaska made him harden emotionally.⁴⁴² Although the phrase eludes ignorance and attempts to lighten the events, nothing can change the fact that it is a fragment of a call for help.

Furthermore, the symbols in the novel gain communicative function between the levels. Specific instructions from Zampanò in the Exhibits are preceded by section signs,⁴⁴³ which emphasize how important they are to him, and allude to legal documents, thus making Zampanò's instructions function as law to the reader at higher narrative level—Johnny—who, ironically, does not adhere to them. Another such symbol is the checkmark at the beginning of Chapter VIII,⁴⁴⁴ which with its position hints to function as an answer to words of Pelafina's letter: "For now all you need to do is place in your next letter a check mark in the lower right hand corner. That way I'll know you received this letter."⁴⁴⁵ The checkmark's appearance suggests Johnny being influenced by the chapter's SOS code to finally use the secret code, even though his mother is dead at that time. Nevertheless, the use of the code still provides Johnny with a chance to accept the memories of his mother. From the point of view of readers, who perceive Pelafina as possible author, the checkmark then exists to emphasize her wish for Johnny's reply, while its presence at the beginning of the SOS chapter suggests a call for help.

Throughout the novel, Danielewski also uses various symbols to add to the meaning and to create a connection between the text and its content. Such is the case of symbols of Ground-Air Emergency Code, which function as footnote indicators and force the reader to find their meaning in one of the collages in Appendix II.⁴⁴⁶ The code is first mentioned by Johnny, in reference to the death of his pilot father with the mirrored L for "not understood" and "x" for "unable to proceed," to describe his feelings. The use of the code is most striking in Chapter IX and Chapter XX. Chapter IX's footnote k⁴⁴⁷ and footnote x,⁴⁴⁸ which mean "indicate direction to proceed" and "unable to proceed," are referred to on many occasions, thus returning reader's attention

⁴⁴²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 103-104.

⁴⁴³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 530.535.

⁴⁴⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 97.

⁴⁴⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 609.

⁴⁴⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 582.

⁴⁴⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 109.

⁴⁴⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 107.

back to them and creating a looped labyrinth structure with many dead ends (for more details see 3.3.4 Parallel texts). The theme of labyrinth is further emphasized by a square symbol,⁴⁴⁹ which indicates “require compass and map,” to signify the importance of marking one’s path mentioned in the text-proper and the symbol’s footnote.

Chapter XX’s footnotes with the code echo Navidson’s disorientation, which is caused by the house’s changing properties, as well as him trying to escape the labyrinth of rooms and corridors. That is indicated by the symbol “→”—“am proceeding in this direction”—which appears in four directions throughout the chapter—right,⁴⁵⁰ up,⁴⁵¹ down (with regard to the orientation of the text),⁴⁵² and left.⁴⁵³

The code’s presence in footnotes further mimics the content with symbols unrelated to directions; such as the mirrored L for “not understood” to signify Johnny’s inability to translate a German word;⁴⁵⁴ F—“require food and water”—after the group’s water and most of their food gets crushed by the changing hallways;⁴⁵⁵ W—“require engineer”—for a commentary by MIT professor about the future of photographic authenticity;⁴⁵⁶ a symbol for “require signal lamp” after Holloway’s demise;⁴⁵⁷ L—“require fuel and oil”—when Navidson lights matches, and later pages of the book, to read the said book;⁴⁵⁸ a symbol for “require doctor – serious injuries,” when Navidson is dying; or a triangle meaning “probably safe to land here,” as he finds comfort in pictures of his loved ones after the traumatic experience in the house;⁴⁵⁹ among other footnotes. The symbols of the Ground-Air Emergency Code thus emphasize the theme of labyrinth of the changing house, and mimic events connected with it, such as the different emergencies that occur due to its exploration.

Throughout the novel, the missing or damaged fragments of Zampanò’s narrative are marked in various ways to distinguish between such fragments and foreground their realness in Johnny’s world. Johnny uses upper-case bold letter “**X**,” to indicate

⁴⁴⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 119.

⁴⁵⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 423.

⁴⁵¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 434.

⁴⁵²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 441.

⁴⁵³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 468.

⁴⁵⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 109.

⁴⁵⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 122.

⁴⁵⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 143.

⁴⁵⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 338.

⁴⁵⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 466.

⁴⁵⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 527.

originally spilled ink,⁴⁶⁰ what look like black crayon and tar,⁴⁶¹ and ink spilled by his fault.⁴⁶² Square brackets, on the other hand, represent the burned passages,⁴⁶³ starting with page 327. The two formats are used in the same paragraph, when both ink and burned parts are included.⁴⁶⁴ Whole missing pages are marked by two lines of dots with the number of the said pages between them.⁴⁶⁵

At first, Johnny actually uses the lower-case letter “x” for what he assumes to be a spilled ink.⁴⁶⁶ The use of this variant of the symbol foregrounds the similarity to the Ground-Air Emergency Code for “unable to proceed,”⁴⁶⁷ which emphasizes the fragments of the book that will never be recovered. The symbol also echoes through the chapter numbers, starting with the labyrinth Chapter IX, and most significantly in Chapter XX, which connotes its finality, further aiding to the false sense of an open ending with Navidson unable to proceed and slowly dying.⁴⁶⁸ The finality of the symbol is further emphasized by the fact that the last sample of a matter found in the space of the house—specifically at the bottom of the staircase—is labeled as “XXXX” and allegedly comes from interplanetary or interstellar space⁴⁶⁹—a space, to which people are unable to proceed under normal circumstances. The letter again foregrounds its finality in the bits included in the Appendix, where entries from A to X are assumed to be written by people other than Zampanò.⁴⁷⁰ The repeated omission of Y and Z brings them into forefront, possibly to say “Why, Z?” which is how Johnny occasionally refers to Zampanò,⁴⁷¹ and possibly an allusion to Mark Z. Danielewski.

Furthermore, the novel contains an intentional omission, as Zampanò introduces blank lines of text to create anonymity of two famous people, who visit Navidson’s family for dinner,⁴⁷² which creates a chaotic ambiguity of reference, since there is no telling, which lines suggest person A and which person B. Such intentionality can be transferred to four footnotes throughout the novel—footnote 142 on page 118, footnote 277 on page 327, footnote 389 on page 403 and footnote 418 on page 507—which use

⁴⁶⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 328.

⁴⁶¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 354.

⁴⁶²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 373-376.

⁴⁶³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 323.

⁴⁶⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 330.

⁴⁶⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 372.

⁴⁶⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 38.

⁴⁶⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 582.

⁴⁶⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 483.

⁴⁶⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 378.

⁴⁷⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 542-547.

⁴⁷¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 31.

⁴⁷²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 63.

the same format. The footnotes consist of five horizontal lines, which mimic a blank staff to be filled with musical notes. Like the anonymity of supposedly real people, the format used in the four footnotes also indicates a reference to objects or people in the real world. In this case it is possibly Danielewski's sister Anne's album *Haunted*, which the novel refers to in the back page.⁴⁷³ Mel Evans, in her chapter in *Mark Z. Danielewski*, emphasizes the inability of the printed sheet music to convey the dimension of sounds, as they cannot be heard,⁴⁷⁴ and further focuses on the connection between the novel and the album.

Similar absence of sound is present in Chapter XX, where two pages include a blank musical staff, emphasized by the following page of a staff filled with melody, which Navidson sings.⁴⁷⁵ Huber identifies the melody as "When Johnny comes marching home," which she considers to be a hint at Zampanò's creation of Johnny.⁴⁷⁶ Moreover, the melody might indicate that Johnny filled the staff with a melody of his choice, thus showing his superiority. At the same time, the fact that Navidson sings a song about Johnny emphasizes the subsequent mise-en-abyme strategy of Navidson reading the book, and thus knowing of Johnny as a character.

Parallel to the "x" symbol of damaged sections and its Ground-Air Emergency Code meaning for "unable to proceed," is the use of "DNE" in the book's index,⁴⁷⁷ which marks more than a hundred of keywords. With the possible meaning of "does not exist," it marks the words as being part of the missing passages, or a result of Johnny's revision process. Their meaning is erased as soon as they are visualized by the reader, foregrounding the novel's incompleteness and the reader's possibility of filling the empty space. The appearance of "DNE??" over the word "DOORWAYS" in the first collage of the second appendix⁴⁷⁸ suggests not the absence of the word but the nonexistence or impossibility of the "doorway"⁴⁷⁹ of fantastic intrusion, since the word itself is present in the novel but left out from the index. The connection to doorways also hints at another possible meaning, which is "do not enter" or "do not exit," thus functioning as a warning or reference to the labyrinth.

⁴⁷³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, back page.

⁴⁷⁴Bray and Gibbons, *Mark Z. Danielewski*, 75.

⁴⁷⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 478-479.

⁴⁷⁶Huber, "Leaving the Postmodernist Labyrinth: Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves*," 103.

⁴⁷⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 664-705.

⁴⁷⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 582.

⁴⁷⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 4.

The symbols of the Ground-Air Emergency Code, which are to an extent echoed in the missing and damaged passages, are not the only symbols Danielewski uses in footnotes to add to the story. Throughout the echo-oriented section in Chapter V,⁴⁸⁰ Zampanò's translation of echoed phrases in footnotes are indicated with the Solar System symbols for (in chronological order) the Earth, Pluto—still a full-fledged planet in 2000—Mars, Mercury, the Moon, Jupiter and the Sun.⁴⁸¹ The symbols for Neptune, Saturn, Uranus and Venus are missing. Danielewski, however, hints at how to find the planets, as the phrase about the myth of Echo, which was meant to say “tears her to pieces” is written as “tears her to pisces,”⁴⁸² alluding to the Zodiac sign Pisces, which is ruled by the planet Neptune.⁴⁸³ To find the remaining planets, the reader must search for their Zodiac sign in the myths about Echo—the Pan myth and the Narcissus myth. Pan, with his various goat body parts,⁴⁸⁴ represents the goat Zodiac sign—Capricorn—and its planet Saturn.⁴⁸⁵ Narcissus, as the son of river-god Cephisus and the fountain-nymph Liriope, together with the famous myth about falling in love with his own reflection in the water,⁴⁸⁶ represents the water-bearer Aquarius and the planet Uranus.⁴⁸⁷

Throughout the chapter, Zampanò does not mention Venus' Zodiac sign Taurus in any way; parallel to the manner, in which he tries to erase any mention of the mythical Minotaur—half-man and half-bull creature. The only hint at the existence of Venus in the chapter is the theme of love in the myth of Echo; parallel to the theme of labyrinth and father-son relationships, which hint at the Minotaur in the novel. Other than the Solar System symbols, the passage also includes infinity symbol and a capital letter Omega,⁴⁸⁸ possibly referring to the infinity and density of the space in relation to the physics of echo described in the text-proper. The reason for choosing symbols, which represent the Solar System, becomes clear in relation with the second half of the chapter, which continues with the theme of echo in Navidson's film with the

⁴⁸⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 41-54.

⁴⁸¹NASA, “Solar System Symbols,” NASA Science: Solar System Exploration, last modified January 30, 2018, <https://solarsystem.nasa.gov/resources/680/solar-system-symbols/>.

⁴⁸²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 41.

⁴⁸³Astrograph, “The Twelve Signs of the Zodiac,” astrograph.com, accessed November 20, 2018, <https://www.astrograph.com/learning-astrology/signs.php>.

⁴⁸⁴Theoi Greek Mythology, “Pan,” theoi.com, accessed November 20, 2018, <http://www.theoi.com/Georgikos/Pan.html>.

⁴⁸⁵Astrograph, “The Twelve Signs of the Zodiac.”

⁴⁸⁶Theoi Greek Mythology, “Narkissos,” theoi.com, accessed November 20, 2018, <http://www.theoi.com/Heros/Narkissos.html>.

⁴⁸⁷Astrograph, “The Twelve Signs of the Zodiac.”

⁴⁸⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 44.

“unwelcome echo”⁴⁸⁹ from the hallways, as well as the growl and lost Navidson calling for help and being saved by the voice of Daisy,⁴⁹⁰ who mistakenly pronounces “hallways” with its echo “always.”⁴⁹¹ As the possibility of the space intrusion in the house being of interplanetary or interstellar origin is revealed,⁴⁹² the house and the hallways are thus connected by echo, which travels through the Solar System or even further.

The headlines are used in the novel as a fragmentation tool, which mimics the film medium and as an attempt to provide better orientation in the lengthy book. The Roman numbers provide the fragmentation of chapters and epigrams, which follow them, foreshadow the chapter’s topic. Other symbols function as a tool to create an additional meaning. Some of the symbols appear to be the narrators’ attempt to communicate between the levels; while symbols, such as the Ground-Air Emergency Code, foreground the labyrinth structure and the emergencies happening during the exploration. For accuracy, different symbols are used to indicate missing passages of various kinds; blank lines referring to objects in the real world, such as sounds. The Solar System symbols foreground the interplanetary or interstellar interpretation of the fantastic intrusion, and further erase the presence of the Minotaur. The symbols thus function not only as a fragmentation tool but also as a tool for creating an additional meaning.

3.3.3 Typography

Danielewski further utilizes the dimension of text with the use of different fonts, colors and formatting to contribute to the novel’s content. The different fonts function to distinguish its multiple narrators, which is emphasized by the Editors, when Zampanò’s and Johnny’s texts first appear on a single page: “In an effort to limit confusion, Mr. Truant’s footnotes will appear in Courier font while Zampanò’s will appear in Times.”⁴⁹³ Distinguishing the authors of the novel’s various texts, however, is not the sole purpose of the different fonts. Elise Hawthorne argues that each font with its unique characteristics is chosen to represent various aspects of the narrators and their

⁴⁸⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 61.

⁴⁹⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 67-68.

⁴⁹¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 73.

⁴⁹²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 378.

⁴⁹³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 4.

text. She describes Zampanò's Times New Roman typeface as the most "bookish," thus appropriate for what she considers to be "the base thread" of the novel.⁴⁹⁴

According to Hawthorne, Johnny's Courier typeface, reminiscent of typewriter, indicates a responsive attitude of Johnny to Zampanò, Johnny's defined personality and his function as a courier between narrative levels.⁴⁹⁵ The Courier's "symbolic government bureaucracy look,"⁴⁹⁶ as well as the implication in the Editors' note that they might be the ones, who chose the two distinguishing fonts, serves as an emphasis for Johnny's paranoia and the feeling of being controlled. The fact that the font was commonly used in "secret government documents and espionage,"⁴⁹⁷ parallels Johnny's use of Ground-Air Emergency code and supports his responsive attitude to Zampanò's narrative, especially with the mirroring of the Morse code throughout Chapter VIII.

The Courier is also common in screenwriting, as it was designed to equal one page of a text to one minute of a video,⁴⁹⁸ which further foregrounds Johnny's status as an unreliable narrator with an inclination to create fictional stories. Because of its use in screenwriting, Rena Sen considers Courier to be a typeface of people, who are interested in film industry: "Film is your life, but that doesn't mean you're successful. Most likely you're unemployed."⁴⁹⁹ Such description, however, is more befitting of Zampanò, whose entire narrative focuses on a film and its in-depth analysis, which emphasizes his interest in it. Thus, Johnny using the font gives rise to irony. Moreover, because of Courier's relation to film, it is possible that Zampanò creates Johnny's narrative as an escape from the restricted objective style of academic writing to the more creative and personal narrative of Johnny Truant.

Compared to Johnny's unreliable and subjective narrative, Hawthorne describes the Editors, with their Bookman typeface, to be authoritative and neutral.⁵⁰⁰ The Editors appear in brief scarce texts throughout the novel. However, aside from the initial amusement at how well the name of the typeface fits with the users, its use does not provide more information about the mysterious editors. Pelafina's Dante typeface

⁴⁹⁴Elise Hawthorne, "Font Functions in 'House of Leaves,'" *Digital Storytelling (Formerly Post-Print Fictions)*, last modified March 14, 2010, <https://postprintfictions.wordpress.com/2010/03/14/font-functions-in-house-of-leaves/>.

⁴⁹⁵Hawthorne, "Font Functions in 'House of Leaves.'"

⁴⁹⁶UF Team, "Font Histories," *urbanfonts.com*, last modified February 2, 2013, <https://www.urbanfonts.com/blog/2013/02/font-histories/>.

⁴⁹⁷UF Team, "Font Histories."

⁴⁹⁸Raka Sen, "What Your Favorite Font Says about You," *Complex*, September 5, 2013, <https://www.complex.com/style/2013/09/favorite-font-says-about-you-typography/>.

⁴⁹⁹Sen, "What Your Favorite Font Says about You."

⁵⁰⁰Hawthorne, "Font Functions in 'House of Leaves.'"

appears in her letters, as well as pages 2 and 3, which include Danielewski's name and the title page of Zampanò's and Johnny's *House of Leaves* respectively,⁵⁰¹ thus implying her superiority, further contributing to the theory of Pelafina being the real author and erasing Danielewski's presence. Dante is also used for the front page of the book's American releases, such as the Full-Color Edition,⁵⁰² while the British edition uses Helvetica or a similar typeface.⁵⁰³ Moreover, if Pelafina is at the diegesis as the superior author, she descends through the lower levels like Dante through his underworld, adding significance to the choice of the typeface. Hawthorne describes Pelafina's font as a more romantic choice, which "adheres to her at times flowery prose and use of classical references and Latin."⁵⁰⁴

The colored editions of the novel contain different font colors, which add upon the content of the text. According to Hawthorne, the colors signify themes and concepts through consistency and repetition.⁵⁰⁵ In the full-color and the 2-color version, the word house is printed in blue; the word Minotaur, as well as any text related to the mythological creature, is struck and red.⁵⁰⁶ A stuck line in Chapter XXI of the full-color edition is purple.⁵⁰⁷ The blue color is used in every occurrence of house, even in the title on the front page,⁵⁰⁸ as well as its foreign variations, such as "haus"⁵⁰⁹ or "domus,"⁵¹⁰ and does not extend itself over plural inflection or any other part of the word, in which it appears, thus creating a sharp boundary. Hawthorne mentions the possibility of the blue color of house referring to the blue screen used in films, indicating emptiness, which can be filled with anything imaginable.⁵¹¹

The possibility of filling the emptiness of the house is further brought to the forefront by the blue square boundary of footnote 144, which runs over the course of the second half of Chapter IX.⁵¹² The text of each square appears twice; the second time in a mirrored image at the back of the same page, "as if it had seeped through the paper,"

⁵⁰¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 2-3.

⁵⁰²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, front page.

⁵⁰³Danielewski, *Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves*, front page.

⁵⁰⁴Hawthorne, "Font Functions in 'House of Leaves.'"

⁵⁰⁵Hawthorne, "Font Functions in 'House of Leaves.'"

⁵⁰⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 4.

⁵⁰⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 518.

⁵⁰⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, front page.

⁵⁰⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 24.

⁵¹⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 107.

⁵¹¹Hawthorne, "Font Functions in 'House of Leaves.'"

⁵¹²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 119-142.

says Michlin,⁵¹³ and names a list of what is not present in the dark rooms and hallways but appears in an ordinary house. The last line of the footnote—“~~Picture that. In your dreams.~~”⁵¹⁴—written in red, then emphasizes the power of imagination, which creates presented objects, even though they are in fiction presented as nonexistent. The final empty square followed by one filled with darkness⁵¹⁵ then represents a contrast between the ordinary house and its fantastic intrusion, presence and the absence of objects, the positive and negative of a photograph; canceling itself into an impossible existence, or a nonexistence, as the square disappears altogether.⁵¹⁶

Hansen considers the blue color to be the color of hyperlinks found on the Web—a “keyword into something like a portal to information located elsewhere”⁵¹⁷—which foregrounds the idea of the house being bigger from the inside,⁵¹⁸ as well as a parallel between the exploration of the house and that of the Internet. The fact that it is only the word house that is blue, and not home,⁵¹⁹ emphasizes the space with a sharp boundary from the outside world without consideration for a home that is created by people and their relationships, thus foregrounding the postmodernist focus on ontological concern over the epistemological. The blue color referring to the building is further emphasized by mentions of “architectural blueprints.”⁵²⁰

With regard to the red struck passages; Hawthorne, aside from the signifying of a work-in-progress, considers them to be rare hints about Zampanò’s character; as “there is something about this theme Zampanò finds disagreeable or uncomfortable.”⁵²¹ For Monica Michlin, the color alludes to something horrific—“red connotes blood and human sacrifice”—while the struck passages signify a taboo, yet not erased text.⁵²² If Hansen’s idea of hyperlinks is applied to these passages, the red keywords are used, when there is no further information available, thus creating a dead end in a labyrinth of hyperlinks. Though the struck format indicates an intention to erase the passages, the red color calls for reader’s attention, like the red cloth used to lure bulls, or in this case

⁵¹³Monica Michlin, “The Haunted House in Contemporary Filmic and Literary Gothic Narratives of Trauma,” *Transatlantica* 11, no. 1 (2012), accessed November 15, 2018, <http://transatlantica.revues.org/5933>.

⁵¹⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 141.

⁵¹⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 143-144.

⁵¹⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 145.

⁵¹⁷Hansen, “The Digital Topography of Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*,” 598.

⁵¹⁸Hansen, “The Digital Topography of Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*,” 599.

⁵¹⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 679-680.

⁵²⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 29.

⁵²¹Hawthorne, “Font Functions in ‘House of Leaves.’”

⁵²²Michlin, “The Haunted House in Contemporary Filmic and Literary Gothic Narratives of Trauma.”

a half-human and half-bull creature. Aleksandra Bida, with her chapter in *Revolutionary Leaves*, suggests that like the red struck passages, which Zampanò tried to exclude, “Minotaur cannot be so easily erased from the labyrinth.”⁵²³ The front page of the full-color edition, which depicts a staircase surrounded by a labyrinth, also contain a red color in the middle of a yellow compass, which sits in the middle of the staircase,⁵²⁴ further alluding to the lost Minotaur.

The purple line, when considering the idea of hyperlinks, signifies a keyword to a previously visited page, which is fitting for a passage focused on remembering. When taking into account the fact that purple is a combination of red and blue, which is emphasized by Johnny watching the sunset before remembering—“Reds finally marrying blues.”⁵²⁵—it is possible to apply their hyperlink meaning—the combination of a new information and a non-existent, or taboo, one. In this case, blue signifies Johnny creating the stories, while red signifies repressed or uncomfortable memories, which question the authenticity of two fragments: the memory of his mother trying to kill him and the story of a baby dying. This returns the discussion back to the theory of Pelafina being the real author, who created Johnny in place of her dead son, or Johnny creating the last story to protect himself with a story of a mother, who wanted her baby to breathe. Urban dictionary defines two mentally connected people, who understand each other’s thoughts, to be connected by a purple line,⁵²⁶ implying that an understanding is created between Johnny and Pelafina and further deepens the dependency of the narrative levels.

The purple, however, is not the only case of color combination. Since the compass on the front page is yellow,⁵²⁷ it is no surprise that the key to escape the blue house is Karen,⁵²⁸ whose surname is Green—a combination of yellow and blue. Meanwhile Navidson, who she calls Navy—connoting navy blue—lacks the yellow, and is imprisoned by the color restriction, even though the beginning of his name alludes to navigation. Therefore, to escape the spatial blue labyrinth Navidson needs a yellow compass to find home with Green; Johnny’s labyrinth of memories, on the other hand,

⁵²³Pöhlmann, *Revolutionary Leaves: The Fiction of Mark Z. Danielewski*, 50.

⁵²⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, front page.

⁵²⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 516.

⁵²⁶Urban Dictionary, “Purple Line,” [urbandictionary.com](https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Purple%20Line), last modified October 22, 2017, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Purple%20Line>.

⁵²⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, front page.

⁵²⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 522.

requires a red erasure creating alternative memories to reach the purple space of oblivion.

The bold and italics format, as well as the text size, are used to foreground various themes of the novel. Throughout his narrative, Johnny often underlines his words for simple word emphasis,⁵²⁹ as well as for titles of longer literary works⁵³⁰ and films,⁵³¹ and for Latin words.⁵³² All of these cases even appear in space of a single page.⁵³³ The format's use on titles of literary works, films and Latin words foregrounds the intertextual and stylistic properties of the novel. Upper-case format is also used for emphasis,⁵³⁴ as well as to represent loudness of sounds in Tom's story, even mimicking a gradual growth in its volume.⁵³⁵

At Zampanò's narrative level, the text proper of each chapter starts with a large bold-faced initial letter, which functions as a further chapter fragmentation. That is, however, not true for Chapter IX, which does not contain a text proper in its own right, as Zampanò's narrative in the chapter is actually a long footnote K;⁵³⁶ and Chapter XXI, which consists entirely of Johnny's narrative.⁵³⁷ Another exception can be found in Chapter V, which includes two such initials—one at the start and one in the middle of the chapter. The top of the page in the second case is blank, as if left that way for a chapter number and an epigram,⁵³⁸ which implies it to be the start of an unnamed chapter. As the chapter's topic and proposed name is Echo,⁵³⁹ it is logical to assume the echoing of the format is present to parallel its content.

The typography in the novel is used to emphasize certain themes and features. The different fonts further foreground the ontological structure and provide more information about each narrator and bring attention back to the theories about the one "real" author being Zampanò, Johnny or Pelafina. The different colors of words emphasize them, even if they are meant to represent the emptiness of the house or erasure of the Minotaur. The different combinations of colors mimic Johnny and

⁵²⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 261.

⁵³⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xx.

⁵³¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xv.

⁵³²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xii.

⁵³³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 297.

⁵³⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 142.

⁵³⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 271.

⁵³⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 109.

⁵³⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 491.

⁵³⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 55.

⁵³⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 540.

Navidson's escapes from different labyrinths. Other formats function for emphasis, to foreground intertextual and stylistic properties, or to represent loudness of words.

3.3.4 Parallel texts

Danielewski uses different formats of parallel texts to foreground different types of ontological features. First, the parallel texts in the novel function as a distinction between the two pivotal narratives—that of Zampanò and that of Johnny. Zampanò's narrative alone includes footnotes referring to variety of real and fictional artworks. It is the space of these footnotes that Johnny intrudes upon with his revisions and additional commentary, which transforms into long narrative about Johnny himself. While in the first chapter, he only supplements to Zampanò's text with short footnotes; starting with a 5-page-long footnote in Chapter II,⁵⁴⁰ Johnny often interrupts, and even overtakes, Zampanò's narrative to the point, where the texts become equal. Other footnotes, such as the one in Chapter III, force the reader to manipulate with the book, as after reading the 3-page-long footnote,⁵⁴¹ he or she has to return few pages back to the text proper, which follows after the footnote indicator. Therefore, the parallel texts further foreground the equality of the two narratives, as well as the book's status as a physical object.

Zampanò's text consists mostly of scholarly gloss footnotes, which create ground for parallel texts. In Chapter VI,⁵⁴² however, because of its short length, Zampanò uses endnotes, upon which Johnny intrudes with his text; creating a much clearer divide between the two narratives and further emphasizing Johnny taking over the text, in this case with the double amount of the text used. Further exceptions also contribute to establish the two texts as equal; as the Introduction and Chapter XXI consist entirely of Johnny's text; while chapters, such as XX, XXII or XXIII, lack his narrative altogether.

The most well-known case of parallel texts in *House of Leaves* is the intriguing section⁵⁴³ of Chapter IX, which utilizes not only footnotes but marginal gloss and a layout imitating a newspaper page to create a labyrinth of parallel texts and multiple reading order possibilities. The newspaper page layout is used in combination with the scholarly gloss format, thus the reader is given directions to follow. The sections of the layout consist of different footnotes, which create paths, as they continue throughout

⁵⁴⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 12-16.

⁵⁴¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 19-21.

⁵⁴²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 74-79.

⁵⁴³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 119-144.

several pages, which mimic the format of the page they first appear in, as is the case with the upside-down footnote 166, which starts on page 134 and continues on every previous even page, ending on page 130 with a footnote indicator to ninety-degree rotated footnote 167 on page 131, which in a similar manner continues on every odd page, finishing on page 135, where only then it allows the reader to continue with footnote 168 from page 135 onward.⁵⁴⁴ The marginal gloss of the section follows the same pattern with footnote 146 on page 120, which appears on left side of every even page until page 134, where a footnote indicator at the end directs the reader to the upside-down footnote 147 on page 135, which runs on the right side of odd pages, and thus returns the reader back to page 120.⁵⁴⁵

Such loopy structure allows reader to travel few pages and back and continue on the same page. There is, however, a striking case of infinite loop, as the chapter itself consists of footnote K (Ground-Air Emergency Code for “unable to proceed”) in a space, where one would find the text proper. If the reader follows every footnote, he or she will not be able to reach the newspaper-like section, as the footnote is back-referred to at the end of footnote 136,⁵⁴⁶ and even if the reader does not return to the beginning of the chapter and continues reading, he or she is interrupted by such back-reference after the mirrored footnote 183;⁵⁴⁷ and furthermore in the last footnote of the chapter marked with symbol for “will attempt to take off,” which ends with reference to footnote K, taking him or her back to the start.⁵⁴⁸ The same happens in the last footnote of Chapter XX,⁵⁴⁹ which, considering Johnny’s tendency⁵⁴⁹ to create stories, might be the original open ending of the film’s narrative. The reference to footnote K at the end then returns the reader back to the labyrinth of Chapter IX and leaving him or her without closure.

The labyrinth structure of the Chapter is further emphasized by footnote x,⁵⁵⁰ which indicates “unable to proceed” in the Ground-Air Emergency Code. Aside from its first appearance, it is back-referred to on several occasions—two times on page 114, and one time on pages 115 and 123—like footnote K. After reading the footnote,

⁵⁴⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 130-135.

⁵⁴⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 120-135.

⁵⁴⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 114.

⁵⁴⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 144.

⁵⁴⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 151.

⁵⁴⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 488.

⁵⁵⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 107.

however, the reader is left at a dead end, not even a loop. The path of the dead end is further prolonged by Johnny's 3-page-long intrusion at the end of the footnote.

In a similar manner, various footnotes throughout the novel refer to different parts of the book. They refer forwards—to the following chapters,⁵⁵¹ exhibits,⁵⁵² different parts of the appendices,⁵⁵³ index⁵⁵⁴—or backwards to chapters,⁵⁵⁵ footnotes,⁵⁵⁶ etc. Strict following such instructions would force the reader to enter the labyrinth chapter at the very beginning⁵⁵⁷ and never escape it. The labyrinth of paths is further foregrounded on textual level in a sentence with features of concrete prose. The second half of the sentence is present twice but continuing in different directions⁵⁵⁸ like the maze of the house's corridors.

The parallel texts are used by Danielewski in various manners to foreground specific levels in the narrative structure; as well as the physicality of the book as an object; and, by combining the scholarly gloss and newspaper page layout with various back-references and flash-forward references, contribute to the mimetic effect of a labyrinth.

3.3.5 Illustrations and Anti-illustrations

Instead of unrelated anti-illustrations, which are more common in postmodernist fiction, Danielewski with his codes and elaborate relations, which echo throughout the novel, utilizes the visual properties to increase the amount of parallel texts, and thus the reader's need to manipulate the material book. The various images in the book's appendices together with the footnotes, which refer to them, force the reader to turn pages and go back and forth.

Section C—“. . . and Pieces,”⁵⁵⁹—of the first Appendix contains photographs of fragments of writing, which Johnny tries to combine to create the book, thus foregrounding the writing, compiling and editing process. The first image contains two crossed-out passages:⁵⁶⁰ one near the top, which seems to be an alternative short version

⁵⁵¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 82.

⁵⁵²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 121.

⁵⁵³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 138.

⁵⁵⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 319.

⁵⁵⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 351.

⁵⁵⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 329.

⁵⁵⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 3.

⁵⁵⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 432.

⁵⁵⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 548-552.

⁵⁶⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 549.

of the last section in Chapter XIII, called Escape, or Evacuation;⁵⁶¹ and one rotated section, which contains an alternative ending of the film narrative from Chapter VIII.⁵⁶²

The second image is an alternative version, or a compilation of missing events, of Chapter XXII,⁵⁶³ with addition of a note written by an ambulance driver, as well as information about Karen still owning the house and warning: “There is nothing there. Be careful.”⁵⁶⁴ In Chapter I, similar line is given to Navidson: “There’s nothing there. Beware.”⁵⁶⁵ The text in the image also adds upon Karen’s interview, where she voices her opinion about the house dissolving,⁵⁶⁶ with the line stating that “it was the dream not the dreamers that ‘dissolved.’”⁵⁶⁷

The third image consists of four pieces of paper. The largest handwritten paper contains the last paragraph of the text about Navidson deciding to read a book in Chapter XX.⁵⁶⁸ The wording is almost identical but the biggest difference is the absence of the book’s name,⁵⁶⁹ which hints at the possibility of Johnny adding the mise-en-abyme of Navidson reading *House of Leaves*; and further contributes to the possibility of Johnny filling the musical staff with a melody, whose lyrics include his own name, thus intensifying the effects of metalepsis. The second handwritten paper, which is shaped in a somewhat triangular shape, reads the second half of the translated Braille epigram in Chapter XX⁵⁷⁰ with what appears to be “Hallmarks”⁵⁷¹ in the middle of the text. The last handwritten paper spots burned sections,⁵⁷² which place the fragment in the Holloway section of Chapter XIII,⁵⁷³ more specifically the text-proper of pages 335 and 337. The last paper contains a printed text describing a house built on top of stairs in 1835 by Washington settlers, which was destroyed by an eruption of Mt. St. Helens more than hundred years later.⁵⁷⁴ In the text, Johnny refers to the image as evidence against the unique nature of the house on Ash Tree Lane.⁵⁷⁵ Treating the paper as real

⁵⁶¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 339-346.

⁵⁶²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 103.

⁵⁶³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 522-525.

⁵⁶⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 550.

⁵⁶⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 4.

⁵⁶⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 524.

⁵⁶⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 550.

⁵⁶⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 465.

⁵⁶⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 551.

⁵⁷⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 423.

⁵⁷¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 551.

⁵⁷²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 551.

⁵⁷³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 323-338.

⁵⁷⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 551.

⁵⁷⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 414.

would truly disprove the house's uniqueness but, at the same time, confirm an existence of such impossible space.

The last image contains three fragments. The largest of them consists of handwritten text with an alternative version of section in Chapter IV, where Navidson checks the cameras;⁵⁷⁶ only this time, there is a buzzer of white noise hiding an ominous presence.⁵⁷⁷ The second paper is an unidentified sketch, over which there lie three papers with book references.⁵⁷⁸ All three of these books are mentioned in the Exhibits (the last of them through a back reference to the bibliography of Chapter IX),⁵⁷⁹ as sources for the pictures of plates that Zampanò meant to include at the end of the book.⁵⁸⁰

The last fragment of paper describes an intention to change the plot of the film narrative by killing the children.⁵⁸¹ It is unclear, whether the author is Zampanò or Johnny. The appearance of the fragment in the front bookplate⁵⁸² makes the paper's headline more visible and sets the time of the children's intended demise to Chapter XIII. Johnny is a possible author of the text, because of its typeface; as well as his desire for parents' love and attention. This is emphasized by the last story about a dying infant and its loving mother,⁵⁸³ which indicates that if he was the infant, his mother would want him to live, instead of trying to kill him. Another possible motive for Johnny is revenge, as the paper states: "Let both parents experience that. Let their narcissism find a new object to wither by. Douse them in infanticide. Douse them in blood."⁵⁸⁴ The fact that he did not resort to this might be because of his state of mind at the end of his narrative, which leads him to create a happy ending for his present and past, and possibly even for the film narrative. There is actually a higher chance of the text being written by Zampanò, as the index of the novel contains a word "infanticide," followed by "DNE,"⁵⁸⁵ which hints at its nonexistence in the text. The word is thus suggested to be part of the missing text, or a text erased by Johnny to save the children. Furthermore,

⁵⁷⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 28.

⁵⁷⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 552.

⁵⁷⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 552.

⁵⁷⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 152.

⁵⁸⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 529-535.

⁵⁸¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 552.

⁵⁸²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, front plate.

⁵⁸³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 518-521.

⁵⁸⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 552.

⁵⁸⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 680.

the text in the illustrations not being recognized as text, which could be mentioned in the index, foregrounds the reign of visual media over the textual.

The illustrations in the second Appendix's section A—"Sketches & Polaroids"⁵⁸⁶—focus on the impossible properties of the house, and aiding to the story's visual aspects. The first image contains two sketches by Johnny, the first one depicting light in darkness, the second one black stairs in black room.⁵⁸⁷ The two following images depict three envelopes with Johnny's illustrations of the inside of the house with the staircase and dark hallways.⁵⁸⁸ The use of envelope's structure emphasizes the house's changing nature in a manner similar to a fold-in method of combining two unrelated pages into one, thus creating a parallel with the combination of an ordinary house and the impossible ever-changing maze of its fantastic intrusion. The last image consists of Polaroid photographs, which depict a variety of white houses, trees, forests, fields, darkness, etc.⁵⁸⁹ Selection of these Polaroid images, separated by frames containing text, is present in the front page of the full-color edition,⁵⁹⁰ foreshadowing the events of the book and contributing to reader's expectations. Paul McCormick, in his chapter in *Mark Z. Danielewski*, considers the photo frames in the front page to "evoke cinematic or cartoon frames" and emphasize the coexistence of text and image in the novel.⁵⁹¹

The second Appendix's section C—"Collages"⁵⁹²—includes two images, consisting of various objects; which, when identified, can be related back to the story in the novel, such as the used matches on top of the book *Leaves and Trees*,⁵⁹³ reminiscent of the matches Navidson burns *House of Leaves* with;⁵⁹⁴ a label of Pelican brilliant-schwarz ink number 4001,⁵⁹⁵ which Johnny accidentally spills on some of the papers,⁵⁹⁶ and which echo the name of The Pelican Poems;⁵⁹⁷ a picture of a Minotaur in the labyrinth engraving; shells and bullets;⁵⁹⁸ a matchbox; a camera roll film;⁵⁹⁹ etc. Some

⁵⁸⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 568-572.

⁵⁸⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 569.

⁵⁸⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 570-571.

⁵⁸⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 572.

⁵⁹⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, front page.

⁵⁹¹Bray and Gibbons, *Mark Z. Danielewski*, 57-58.

⁵⁹²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 581-583.

⁵⁹³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 583.

⁵⁹⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 467.

⁵⁹⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 583.

⁵⁹⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 376.

⁵⁹⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 573-580.

⁵⁹⁸Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 583.

⁵⁹⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 582.

of the objects are covered in red stains, possibly blood.⁶⁰⁰ However, the most focus is given to a table with the Group-Air Emergency Code, which the reader needs to look at to recognize the meaning of symbols of the code throughout the novel. It is thus the most prominent parallel text, which includes an illustration.

The Appendix III consists of contrary evidence.⁶⁰¹ The first illustration is that of the cover of *The Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft, Volume XXVIII*.⁶⁰² The image provides evidence against Johnny's statement of the book's nonexistence in the Introduction, which gives rise to irony, as in the following paragraph he mentions presence of his own mistakes.⁶⁰³ The first image thus undermines Johnny's reliability to create grounds for the following illustrations, which are contrary evidence to his statement about the film's nonexistence.⁶⁰⁴ First of these images is a comic book page depicting events of Exploration #4 with Navidson and Billy Reston crossing path with Holloway in the corridors;⁶⁰⁵ followed by a painting of the Great Hall by Mazerine Diasen,⁶⁰⁶ the made-up name evoking a word "maze" in readers' minds, with the rest of the name possibly creating "insane ride." The next image is of the model of the house with,⁶⁰⁷ which is reminiscent of Maurits C. Escher's works, such as "House of Stairs" or "Relativity" made in 1950s,⁶⁰⁸ with its unclear perspective-dependent orientation. The presence of a tree growing from the floor, wall or ceiling with a labyrinth drawn on it;⁶⁰⁹ creates a parallel to the ash tree Yggdrasil growing upside down. The last illustration called "Man Looking In/Outward,"⁶¹⁰ depicts Navidson's photograph of Holloway's figure,⁶¹¹ which though visible in the Full-Color edition, is not visible in the British Black & White edition.⁶¹² The images of contrary evidence thus foreground the postmodernist theme of blurred boundary between reality and fiction, while trying to prove the existence of a film about an impossible house, ironically with created evidence.

⁶⁰⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 582-583

⁶⁰¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 657-662.

⁶⁰²Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 658.

⁶⁰³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xx.

⁶⁰⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, xix.

⁶⁰⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 659.

⁶⁰⁶Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 660.

⁶⁰⁷Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 661.

⁶⁰⁸Maurits C. Escher, "Litograph," mcescher.com, accessed November 27, 2018, <https://www.mcescher.com/gallery/lithograph/>.

⁶⁰⁹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 661.

⁶¹⁰Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 662.

⁶¹¹Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 213.

⁶¹²Danielewski, *Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves*, 662.

Fragments of all illustrative sections come together in a collage in the front bookplate, which also contains additional object, such as a compass and a yellow measuring tape.⁶¹³ The focus of the image falls on the piece of paper from the last page of Appendix C about the children dying,⁶¹⁴ which may be why the front plate contains more red stains. Like the book's front page with its Polaroid frames and illustrated labyrinth by Eric Fuentecilla,⁶¹⁵ the front plate creates expectation by providing the reader with fragments of foreshadowing. The front page of the British edition does not foreshadow the theme of the book to such extent but foregrounds the connection between the *House of Leaves* and book of leaves (pages), with photograph of a door knob by Mark Pennington,⁶¹⁶ with which the reader enters the book like he or she would the house.

As each of the images contains a connection with the text, Danielewski truly uses illustrations, and not anti-illustrations. Some of the images foreground Johnny's assembling and revising process, and the theories about the "real" author. Other images attempt to mimic the house's changing properties; prove the authenticity of the film by discrediting Johnny's reliability; or foreground the ability of seemingly random fragments to create a whole. The images also further emphasize parallel texts with the presence of Ground-Air Emergency Code sheet, which explains the meaning of each symbol; as well as with other references to the illustrations throughout the text. The image on the front page also contributes to the meaning, as the front page of the US edition foreshadows the labyrinth theme and the presence of the house and film; while the front page of the UK edition foregrounds the book representing the house, which the reader can enter.

⁶¹³Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, front plate.

⁶¹⁴Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, 552.

⁶¹⁵Danielewski, *House of Leaves*, front page.

⁶¹⁶Danielewski, *Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves*, front page.

CONCLUSION

In this thesis I explored the postmodern narrative techniques in Mark Z. Danielewski's novel *House of Leaves* together with the manner, in which the author exploits them. I introduced the topic with the theory of postmodern narrative techniques, provided a short summary of the novel, and analyzed the individual postmodern narrative techniques in *House of Leaves*.

To conclude, postmodern narrative techniques in the novel are used in a manner, which foregrounds the postmodernist indeterminacy and the possibility of multiple interpretations. The mise-en-abyme strategy of Navidson reading *House of Leaves* gives rise to strange loops, and thus undermines the hierarchy of the Chinese-box world structure. Frequent links between the narratives blur the boundaries between narrative levels and between the roles of authorial subjects, thus giving rise to theories about the "real" author being among the authorial personas—Johnny, Zampanò and Pelafina. That is made possible with the author's lack of presence, which fuels to the reader's doubt about Danielewski's existence. Furthermore, the author's absence renders Johnny unable to find Danielewski's identity, even though he suspects his own fictionality. Paradoxically, Danielewski foregrounds his own superiority by being absent. The linking between the narrative levels allows the resonance of themes; such as echo, labyrinth or the metaphor of book as a house; throughout the whole structure. The strategies of self-erasure contribute to the atmosphere of terror, the characters' paranoia, or the emphasis of emotional injuries; and foreground the literature's power of fictionalizing reality. Johnny's tendency of overwriting events to protect himself, creates a possibility of multiple endings—the closed ending of the novel being Johnny's addition, and the alluded open ending being Zampanò's intended ending. Through the use of strategies of temporal disorder, Danielewski projects the real world and creates an illusion of authenticity of the embedded artworks. The combination of real and fictional footnotes, together with an appearance of real personalities and fictionalizing the dark areas of their life, even with Roman-à-clef of Will Navidson portraying Kevin Carter, and autobiographical traces of the author, further contribute to the reader's illusion of being part of the same world as the authorial personas.

The stylistic techniques in the novel function to support other techniques; with the lexical exhibitionism connecting the words with the real world of the reader and further blurring the boundaries between narrative levels; catalogues structures providing ground

for textual techniques, especially parallel texts; the back-broke sentences, which give rise to variety of interpretations; and Johnny's use of stream of consciousness mode, which mimics the labyrinth structure of the novel and of the reader's interpretation. The discursive techniques further support the ontological structure with different registers, which define characters and provide them with personality. For Johnny, the use of informal language, especially expletives, is part of his identity. The absence of expletives fuels his paranoia with the possibility of being controlled by another narrator. The use of symbols instead of expletives in the remediation of radio, establishes text as the superior medium with the authenticity in the dimension of language. The strategy of carnivalized fiction with its variety of genres foregrounds the narrative levels; and mirrors even their interconnectedness; as the genres, such as gothic haunted house, echo through the structure and break genre boundaries. The presence of picaresque adventure story, which is typical for carnivalized fiction, emphasizes the postmodernist rejection of grand narratives, as the protagonists are unable to achieve ultimate truths. In the end they find comfort in the permanence of art, which is able to create a fictional reality. According to the novel, the only way to attain maturity is through not knowing. In the same manner, the reader will never be able to achieve an ultimate interpretation. The picaresque motifs and themes are also present through Johnny's sexual encounters and experimenting with substances, as well as with the novel's recurrence of grotesque imagery of human body during death or injury. Other borrowings through pastiche include passages with the dialogue structure, which contributes to the representation of the film in text.

The textual techniques connect the textual dimension with the text's content in order to create an additional meaning and to foreground the physicality of the book. The distribution of blank space attempts to mimic the visual aspects of film and photography, and foregrounds the connection between the house and the book, as it mirrors the house's changing spatial properties. Although opinions on the topic vary, the book is, to various extents, able to represent visual media. The calligrammes further add to the meaning, most prominently with the T-shaped title of the Yggdrasil poem at the end of the novel, which represents a new hopeful beginning, as the book provides space for infinite possible interpretations. Various headlines and symbols function to fragment the text but also to create new meaning, such as an attempt to communicate between the levels, or a mirroring of the labyrinth structure of the house and the emergencies of its exploration through the Ground-Air Emergency Code. The Solar System symbols

broaden the power of the theme of echo with the interplanetary or interstellar interpretation of the house. The variety of symbols indicating missing passages of the text create a possibility to be filled from the real world, as is the case of sound and the inability of the text to represent it. The different fonts foreground the division of narratives and provide more information about their users. The presence of the fonts also further contributes to theories about the “real” author. The different colors emphasize the theme of the house as unknown or empty and the Minotaur as missing or taboo, which becomes pivotal with regard to the combinations of colors, which allow the protagonists to escape their respective labyrinths. Other different formats function as an emphasis, or as a representation of loudness of sounds. The technique of parallel texts foregrounds the physicality of the book, and combines scholarly gloss and the layout of newspaper page to mimic the labyrinth and to force the reader’s manipulation with the book to its extreme. Similar effect is achieved with illustrations. Each image in the novel, from the front page to the images in appendices, can be connected with the text, thus Danielewski does not use anti-illustrations. The illustrations function to foreground the assembling process and the “real” author theories; to prove the authenticity of the documentary film on grounds of Johnny’s unreliability; or to illustrate the house’s changing properties. The different front pages of editions in English provide a foreshadowing of the book’s content (US), or foreground metaphor of the book as a house, which is to be entered (UK).

Therefore, I have achieved my goal of exploring the postmodern narrative techniques in *House of Leaves*, and reached a conclusion that Danielewski does not use the techniques in a random manner but in an elaborate one, which foregrounds the postmodernist themes of indeterminacy of history, meaning and interpretation; as well as the author’s superiority over authorial personas and the reader, who is forced to doubt the authenticity of narratives and narrators, as well as to manipulate the physical book.

RESUMÉ

Cílem této diplomové práce bylo zmapovat postmoderní narativní techniky v románu *House of Leaves* od Marka Z. Danielewského z roku 2000, a analyzovat způsob, jakým autor tyto techniky používá.

Diplomovou práci jsem rozdělila do tří kapitol. V první z nich jsem se věnovala teorii postmoderních narativních technik. Nejprve jsem definovala samotný postmodernismus; jeho myšlenky v literatuře; a znaky odlišující postmodernistickou fikci, tedy ontologickou otázku a využití postmoderních narativních technik. Následně jsem představila historické přístupy k literární ontologii, které se objevují v postmodernistické literatuře. Na závěr jsem se soustředila na rozdělení a popis konkrétních postmoderních narativních technik: technik tvorby světů, technik souvisejících se slovy a styly, a textových technik. V části soustředící se na techniky tvorby světů jsem se zaměřila na strategie světů se strukturou čínských krabiček, které zahrnují strategii mámení, smyček či mise-en-abyme; strategie mazání, mezi které patří i otevřené a alternativní konce; a strategie časového narušení jako je apokryf, anachronismus nebo kombinace historie a fantazie. V následné části technik souvisejících se slovy a styly jsem zmínila strategie tropologických světů, metafory a alegorie; strategie stylistických světů, lexikální exhibicionismus, strukturu katalogů a vět postrádajících kostru; a strategie diskursivních světů, tedy pastiš utvářející karnevalovou fikci, která kombinuje různé jazykové registry a literární žánry. V části textových technik jsem se soustředila na využití mezer, nadpisů a jiných znaků, které oddělují text; typografické úpravy textu; orientaci textu; paralelní texty, ilustrace a anti-ilustrace, a konkrétní prózu. Ve druhé kapitole jsem poskytla stručné shrnutí románu.

Ve třetí kapitole jsem se zaměřila na analýzu specifických postmoderních narativních technik. Nejprve jsem zkoumala techniky světů se strukturou čínských krabiček. Popsala jsem narativní úroveň a strategii mise en abyme, která mění hierarchii narativní struktury ve smyčku, kvůli Navidsonovu čtení románu, jehož je součástí. Soustředila jsem se na propojenost mezi jednotlivými úrovněmi, která zasahuje i do čtenářova světa pomocí metafikce. Časté spojitosti rozmazávají hranice mezi úrovněmi a mezi rolmi autorských subjektů, což dává prostor pro teorie týkající se

„opravdového“ autora mezi autorskými personami, konkrétně mezi Johnnym, Zampanem a Pelafinou. To je možné díky autorově absenci v narativu, což způsobuje čtenářovy pochyby o Danielewského existenci. Kvůli jeho absenci je Johnny neschopen autora identifikovat, i přes náznaky uvědomění vlastní fiktivnosti. Propojenost mezi úrovněmi dále umožňuje rezonanci myšlenek; jako je echo, labyrint nebo metafora knihy jako domu; skrze celou strukturu. Strategie mazání podtrhují teror, paranoiu a emocionální zranění; dále také zdůrazňují schopnost literatury vytvářet fiktivní realitu. Johnnyho tendence pro mazání událostí pro vlastní ochranu, umožňuje konec románu chápat jako otevřený i uzavřený, protože Johnnyho uzavřený konec lze vnímat jako vymyšlený a následně přidaný, zatímco Zampanův otevřený konec je poté označen jako původně zamýšlený. Se strategiemi časového narušení Danielewski promítá skutečný svět a vytváří iluzi pravosti vložených uměleckých děl, jako je Navidsonův film. Kombinace reálných a fiktivních poznámek pod čarou, společně s přítomností reálných osobností v příběhu, dokonce s pomocí roman-à-clef, kdy Will Navidson je Kevin Carter pod falešným jménem, a spolu s autorovými autobiografickými stopami; přispívá čtenářově iluzi o tom, že se nachází ve stejném světě jako autorské osoby.

Stylistické techniky v tomto románu fungují jako podpora pro ostatní techniky. Zatímco lexikální exhibicionismus pojí slova se skutečným světem a pomáhá mazat hranice mezi úrovněmi, katalogové struktury poskytují zázemí pro textové techniky, a to především techniky paralelních textů. Věty bez kostry přispívají množstvím jejich různorodých interpretací, a jim podobný proud vědomí v Johnnyho narativu napodobuje labyrintovou strukturu románu a interpretací. Diskurzivní techniky podporují ontologickou strukturu odlišnými jazykovými rejstříky, které definují postavy a dodávají jim charakter. Pro Johnnyho je nespisovný jazyk součástí identity, a to především jeho využití sprostých slov. Absence takových slov pohání jeho paranoiu možným uvědoměním, že je ovládán vypravěčem jiné úrovně. Použití symbolů místo sprostých slov v radiovém vysílání staví text jako nadřazené medium s ohledem na reálnost jazyka. Strategie karnevalové fikce s různorodými žánry zdůrazňuje jednotlivé narativní úrovně; a zároveň jejich propojenost; jelikož žánry, jako je například gotický strašidelný dům, se promítají celou strukturou; a tedy prolamují hranice daných žánrů. Pikareskní dobrodružný příběh, typický pro karnevalovou fikci, zdůrazňuje postmoderní odmítnutí velkých vyprávění, jelikož protagonisté nejsou schopni dosáhnout absolutní pravdy. Místo toho naleznou útěchu ve stálosti umění, které je schopno tvořit fiktivní realitu. Stejným způsobem čtenář nikdy nedosáhne absolutní interpretace. Pikareskní

motivy a myšlenky se v díle dále objevují skrze Johnnyho sexuální požitky a experimentování s drogami, a zároveň díky grotesknímu zobrazení lidského těla během smrti, či zranění. Další příklady pastiše jsou znát v částech s dialogovou strukturou, která přispívá ke znázornění filmového média.

Textové techniky spojují textovou dimenzi s jejím obsahem a přidávají či vytvářejí nový význam, zatímco také zdůrazňují materialitu knihy. Rozmístění prázdného místa se snaží napodobit vizuální aspekty fotografie a filmu a zviditelňuje vztah mezi domem a knihou, jelikož text a stránky napodobují měnící se prostorové vlastnosti domu. I přesto, že se názory liší, tato kniha je do určité míry schopna znázornit vizuální média. Kaligramy také obsahují přidaný význam, a to především název básně Yggdrasil ve tvaru písmene T na konci knihy, který znázorňuje nový nadějný začátek, jelikož kniha vytváří prostor pro mnoho následných interpretací. Různorodé nadpisy a symboly jsou nástrojem fragmentace, ale také nástrojem tvorby nového významu. Některé symboly jsou přítomny jako pokus o komunikaci mezi úrovněmi či jako odraz labyrintové struktury domu a příslušné krizové situace během průzkumu. Symboly Solární soustavy fungují pro rozšíření myšlenky ozvěny díky meziplanetární a mezihvězdné interpretaci domu. Různorodé symboly pro chybějící části textu vytváří možnost vyplnit je z reálného světa, a to například zvukem, jehož pravdivé znázornění v textu je nemožné. Rozdílné fonty zdůrazňují rozdělení narativních úrovní a poskytují více informací o jejich uživatelích, a navíc dále přispívá teoriím „opravdového“ autora mezi personami. Odlišné barvy písma zdůrazňují myšlenku domu jako neznámého a prázdného, a minotaura jako nepřítomného a tabu; což je klíčové s ohledem na kombinace barev, které dovolí protagonistům utéct z jejich příslušných labyrintů. Další odlišné formáty jsou přítomny pro důraz, či pro znázornění hlasitosti zvuku. Technika paralelních textů zvýrazňuje knihu jako předmět a přivádí čtenářovu nutnost manipulovat s knihou do extrémů. Podobný efekt mají i ilustrace. Každý obraz v *House of Leaves*, od titulní strany až po ilustrace v dodatcích, obsahuje souvislost s textem. Danielewski tedy nevyužívá techniky anti-ilustrace. Ilustrace v tomto románu zvýrazňují Johnnyho proces sestavování textu a teorie „opravdového“ autora, snaží se dokázat pravost dokumentárního filmu na základě Johnnyho vypravěčské nespolehlivosti, a znázorňují měnící se vlastnosti domu. Rozdílné titulní strany anglických verzí fungují jako věštba obsahu knihy (americká verze) nebo jako zdůraznění metafory knihy jako domu, jehož dveře někdo otevře a vstoupí do něj (britská verze).

Prozkoumala jsem tedy postmoderní narativní techniky v *House of Leaves*, a tím jsem splnila cíl práce. Došla jsem k závěru, že Danielewski nepoužívá techniky nahodile, ale velmi propracovaně, což klade důraz na postmoderní neurčitost historie, významu a interpretace, a také autorovu nadřazenost nad autorskými personami a čtenářem, který je nucen manipulovat s knihou, a pochybovat o skutečnosti narativů a jejich vypravěčů

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The thesis explores postmodern narrative techniques in the novel *House of Leaves* by Mark Z. Danielewski; and the manner, in which the author uses them. The first chapter provides an introduction to the theory of postmodern narrative techniques. The second chapter briefly summarizes the novel. The final chapter analyzes the specific techniques used in the novel from world-making techniques of mise-en-abyme and metalepsis, to textual techniques of parallel texts and illustrations.

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Tato práce zkoumá postmoderní narativní techniky v románu *House of Leaves* od Marka Z. Danielewského a způsob, kterým je autor používá. První kapitola poskytuje úvod do teorie postmoderních narativních technik. Druhá kapitola román stručně shrnuje. Poslední kapitola analyzuje specifické techniky, které jsou v románu použity, a to od technik tvorby světů jako je mise en abyme a smyčka, až po textové techniky paralelních textů a ilustrací.