



‘Textual Space and Metafiction in
Mark Z Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*’

Simon Barton BA (Hons)

MA by Research

University of Central Lancashire

December 2006

Student Declaration

Concurrent registration for two or more academic awards

I declare that while registered as a candidate for the research degree, I have not been a registered candidate or enrolled student for another award of the University or other academic or professional institution

Material submitted for another award

I declare that no material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award and is solely my own work.

Signature of Candidate



Type of Award

MA BY RESEARCH

Department

CLASS

ABSTRACT

The thesis presents an argument that through employing metafictional techniques, experimentation with textual and graphic space and allusions to hypertextual devices, Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* seeks to remind the reader of the presence of the book in print fiction.

Danielewski dispenses with traditional textual formats in order to provoke the reader to realise the presence of the physical book in their hands. This is mirrored in the narrative as two of the main characters both obtain a copy of the very same book that the reader is holding. The author employs metafictional characteristics such as characters that acknowledge their fictional status whilst writing a book within a book. The first chapter of the thesis examines the potential of metatexts and criticism in the twenty-first century and a questioning of its continued relevance.

Danielewski challenges textual space that potentially distances the reader from the narrative. There is an overwhelming amount of blank space in the text where there could have been narrative. The reader is told on several occasions that parts of the narrative are missing. Chapter Two is concerned with references to the book and the unconventional page aesthetics that encourage the reader to initially look at the page before actually 'looking through the page'.

The final chapter compares *House of Leaves* with the hypertext fictions that it so often mirrors. The two forms of literature, whilst initially seeming quite different are actually very similar in narrative and form. *House of Leaves* appears to draw on some of the conventions associated with hypertext fiction in order to provide the reader a more active role in the reading of the text, whilst allowing them to understand the conventions of the writing.

The experimentation with conventional textual space, metatextual techniques and references to electronic literature in *House of Leaves* challenge the nature of the physical book and its presence in contemporary prose fiction.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

i- TABLE OF CONTENTS

ii- ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1 - INTRODUCTION

7 – THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION

**19 – CHAPTER ONE: SELF-CONSCIOUS FICTION AND CRITICISM AND
THE RENEWAL OF ARTISTIC INTEGRITY IN *HOUSE OF LEAVES***

**32 - CHAPTER TWO: TEXTUAL SPACE AND THE PRESENCE OF THE
BOOK IN *HOUSE OF LEAVES***

**44 – CHAPTER THREE: HYPERTEXT FICTION, INTERTEXTUALITY
AND THE FUTURE OF SPATIAL BOUNDARIES IN PROSE FICTION**

56 - CONCLUSION

62 – APPENDIX ONE

70 – APPENDIX TWO

87 – APPENDIX THREE

94 – BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RELATED WORKS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful for the continued help and support of several people during the writing of this thesis. First I must start by thanking Alizon and Robin for all their patience, time, support and incisive comments over the previous twelve months. I must express my gratitude to Anne for showing so much dedication in helping both me and the rest of the postgraduates. I must thank my parents and grandmother for their continued emotional and financial support that I have received during my writing. Thanks to Hannah for always being there to listen to my constant barrage of ideas and strong opinions, and the financial support! I need to thank Whitney for her constant support and faith in my ideas and ability. I am grateful to the other postgraduates for always being so enthusiastic towards an area that is outside of their discipline, in particular, thanks to Marilena and Adam. I must finally thank all of my friends. Thanks to all the people I know that allowed me to mentally remove myself from my thesis it if only for a few hours at a time. I dedicate this thesis to my late grandfather.

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis I will demonstrate that the metafictional techniques employed in Mark Z Danielewski's *House of Leaves* (2000), with its experimentation in terms of textual 'space' and its allusions to the conventions of hypertext fiction, explore the limitations and resources of the traditional print novel. This argument will be supplemented by an analysis of the novel's defamiliarisation of traditional reading techniques which work to reinvigorate the novel form and provide a new understanding of the presence and purpose of the physical book as an object in literature. What makes this novel worthwhile from an academic standpoint is not its attempts to be innovative or unique but rather the author's efforts to re-examine and comment on traditional conventions that have formed in print fiction. The emergence of electronic media in the twenty-first century and hypertext fictions may have been an influence in creating a novel that uses hypertextual techniques in order to exist within a 'liminal' zone between print and hypertext fiction.

The supposed subject of *House of Leaves* is the documentary film, 'The Navidson Record', which is produced by a Pulitzer-Prize winning photojournalist named Will Navidson after he moves into the House on Ashtree Lane in Virginia with his partner Karen and their children, Chad and Daisy. Navidson intends to document family life by installing high-8 video cameras around the house. Instead, the cameras document inexplicable architectural inconsistencies. Will finds that the house is a quarter of an inch bigger on the inside than on the outside and then discovers a hallway that leads to a metamorphosing void of a labyrinth with no centre.

The plot of *House of Leaves* is palimpsestic with multiple narrative layers. There is not one narrative that is given more importance than another. Instead, Danielewski writes narratives in narratives and stories written upon stories. 'The Navidson Record' is the subject of an academic critique by a blind old man named Zampano who, despite being unable to see, has compiled a commentary on a film, complete with appendices, indexes, citations and allusions to other academic works, both real and fictional. Zampano is discovered dead in his LA apartment at the start of the novel by Johnny Truant, a tattoo-parlour assistant. Johnny discovers a trunk in Zampano's room containing manuscripts and scraps of paper that form 'The Navidson Record' commentary. Johnny soon discovers that the film is entirely fictitious but

regardless he decides to create a coherent narrative out of Zampano's notes. Johnny adds footnotes to the text that reveal his own possibly fictitious past and the experiences he has whilst reading through Zampano's notes. The novel also has occasional input from anonymous Editors who correct Johnny's footnotes.

The footnotes and main narrative units of the text often defy narratological and spatial conventions and mirror the architecture of the house on Ash Tree Lane; some pages will only feature one word, words that appear upside down, on their side and some narrative units run across two pages. The traditional graphic surface of the page is repeatedly disrupted. The footnotes and citations are often given more textual space than the actual narrative and there are many references to appendices that when turned to, are missing. The reader is told at the beginning of the novel that all the names contained within are pseudonyms and the work was submitted to the fictional editors by Johnny Truant.

In the first chapter of this thesis I explore why encouraging the readers to turn ahead in the book by including footnotes that can often be found several pages ahead or behind in the text, the reader is pulled out of the reading experience and is forced to remember that they are reading a physical book. The novel includes metafictional conventions that are concerned with making the reader aware of the presence of the book. In the case of *House of Leaves* the reader is aware of the book within the book (The Navidson Record commentary) and the actual book that they are reading (*House of Leaves*). At one stage in the text, Johnny Truant comments on his own fictional status. He wonders if he is simply a character in somebody else's work. The act of writing a book about a character compiling the notes of another character who was writing an academic thesis constantly displaces the reader. None of the multiple narrators can be deemed reliable as even the editors are fictional characters. The reader is left with trying to find common themes between each character to try to find common 'truths'. If there is to be a concept that can be deemed metafiction, there must also be a resulting metacriticism. Metafiction is concerned with self-conscious elements that become prevalent in a text. *House of Leaves* challenges academic criticism by self-consciously fictionalising it. There is a section in the novel that is composed of fictional accounts of real-world academics commenting on 'The Navidson Record'. When the traditional format of a novel is challenged, the reader has to reassess their reading methods and in doing so recognises the presence of the book, both in the novel and outside of the novel.

This thesis is primarily concerned with analysing how Danielewski structures his novel and his use of textual space as a tool that provokes the reader to acknowledge the text's status as a book. Space, both conceptual and textual, is discussed in the second chapter. I will argue that he does this to provoke a deconstruction of narrative that will lead to a realisation of the book's physical presence that will allow contemporary paper-based literature to regain its relevance in an increasingly electronically dominated society. In *Reading the graphic surface: the presence of the book in prose fiction* (2005), Glyn White argues, 'graphic devices in narrative texts raise ontological problems for the reader by foregrounding the book as object' (White 17). This is certainly the case in *House of Leaves* as the novel contains many instances of textual absence where blank space is given dominance over the text on a page. The presence of the physical artefact and its importance can not be underestimated; especially in a book that is as concerned with defamiliarising traditional reading methods as *House of Leaves*. White argues,

When the conventional graphic surface is disrupted, the reader responds to it in a very similar way in which he or she responds to difficulties in the purely semantic message, by taking context and metatext into account. And, ultimately, the challenge to the reader is always finite and manageable since the coherence of the text, however much it is defamiliarised, is guaranteed by the presence of the physical book in the reader's hands (White 22).

White's argument is particularly important because of the lengths that Danielewski goes to in order to defamiliarise the reading experience. No amount of defamiliarisation can take away the presence of the book and therefore the narrative will always be self-contained and finite. Eventually, the reader will come to an 'understanding'; it is not so abstract as to create an impossible read. *House of Leaves'* considerable amount of formal and textual games are still coherent and relevant to the main narrative.

Danielewski employs subversions of academic conventions. For example, in using footnotes that are given more space on a page than the main narrative. The reader is told many times that certain sections of text have been lost by the compilers of the thesis; instead the reader is often presented with letters that represent the gaps. There are instances where there should be a photographic image on the page but the reader is left with a blank space or letters in its place. The novel discusses the irrelevance of image to accurately portray reality. Alternatively it also expresses

language's inability to portray a visual image, especially an indescribable image such as the photograph of the dying Sudanese girl that won Will Navidson his Pulitzer-Prize. Despite this, certain pages are formatted in a way that provokes an image; some pages seem to represent stairs or ropes. The reader is constantly presented with unreal situations in which the laws of physics are changed in order to fit the narrative. The reader will have no image to relate it to in their reality and as such, the words become the indescribable image.

The third chapter is concerned with looking at how *House of Leaves* compares with the hypertext fictions that it seems to have been inspired by. Hypertext fictions are an interesting medium as they are a form of electronic fiction because the presence of the book is removed and replaced with the presence of the computer. In this way, the authors demonstrate similar methods of showing textual space. The move from physical space to virtual space seems to initially change the spatial boundaries of the text. The textual space in a hypertext can be theoretically limitless whereas the textual space in a paper-based novel is limited to the boundaries of the physical page and the front and back pages of the book that confine the text. Each screen (page) of a hypertext nearly always only contains a comparatively small amount of text in comparison to a traditional paper-based novel. This is similar to the pages in *House of Leaves*. The methods that a reader uses to navigate a hypertext are also similar to citations and footnotes in Danielewski's novel. A hypertext is navigated by clicking on hyperlinks instead of by turning a page as you do with a traditional novel. In *House of Leaves* the reader is provoked to turn ahead several pages by following the footnotes instead of simply turning to the next page after reading all the text on one page. In her essay, *Mediating Print and Hypertext in Mark Danielewski's House of Leaves*, Hagler argues:

In contrast to the passive role expected of print readers, readers of hypertext narratives must necessarily assume an active role in order to navigate through the text (Douglas 42). The expanded role of the hypertext reader suggests a transfer of authorial power. The hypertext reader has the ability to "choose his way through the metatext, to annotate text, written by others, and to create links between documents written by others" (Landow 90). Thus, hypertext narrative systems esteem the power of an intrusive, active reader over the traditional autonomy of the single author (Hagler 1).

Literature is facing a possible lack of relevance due to an increase in technological forms of entertainment. This may be as a result of the relatively passive role a reader must play in reading a text in an increasingly interactive world. Hypertexts are an active reading experience; to such an extent that some hypertexts allow the reader to create parts of the narrative with collaborative hypertexts. The chapter also shows how the two media of literature are actually more similar than first anticipated. Hypertexts are often not so far removed from a traditional novel in structure and narrative convention. It is simply the method of navigation that is changed. Chapter three is also concerned with showing how the deferral of meaning in both the novel and in academic criticism is highlighted by *House of Leaves*. Academic footnotes are used to give integrity to comments that are made in the main body of the text; however, in this case the majority of the footnotes refer to fictional writings on ‘The Navidson Record’. This intertextuality mirrors the constant deferral of meaning that a reader of a traditional novel always experiences, yet in the case of *House of Leaves*, there are many intertextual references on every page.

Because of the relatively recent publication of Danielewski’s novel, literary criticism is scarce on the text. There have been six essays that feature the novel in their discourse. However, I will only employ two of these essays in this thesis to support my arguments. Martin Brick’s ‘Blueprint(s): Rubric for a Deconstructed Age in *House of Leaves*’, approaches the text by looking at Danielewski’s use of colour, an uncommon tradition in literature. Brick looks to medieval literature’s reliance on ‘rubrication’, the use of annotations, traditionally scripted in red:

The word “rubric” derives from the French *rubrique* and Latin *rubrica* simply meaning *red*, though many of the word’s early uses reveal its textual and authoritative implications...By visually charging these words with a privileged status, rubric closes a text to its readers. The author of rubric sanctions – or rather insists upon – one particular reading of the text (Brick 2).

Brick argues that Danielewski’s use of blue is an ‘anti-rubrication’. By choosing a colour that is most commonly associated with hypertext fiction or links on a webpage, the twenty-first century reader associates the blue ink with multiplicity and diversity of narrative choices:

Ultimately, the blue print of *House of Leaves* achieves the status of anti-rubric by paradoxically guiding the reader towards a “single” reading through an

utter lack of authority. This seeming contradiction is possible because the blue script acknowledges a single author despite the varied voices (Brick 6).

The choice to colour the word House in blue paradoxically acknowledges a singular author despite the multiple narrative layers in the text. The fact that the word is coloured throughout the entire text, both in Johnny's and Zampano's narratives only points towards Danielewski being the true author of the text. Brick's essay will prove especially useful in my third chapter that discusses the use of colour in *House of Leaves*.

Sonya Hagler's 'Mediating Print and Hypertext in Mark Z Danielewski's *House of Leaves*', discusses how Danielewski's novel exists in a 'liminal' zone between print fiction and hypertext fiction. Hagler's essay will prove important in supporting my thesis as she also discusses the presence of the textual surface and its effect of making the reader recognise the presence of the book. The disruption of textual space seems to be important to Danielewski, as is the reliance on metafictional techniques that encourage the reader to become aware of the presence of the physical and metaphysical book in *House of Leaves*. Hagler stresses *House of Leaves*' hypertextual connections in order to acknowledge that Danielewski wishes to encourage the reader to recognise the presence of the book. However, I wish to discuss the textual space and the graphic surface of the book in relation to the metafictional characteristics that the author employs as well as providing an analysis of the frequent blank spaces on the textual surface of the book.

The physical artefact has an important role in our act of reading. I must analyse the conventions of the book as a printed object and the space that it contains within in order to understand how it can be manipulated and renewed to give it a place in a culture that is now finding relevance in electronic media. The twenty-first century reader is used to the multiprocessing that is required to operate the internet, television, radio and other electronic items. Hypertext and traditional (or untraditional) literature need to exist together in order to influence the evolution of the other. In *House of Leaves*, Danielewski incorporates conventions from traditional print-based fiction, hypertext fictions and academic criticism in order to expose how all the medias must evolve together to give them continued relevance in a society that strives for increased interactivity and new experiences in entertainment.

THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION

In the twentieth century, fictions began self-consciously to address their status as artistic artefacts. This enabled the novel to begin constructing complex arguments about the relationship between fiction and reality and investigating the way that language is said to construct our perception of reality. The form of fiction was dubbed metafiction - fiction that self-consciously admits its status as a fictional work. This technique of writing took many forms, such as: the author directly addressing the reader in first person, effectively making the author a character within the text; fictional characters that are foregrounded to the reader and acknowledge that they are fictional constructs; a story that subverts narrative conventions, and 'narrative footnotes' that continue the story whilst commenting on it. *House of Leaves* is arguably a postmodern novel with modernist conventions, with its non-linear narrative, multiple narrators, metatextual games and dismissal of universal narratives or 'truths'. The text is representative of the current need for reinvigoration facing literature and theory from the continued emergence of electronic media in society. The paper-based novel has to readdress its continued relevance in a culture that has disposed of many traditional spatial boundaries and the physical form of the novel.

House of Leaves is a novel that is arguably associated with the postmodern condition. Depending on the academic, the novel could be seen as a critique of postmodern conventions or homage to the movement. Whilst sharing many of the characteristics associated with modernism, a movement associated with the late nineteenth century and twentieth century, postmodernism often seems impossible to define. Postmodernism can be seen as a critique of, or a reaction to, Modernism. The movement is sceptical towards the ideas and ideals of Modernism, especially the ideas of grand narratives, progress, reason, identity, certainty and objectivity. It is for this reason that postmodernism has been attacked by critics since its supposed beginnings in the 1960s. There are many characteristics associated with postmodern literature. For example: it could feature a fragmented narrative, there can be multiple narrators all vying for significance in a complex narrative hierarchy. The characters may show signs of becoming self-aware as in metafiction and could question their reality. The theorist Jean-Francois Lyotard is most commonly employed in defining what

postmodernism means. He states, "Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard 1). Lyotard continues to state that:

A postmodern artist or writer is in the position of a philosopher: the text he writes, the work he produces are not in principle governed by preestablished rules, and they cannot be judged according to a determining judgment, by applying familiar categories to the text or to the work. Those rules and categories are what the work of art itself is looking for. The artist and the writer then, then, are working without rules in order to formulate the rules of what *will have been done*. (81)

The postmodern movement allowed for a re-construction of narrative, a questioning of previous grand-narratives and a re-establishing of the boundaries of text. This is certainly what Danielewski tries to obtain in *House of Leaves*. Many postmodern writers concern themselves with challenging the book itself and the traditions that have become inherent within it. Whilst postmodernism defies definition, as it itself could be regarded as a grand-narrative, it is worth noting that it is a useful term to categorise and describe an era and a movement that required a new way of thinking in order to address the increase in Globalisation and the emergence of the mass media and electronic information. It is a worthwhile term to describe a period in history where knowledge itself became a commodity in a late-Capitalist ideology. The increase in computerisation and the resulting fluidity of knowledge have resulted in a society with a loss of legitimacy and control.

I would prefer the reader to acknowledge that *House of Leaves* was written in a mass-media dominated society. Postmodern or not, *House of Leaves* could have only been written as a result of an increasing cynicism towards contemporary literature and its resulting criticism. The graphic surface of the page in *House of Leaves* reflects the cynicism towards traditional conventions. Danielewski's experimentation with the physical page and adherence to metafictional conventions portray a discomfort with traditional page formats and characteristics associated with contemporary literature.

The term metafiction is primarily but not exclusively, associated with postmodern literature that came to prominence in the early 1960s through authors such as John Barth, Robert Coover and William H Gass; though it is not a historically recent construct. Patricia Waugh suggests:

I would argue that metafictional practice has become particularly prominent in the fiction of the last twenty years. However, to draw exclusively on contemporary fiction would be misleading, for, although the *term* 'metafiction' might be new, the *practice* is as old (if not older) than the novel itself...metafiction is a tendency or function in *all* novels (Waugh 1984, 5).

Whilst metafictional elements became increasingly prevalent throughout the development of postmodern literature, metafiction cannot simply be a postmodern phenomenon. Every novel must possess an element of self-consciousness in its construction; the author consciously sets out to construct a novel usually built upon previous conventions that were themselves built upon more conventions and so on. In first person narratives the character tells their story directly to the reader as if the reader was a character in their fictional reality. Third person narratives are told to the reader by the author or the narrator, if the two are one and the same. The act of telling a story, whether it is orally or by writing prose is a fundamentally self-conscious act by the 'author'.

Novels such as Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1605) and Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759) both contain many metafictional aspects; yet they were both published several hundred years before the postmodern age. The opening page of Sterne's work shows a metafictional convention when its titular character directly addresses the reader,

I am verily persuaded I should have made a quite different figure in the world, from that, in which the reader is likely to see me.—Believe me, good folks, this is not so inconsiderable a thing as many of you may think it (Sterne 1).

By addressing the reader, the character acknowledges the character's fictionality or believes that he is writing a historical document that will some day be read by another person. Of course the real writer is Sterne, and it is Sterne who is addressing the reader through a fictional construct. By addressing the reader directly, the author offers his audience a choice either to remain in 'reality' or to become complicit with his fictional construct; in choosing to opt out of 'reality' the reader becomes a character in the novel's universe, albeit momentarily.

Patricia Waugh's *Metafiction: The theory and practice of self-conscious fiction* (1984) states that the one thing that all metafiction have in common is that they "explore a theory of fiction through the practice of writing fiction" (Waugh 2).

Fiction addressed the process of writing fiction and literary theory began to assimilate itself into the fictional works on which it was previously commenting. Fiction was written inside existing fictions, works by Muriel Spark, Robert Coover and E.L. Doctorow were among the most well-known in the twentieth century to include characters that are actively writing the fiction that the reader holds in their hands. Twenty-first century writers such as Bret Easton Ellis, Haruki Murakami and the focus of this thesis – Mark Z Danielewski, continue to work inside this particular tradition by foregrounding the book as object.

Metafiction's ability to provide a critique of its own construction allows the author to examine the structures and conventional norms of narrative fiction. Whilst analysing and discussing ingrained narrative conventions, metafiction simultaneously explores the fictionality of the 'real' world outside the literary text. That is, the construction of a reality so dependent on language and fiction that fiction is able to construct reality. Metafictional characteristics encourage the reader to remove themselves from the narrative and acknowledge the presence of the page and subsequently, the book. The traditional book-based boundaries are shattered and the reader is no longer restricted by the covers of the text. The reader recognises that they are currently reading a book, so any self-conscious comment by a character only allows the reader to realise the character's fictional state.

Metafiction has been hailed by many critics as representative of the death of the novel, the end of narrative evolution. It has been argued that as soon as the novel becomes primarily self-conscious of its physical state, it can no longer proceed in new directions. Waugh remarks upon this common misconception:

How can metafiction be 'placed' within the evolution of the novel, as well as within the context of non-literary culture, and still be seen as a point of renewal rather than a sign of exhaustion? Ultimately, questions about the viability of metafiction lead to questions about the novel itself and its possible future development. (Waugh 64)

To enable the novel to renew itself, metafiction began to take a prominent role in literature. Many metafictional works were dubbed 'experimental fictions'. Experimental fiction of any kind needs an audience with the ability to recognise literary and linguistic conventions. The forms and language that experimental fictions implement should not be so unfamiliar as to be beyond the given modes of communication, or the fiction will be simply not worth the effort – a common argument with regards to the

complex linguistic and narrative ‘games’ that authors of metafictional novels often employ such as B.S. Johnson’s *Albert Angelo* (1964) or Mark Z Danielewski’s *The Fifty Year Sword* (2005). There has to be a level of familiarity, a link to previous generic conventions that provide the reader with certain expectations. Waugh states, “In metafiction it is precisely the *fulfilment* as well as the *non-fulfilment* of generic expectations that provides both familiarity and the starting point for innovation” (Waugh 64). The traditional and simple conventions of realism and popular fiction establish a sense of familiarity in the reader which is then often parodied and assimilated with cultural forms from outside the novel form such as journalistic techniques, cinematic devices and cult genre conventions.

Waugh makes connections to Russian formalist theory, particularly Viktor Shklovsky’s theory of *ostranenie* or defamiliarization. Defamiliarization is a technique that constantly renews perception by “exposing and revealing the habitual and the conventional” (Waugh 65), and the practices of commenting on and unveiling the conventional and habitual are among the most prominent concerns of metafiction. The second main component of Shklovsky’s theory is ‘laying bare the device’ in order to achieve his concept of defamiliarization. Thus metafictional literature can be seen as inherently self-conscious when applied to the work directly that results in a deliberate parody of itself – metafiction. Waugh states:

In the Russian formalist terms of literary evolution, however, such parody would be seen as a point of positive renewal in literary development, for the concept of ‘making strange’ or defamiliarization implies a literary dynamism: things cannot *remain* strange. In these terms, therefore, metafiction represents a response to a crisis within the novel – to a need for self-conscious parodic undermining in order to ‘defamiliarize’ fictional conventions (Waugh 65).

These fictional conventions have become what Waugh calls “automatized and inauthentic” (Waugh 65) and as such metafiction strives to release new and more authentic forms. The term ‘parody’, as a literary form, “deliberately sets itself up to break norms that have become conventionalized.”(Waugh 65). Metafiction is a technique that inherently relies on parody, not to play simple games with literature but to challenge the very foundations on which literature is built. It could be argued that years of realist fiction resulted in a sterile and contrived form of art that metafiction set out to positively renew through defamiliarization and parody of familiar conventions. Metafictional parody reveals how a particular set of contents was

expressed in a particular set of conventions that was recognised as 'literature' by its readers. What is important is how these contents and conventions are relevant in contemporary culture. Waugh argues:

'[Metafiction]' exploits the indeterminacy of the text, forcing the reader to revise his or her rigid preconceptions based on literary and social conventions, by playing off contemporary and earlier paradigms against each other and thus defeating the reader's expectations about both of them (Waugh 67).

Waugh believes that every novel, contemporary or otherwise is inherently metafictional, or at least self-consciously written. However it is at crisis points such as the proliferation and emergence of postmodern writing in the 1960s that metafiction starts to become especially prominent in literature:

The novel, always inherently self-conscious, always inherently provisional in its process of relativizing language through continuous assimilation of discourses, has now and again to stop and examine the process, to see where it is going, to find out what it is (Waugh 67).

This constant self-conscious analysis of the novel's form from within the novel allows for a positive renewal of form and structure that reflects the culture and society that it exists within and allows the novel to keep its relevance and artistic integrity.

Metafiction allows fiction to discuss and analyse the history of the novel as genre: "By studying metafiction, one is, in effect, studying that which gives the novel its identity." (Waugh 5). Metafiction has provoked the reader to study the conventions of the novel's history that gave the novel the structure and style that it has today. Unlike conventional theory that analyses the novel outside of the text, metafictional analysis appears inside the text by its author and by the reader who is physically outside of the text.

Throughout the history of literary theory, the novel has always proved notorious in its ability to defy definition. Metafiction tries to expose the foundations of this instability by addressing the fact that novels are constructed through historical forms of communication. Waugh states:

There is no one privileged 'language of fiction'. There are languages of memoirs, journals, diaries, histories, conversational registers, legal records, journalism, documentary. These languages compete for privilege. They question and relativize each other to such an extent that the 'language of fiction' is always, if often covertly, self-conscious (Waugh 5).

The novel as a construct of language continues to question itself and prioritise various languages. Metafictional novels tend to be constructed on a continual opposition: “the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion” (Waugh 6). Metafiction will always construct a fiction that will simultaneously make a statement about its own creation.

For example, a prominent metafictional text, Italo Calvino’s *If on a Winter’s Night a Traveller*, opens with a direct address to the reader about the situation of reading and purchasing a book; the second chapter opens with the first paragraph of the novel that the reader has bought, however, Calvino flips the fictional and ontological levels of the novel by directly placing the reader into the story,

The novel begins in a railway station, a locomotive huffs, steam from a piston covers the opening of the chapter, a cloud of smoke hides part of the first paragraph (Calvino 1).

The author reminds the reader that descriptions in fiction are always linguistic constructs created by an author as signs on the page. Calvino suggests to the reader that those signs on the page are not just simple, that they are far more than just shaped ink in rows. The language in this novel is self-conscious; whilst immersing the reader in the story, the reader is never allowed to forget that it is a story, descriptions are restrained by linguistic structures.

Other terms for self-conscious writing are, to quote Waugh, “the introverted novel”, ‘the anti-novel’, ‘irrealism’, ‘surfiction’, ‘the self-begetting novel’, ‘fabulation’. All, like ‘metafiction’, imply a fiction that self-consciously reflects upon its own structure as language; all offer different perspectives on the same process.” (Waugh 14). Each of the ‘sub-genres’ of metafiction specify a certain quality of metafiction. For example, ‘surfiction’ describes the entry of the overt narrator into the text. The narrator dominates the text. The focus of the novel becomes the narrator. Metafiction, therefore is a term that covers a wide range of fictions, both realist and surrealist; some deal with exploring the conventions of fiction, others theoretical conventions. Some metafictional works critique linguistic constructions and their relevance to fiction and others deconstruct typical narrative structure. Some metafictional works are studies of intertextuality. Occasionally the author implements the use of narrative footnotes that refer to previous fictions and even to pages in that particular novel. This will be discussed later in this work. It seems that only through

experimentation with existing narrative techniques, textual formats and intertextuality can the novel as an artistic artefact be truly relevant in contemporary postmodern society.

Intertextuality is a convention that is often used in *House of Leaves*. Danielewski presents the reader with intertextual links to real academic works, fake academic links and recreates entire works within the confines of his text. This can be seen in his publication of *The Whalestoe Letters* (2000), released in conjunction with *House of Leaves*. *The Whalestoe Letters* were originally a series of letters inside the *House of Leaves*.

Intertextuality is the relationship between two or more texts that allude to one another, quote one another or otherwise refer to the other. Roland Barthes argued that the meaning of an artistic work does not reside in that particular work, but instead, in the reader's or viewer's experience. Julia Kristeva suggested that intertextuality refers to the interdependence of texts and the continual deferment of meaning through and between texts. Meaning and 'truth' are constantly deferred to another text so that no text can possess an ultimate meaning.

Whilst the term was coined by Kristeva in 1966 and is primarily associated with postmodernism, the word is not just related to contemporary texts. Many poems and paintings refer to Biblical history or mythology, as do many older texts. Intertextuality is most commonly seen in contemporary popular culture, especially in modern hip-hop that is constantly referring to artists that have come before. The television show *The Simpsons* makes frequent references to film and literature in each programme. *The Simpsons* and other popular television programmes such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Lost* are reliant on intertextuality as a source of humour and a reference to reality that the viewer can relate to.

In the context of this thesis, intertextuality will be discussed in relation to the similarities between *House of Leaves* and internet-based electronic hypertext fictions. Hypertext fictions are fundamentally intertextual as they require the reader to actively click on hyperlinks that are part of the narrative in order to navigate the text. *House of Leaves*'s numerous footnotes can be applied by the reader in a similar manner.

Metafictional techniques in contemporary literature have resulted in increasingly self-aware narratives that re-establish the boundaries between fiction and reality. Postmodern games with page structure and form, especially in experimental fictions such as *House of Leaves*, provoke the reader to initially acknowledge the

graphic surface of the page itself before acknowledging the narrative that it contains and presents. It is therefore important to understand how to read the graphic surface of the page and what the resulting analysis means for literature. Glyn White's book *Reading the Graphic Surface: The Presence of the Book in Prose Fiction* will prove especially useful in this thesis. He writes:

The term 'graphic surface' relates to the face of any page of printed text. We are all familiar with a page of text, and we know how to use it, yet it is just this familiarity that makes the graphic surface a little too close for analytical comfort (White 5).

This is precisely the problem that Danielewski addresses in *House of Leaves*. In order to establish paper-based fiction's continued relevance in an increasingly electronic society, the focus must be drawn to the page itself. The reader must return to what makes a novel unique – the page of printed text. By analysing how the printed page can be used in new and culturally relevant ways the novel can regain its place in society. This is the fundamental argument in this thesis, I wish to understand how Danielewski's text can help to re-establish and renew the book.

Danielewski's text often features pages that are dominated by white blank space that could otherwise be used to contain text. The reader is forced to evaluate their attitudes towards what they expect from a page in a book. White discusses the reader's perceptions towards individual pages, "Nevertheless our attitude to this printed page will be completely different to that with which we might approach a wholly blank page" (White 5). In *House of Leaves*, the reader is also presented with a graphic surface of narrative text that is often broken, with missing words or entire units of text. White states that this is an example of redundancy:

Speech usually contains some redundancy in order to guarantee its message is not lost. So too does literature, but literary texts don't need to be 'committed to memory quite so urgently as speech because they exist on paper (White 11).

Writing often parallels speech and this is why writing will sometimes contain missing words or redundancy. In this thesis I will often refer to it as blank space or absence of text. In Danielewski's text the reader is not sure if it is the narrator's omission and therefore also the author's, or the printer's. The blank space in *House of Leaves* is only significant because it makes the reader reassess their reading habits and

that removes the reader from the act of reading and allows them to analyse the text and content of the narrative.

More modern hypertexts, known as electronic hypertexts, are found on the internet and use a variety of methods to encourage a non-linear and unconventional read. Electronic hypertexts implement blue hyperlinks as found on websites. The reader uses a mouse to click on these links, which move them to other web pages, thus giving the reader the opportunity to move through metaphysical time and space in new and unconventional ways.

The development of electronic hypertext fiction paralleled the growth and proliferation of hypertext development software and the technological emergence of electronic networks. Two software programs that were specifically designed for literary hypertext, *Storyspace* and *Intermedia* became available in the 1990s. Resulting hypertexts included Michael Joyce's *afternoon, a story*, Stuart Molphrop's *Victory Garden* and Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*. Early electronic hypertext critics and theorists include Jay David Bolter, George Landow, Robert Coover, Stuart Molphrop, Douglas Anthony Cooper and Michael Joyce.

It is inevitable that discourse written on *House of Leaves* will eventually have to touch on its connections to the medium of hypertext fiction. In this thesis I will use two free hypertext fictions from the Electronic Literature Organisation website to give a comparative study between Mark Amerika's *Grammatron*, Martha Conway's *8 Minutes* and Danielewski's *House of Leaves*. By choosing freely available hypertext fictions, the reader can see the varying quality and literary merit of this emerging form of literature. Hypertext fictions do not receive the same amount of rigorous quality control that a paper-based novel would receive. This could be for purely financial and economic reasons (the texts do not require printing and promotion) or it could be as a result of the willingness to allow experimentation in this relatively new medium. *House of Leaves* exists in a 'liminal zone' (Hagler 1) between print and hypertext, "*House of Leaves* represents the possibility for print and electronic media to exist together symbiotically, each influencing the other's evolution." (Hagler 1). Most importantly for this thesis, hypertext fictions show how metafictional techniques and textual space can be experimented with to allow the reader to acknowledge the presence of the book, or in a hypertext's case, the computer. The physical artefact has a key role in our act of reading, it is only by acknowledging it and understanding how

it can be manipulated that we can renew the novel's form and make it relevant in an increasingly electronically dominated culture.

CHAPTER ONE
SELF-CONSCIOUS FICTION AND CRITICISM AND THE RENEWAL OF
ARTISTIC INTEGRITY IN *HOUSE OF LEAVES*

In this chapter I will discuss the connection between fiction and its resulting criticism and the result that metafiction has on a reader with regard to making the individual realise the spatial boundaries and physical presence of the book. I will comment on how the concept of metafiction has evolved and what techniques *House of Leaves* uses to comment on the current state of self-conscious fiction and literature. If there is to be such a thing as metafiction, something that also must be problematised, there must, therefore, be some form of metacriticism. This is something that is represented in this specific text by the self-awareness of the criticism as a piece of criticism that is paradoxically simply part of the fiction. Metafiction is a concept that could encourage the reader to remove oneself from the reading experience and acknowledge the presence of the book that they are holding. It is a technique that gives the text a transparency that forces the reader to become aware of the graphic surface of the page and the sentences that it contains. The presence of the physical book is a major concern in this thesis. This particular novel encourages the reader to firstly, acknowledge the aesthetics and the physicality of the text on the page before proceeding “to look through the text” (Hagler 2). The reader has to constantly readdress their own methods of reading:

I suggest there is a useful principle here. Disruptions of the conventional graphic surface are soon assimilated into the fictional world. *In Transit* is self-consciously aware of it: ‘An alienation effect may be a fiction within a fiction, purporting to thrust the spectator back into the real world outside the frame but in practice drawing him deeper into the fictitious perspective’ (1969:70). The outcome of this is to place the accuracy of the term ‘alienation effect’ in doubt. The reader will attempt to adapt his reading to understand a graphic device (White 20).

Danielewski successfully achieves this in his text, the reader is constantly alienated by the shifting boundaries and yet, constantly adapts to the new reading challenges in order to understand the graphic device that he is employing. By adapting, the reader must readdress their own individual act of reading, in *House of Leaves*, the author

appears to recognise that disruptions on the graphic surface of the page force an adaptation and as such, a form of renewal in reading.

House of Leaves is unique in addressing the book. The book that the reader is holding and reading is featured inside of the narrative on a few occasions. We are told that Navidson is carrying a book entitled '*House of Leaves*' when he is lost in the labyrinth. Navidson's text is burnt in order to provide a source of light in the darkness of the halls. He burns each page after he has read it. Late in the narrative, an increasingly mentally unstable Johnny Truant stumbles across a rock band in a club who present the book to him (*House of Leaves* 513). The reader is given the layout of the title page which is almost exactly the same as the title page of the book the reader is holding. This has another effect on the reader by forcing them to realise the book's presence and how it affects how they read. The reader becomes aware of how the book creates boundaries, something that Danielewski both conforms to and tries to challenge.

Metafiction is a concept that an author employs to allow the novel to regain its status as a legitimate and relevant art form by parodying its own conventions. Patricia Waugh remarks:

Could it not be argued instead that metafictional writers, highly conscious of the problems of artistic legitimacy, simply sensed a need for the novel to theorize about itself? Only in this way might the genre establish an identity and validity within a culture apparently hostile to its printed, linear narrative and conventional assumptions about 'plot', 'character', 'authority' and 'representation'. The traditional fictional quest has thus been transformed into a quest for fictionality (Waugh 10).

An analysis of fictional conventions from inside the fiction, as is the case with Danielewski's novel, allows the author to estimate their novel's theoretical (literary) criticism to a certain extent. Of course, this theoretical criticism is fictitious but only goes to amplify the inherent fictiveness of literary criticism. The critic/novelist David Lodge writes at the boundary between theory and fiction. In *The Novel Now* he writes:

Indeed it would be false to oppose metafiction to realism; rather, metafiction makes explicit the implicit problematic of realism. The foregrounding of the act of authorship within the boundaries of the text which is such a common feature of contemporary fiction is a defensive response, either conscious or

intuitive, to the questioning of the idea of the author and of the mimetic function of fiction by modern critical theory (Lodge 10).

In this statement, Lodge questions metafiction's traditional opposition to realism, claiming that the metafictional work often critiques the realist novel from a realist viewpoint. Because Lodge works between the two disciplines he has the ability to critique the novel from an author's point of view and a critic's.

Lodge also talks about the process that is required to renew or reform the novel:

'resisting the novel may in fact be a way of reforming the novel...' (Lodge). One might argue that this is precisely what novelists themselves have always done, from Cervantes to Martin Amis: reformed the novel by building resistance to fictional stereotypes and conventions into the novel itself (Lodge 12).

Metatexts employ the traditional conventions of the novel and then expose them as fictional stereotypes that need to be challenged in order for the novel to progress as a legitimate art form. *House of Leaves* is critically worthwhile because whilst it discusses realist conventions and a multitude of narrative conventions, it works from inside the form of metafiction and challenges the conventions that have become concrete in the previously unique, unorthodox and often experimental realm of self-conscious fiction.

If originally metafiction was entirely dependent upon employing conventional genres such as westerns, thrillers and science fiction and subverting them, we come to another crisis point in contemporary literary criticism where we have to now step back and analyse the previously experimental and avant-garde form of metafiction. If the concept became so popular in the late twentieth century that it entered the mainstream, surely metafiction in the twenty-first century can be seen as a tempting target for defamiliarisation and create what could be termed a 'post-metafiction'. This is, of course, if such a concept as a metafiction can actually exist. A 'metafiction' suggests that there is something more to the fiction that the reader is holding. Now, as I have stated, there is no more fiction than the fiction that is contained in that particular book. Narratives are placed on narratives but that does not mean that one narrative takes importance over the rest in order to become 'more' than fiction, or that the narratives can 'break out' of the confines of the front and back covers. Each narrative is simply a fiction, a self-conscious fiction, but fiction

regardless, contained by the book itself, there cannot be any more fiction than that which is contained within that particular text. White states:

The idea of levels is a common critical device, as Umberto Eco notes: 'When trying to propose a model for an ideal text, current theories tend to represent its structure in terms of levels – variously conceived as ideal steps of a process of generation or a process of interpretation (or both)' (1979: 12). Eco himself realises the inadequacy of the application of levels to texts, and that it bears no relation to the actual text: 'The notion of textual level is a very embarrassing one. Such as it appears, in its linear manifestation, a text has no levels at all ... Therefore the notion of textual level is merely theoretical; it belongs to semiotic metalanguage' (13). In practice Eco uses a diagrammatic form and 'boxes' instead of levels, i.e. alternative spatial conceptions of text. But it needs to be made clear that there are NO LEVELS in literature itself, nor any other non-textual spatial reconfigurations of text, there is only text: 'Levels do not exist: our sense of them is the result of an allusive juxtaposition of registers' (White 14).

This is particularly appropriate to *House of Leaves*, and I found it worthwhile to include it in its entirety as it is important in showing why metafiction is in many ways an inappropriate word. *House of Leaves* is a text that incorporates different thematic levels and narrative hierarchies. This problematises the idea of metafiction: if there are no levels in literature (as Eco would lead us to believe), how can there exist something 'more-than' fiction. Only the work of fiction can exist, as there is no more text than what is on the graphic surface of the text. However, for ease of understanding and a certain degree of categorisation, I will continue to use the term metafiction or metatexts to describe texts that are primarily self-conscious such as *House of Leaves* as I believe that it is useful to refer to them as such (lacking any other adequate word apart from self-conscious fiction). It will allow the reader of this thesis to understand when a fiction is self-conscious, or metafictional, even if the word, metafiction, can only be defined metaphorically.

There is a prevalent self-awareness in Danielewski's text. It is therefore worthwhile to investigate the characteristics associated with metafiction that *House of Leaves* possesses in order to distinguish how the text comments on them, why it comments on them and how it challenges them. It will be important to explore how and why the text appears to be concerned with drawing the reader's attention to the novel's status as a book.

1. Identity and authorship

The novel is concerned about the act of an individual or individuals writing a novel; and the identity of these individuals is a main theme that runs through the duration of the text. The authorship even, fictionally, eludes Danielewski's grasp, possibly intentionally. This distancing of the author is different to metafiction that feature the author as a character in his or her own story. For example, in Gilbert Sorrentino's *Imaginative Qualities of Actual Things*, the author actively writes himself into the narrative. He does so in order to question the methods and conventions that are present in the writing of prose fiction,

What a bore she is! Can you imagine being a novelist and having to make her up, make her-believable? I have a mildly interesting idea, though, for those readers-and they are, I understand, legion-who insist on a character they can "get ahold of." Let's say that Bart's wife is Lolita. I mean, she is the exact Lolita that Nabokov stitched together (Sorrentino 193).

The author directly addresses the reader and by doing so, makes himself a part of his narrative. Sorrentino self-consciously addresses the conventions of character and character production in writing prose. He critiques the readers who try to place a character into their reality by asking them to replace the character he has described with Nabokov's Lolita – a fictional character herself. Again, by allowing the reader to recognise the characters as being merely fictional, the reader is allowed to see the book that they are holding. The page is seen before the sentences that it contains.

The 'main' narrative in *House of Leaves* is Zampano's creation - a thesis that comments on a fictional documentary. As Hagler states:

The Navidson Record becomes the subject of an ostensible academic commentary by Zampanó, an old blind man, complete with citations, allusions, appendices, and analyses of other commentaries on the film (Hagler 1).

Johnny makes many contributions to Zampano's work via footnotes that often take precedence over the main thesis¹. Whenever Johnny tells one of his stories, Zampano's narrative becomes secondary to it.

¹ See Appendix One i for example of Johnny's footnotes in Courier font (Footnote 25). *House of Leaves* 20.

2. Multiple layers of fiction

Johnny's stories are often fabrications. Johnny is a fictional character in the reality of the reader but in the reality of the book Johnny is the character who is most parallel to the reader. Johnny's narrative is always given precedence over the main narrative unit (Zampano's narrative). It is Johnny who ultimately decides how the thesis is presented. *House of Leaves*' main narrative system is controlled by footnotes and citations that suggest that the reader or critic is reading an academic work. This fictional intertextuality is the main technique that Danielewski uses to prompt a non-linear and defamiliarising reading and is something that will be discussed in more detail in the third chapter. These hypertextual elements provoke the reader to read several pages ahead when prompted by footnotes that sometimes last for twenty pages and then return to the 'main' narrative unit; a technique that disorientates the reading experience. The footnotes describe the process of putting Zampano's thesis together, Johnny's personal life and various analyses of texts that Zampano references. By defamiliarising a reader's normal reading method and using conventions that are usually applied to academic writing, Danielewski creates a pseudo-reality effect that both gives the narrative integrity whilst simultaneously prompting the reader to acknowledge its status as fiction and therefore the book that contains it. This not only creates an effective narrative but it also redefines the format of traditional print fiction and metatextual conventions.

3. Self-conscious characters

In Chapter XIII of *House of Leaves*, Johnny questions his reality and wonders if he is simply a character in a book. At this stage, Johnny's mental state is rapidly deteriorating; his perception of his life is collapsing itself around him which ironically gives him his greatest moment of self-awareness:

A moment comes where suddenly everything seems impossibly far and confused, my sense of self derealized & depersonalized, the disorientation so severe I actually believe – and let me tell you it is an intensely strange instance of belief – that this terrible sense of relatedness to Zampano's work implies something that just can't be, namely that this thing has created me; not me unto it, but now it unto me, where I am nothing more than the matter of some

other voice...possessing me with histories I should never recognise as my own; inventing me, defining me, directing me...that all of this has just been made up and what's worse, not made up by me or even for that matter Zampano. Though by whom I have no idea (*House of Leaves* 326).

On the same page Johnny has just stated that he thinks that 'The Navidson Record' only exists because of himself, "I'm its source, the one who feeds it" (Danielewski 326). He then suggests that the work has created him, he does not know if Zampano has created him or some other external person unknown to him. The reader is aware that Johnny is a construction of the author but the multiple narrative structures in the book make Johnny discuss and confront his creator. His proceeding comments in the footnotes are a metafictional self-realisation whilst still standing up as a critique of Zampano's main text. Whilst Danielewski seems concerned with addressing the various characteristics of metafiction, he still allows his characters to adhere to the basic rules that are associated with it. It appears that the only way to redevelop the form and structure is from the inside, the change must come from within the established forms.

4. The act of reading

House of Leaves could be argued to be a novel about the physical act of reading. Johnny discovers Zampano's notes, finds that he can relate to the content and decides to undertake an analysis of it and structure it into a readable format. He does this in order to confront memories of a difficult childhood. The reader reads along with the characters as they discover more text. Johnny grows and changes as he experiences more of Zampano's notes. The novel is perhaps a comment on the act of reading, the characteristics and conventions that a reader employs and the conventions that a critic follows in order to analyse a novel. Johnny restructures Zampano's notes that often challenge conventional methods of reading fiction, the text is often upside down, on its side and occasionally there is only one word on the page². This ignores the conventional methods of writing a thesis, an act that is already restrained by regimen and convention. It also defamiliarises the conventional methods of how a book must

² Appendix One ii. *House of Leaves* 220.

appear in published form. It always seems incomplete, a feeling that is intensified by the amount of absence or negative space on the page.

5. Conventions of narrative

The book addresses and challenges the specific conventions of narrative, such as the significance of title, paragraphing, plotting and typeset format. It appears that this is one of the book's main themes – to rethink the reader's traditional methods of reading a book by questioning the need for a linear narrative or a traditional left to right typesetting. The reader's own choice will determine if they read the sentences in a particular manner, which leads to a plurality of readings. The critic will analyse *why* Danielewski chooses to employ this unique technique and will thus get a different reading of the novel. Danielewski seems to prompt heterogeneous response to the text; any one metanarrative soon becomes problematic when another one takes its place, and so on. The book soon becomes like the labyrinth it portrays.

6. Narrative hierarchies

The book includes multiple narrative layers from various media that are equally important. 'First' there is the documentary film 'The Navidson Record', shot and edited by photojournalist Will Navidson. Zampano's narrative is an academic analysis of 'The Navidson Record' that is presented as the 'main' body of the text. Johnny Truant's narrative is restricted to the footnotes underneath (and often above and surrounding) Zampano's narrative and is concerned with questioning Zampano's work and constructing stories around his personal life and the effects that Zampano's thesis has on his mental state. Johnny Truant submits the finished work to anonymous Editors who make amendments to Zampano's and Johnny's work in the footnotes. Here we have fiction criticising fiction, making a statement about the written word's transparency and inherent fictional qualities. Outside of the main story there is a fifth narrative by Johnny's institutionalised mother named Pelafina Heather Livré that exists in Appendix II E – The Three Attic Whalestoe Institute Letters (p. 586 – 644). Pelafina's letters are also published in a separate novel, *The Whalestoe Letters* (2000). Pelafina's letters act as a narrative technique that allows the reader to

gain insight into Johnny's childhood and mental instability that Johnny does not give in his own narrative.

7. Fictional critical response

The book incorporates a fictional critical response. Danielewski includes a section with fictional comments from non-fictional critics (*House of Leaves* 354 – 365) who discuss 'The Navidson Record'. This is not to say that Danielewski writes his own criticism, merely a fictionalised estimation of the criticism the book could receive upon publication. This satire of criticism seems to suggest that Danielewski is exposing criticism's narrative and linguistic restrictions much like he does with fiction. The two do not seem to be so far removed from each other. There is a difference between the critics and the reader that needs to be addressed. Critics will read *House of Leaves* and notice the preponderance of conventions associated with academia, and this may or may not affect their individual reading of the text. Some of the non-fictional footnotes will be familiar to the critic, whilst the fictional references will be exposed more quickly. The critic will question why the characters act the way they do depending on their area of expertise and their academic discipline. For example, psychoanalysts will question the abundance of references to mental health and two notable psychoanalysts: Freud and Jung. Feminists will analyse the importance of Karen and Pelafina and the significance of the house as a womb or female sexual organ. Casual or educated readers will want to become involved in a complex and interesting mystery. Whilst it would be fallacious to predict a reader's response, readers could have a more diverse reaction to the text, unrestricted by a discipline. Alternatively, readers may have a more uniform reaction to the text since they are not informed by a particular discipline.

The spatial and structural boundaries and similarities between fiction and criticism also appear to be a major concern in *House of Leaves*. Spatially the two mediums appear to differ in only one aspect, the textual space on the page. Academic criticism contains citations that can be found at the bottom of each page as footnotes or at the end of each chapter as endnotes. This is where the book and criticism differ but is not the case in *House of Leaves*. Danielewski's text that has a narrative that is structured as a piece of criticism, containing footnotes that often occupy more space on the page than the main narrative units. The text actively presents itself as an academic thesis,

something that is uncommon in traditional fiction. It presents facts that are supported by more facts from other sources. The structure of the book bears more in common with the traditional structure of literary criticism, or film criticism as is the case of 'The Navidson Record' than a traditional fictional book. Criticism usually follows the same graphical page formats as would be found in a traditional novel, the differences between the two mediums being the citations and occasional figures that play an important role in arguing a specific discourse. This is challenged later in the text when the structure and form of the page is unusually changed. The presentation of the main narrative as a thesis with literal and metaphoric, fictional and critical elements suggests that the text is addressing an idea that fiction and its resulting literary criticism are not such separate entities, especially in a literary area that is becoming increasingly theoretical. There have been theoretical fictions that present themselves as fiction with explicitly theoretical ideas such as Borges' *Labyrinths* and Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*. These fictions appear to be initially as concerned with presenting theoretical and philosophical discourse as they are presenting a fictional narrative.

The boundaries of the book are in a constant flux. The transparency effect that the reader experiences by reading a self-conscious narrative forces an awareness of the physical boundaries of the text. By having to look at the page first (something that will be discussed in the second chapter in regard to Danielewski's unconventional page structures), the reader recognises the literal boundaries of the page. They also become aware of the boundaries of the book. In this case, the book is 709 pages long contained in two covers. The text and the narrative cannot move from the confines of the pages and the covers. This forces the reader to recognise the aesthetics of the book as a material artefact and the restrictions and abilities that such an artefact has. By doing so, the reader can self-consciously alter how they perceive literature and the criticism that follows it.

Zampano's notes spend a significant amount of space and time describing fictional events from 'The Navidson Record' that reflect a traditional narrative, as if the character, Zampano, was describing or transcribing a story rather than an in-depth analysis of a documentary film. The narrative in this case takes place within a film; the main narrative of the novel is not literary criticism but rather, film criticism – a different discipline and medium altogether. Danielewski does not limit himself to a specific discipline of criticism but rather to critique the fictional nature of academic

criticism. Criticism must, to some extent, be fictional and self-aware. It is a medium that is dependent on language and interpretation, as is the fiction it is commenting upon. The reader of criticism is presented with concepts and ideas that are restricted by the writer's language and vocabulary, there are no physical entities that the reader can touch and 'see' as facts.

Criticism is much more inclined to be self-aware. The author is not trying to construct a believable reality in which to set plot and characters. They are trying to construct a narrative that critiques a particular area. The narrative must flow in a similar way to fiction but criticism is always aware of its form. The constant reference to previous works show that the writer must remove themselves from the narrative to insert other people's narratives.

Therefore, *House of Leaves* works on the border between the subject and the comment. As Mark Currie notes, metafiction, "places itself on the border between fiction and criticism, and...takes that border as its subject" (Currie 2). The realm of metafiction is the 'boundary' between the fiction and criticism, especially in novels that present themselves as theoretical, and yet, metafiction as a concept is itself a component of theory, it does not act independently of theory. Currie states:

The borderline between fiction and criticism has been a point of convergence where fiction and criticism have assimilated each other's insights, producing a self-conscious energy on both sides (Currie 2).

Not only has this resulted in metafiction but we now have a function termed metacriticism that is equally self-conscious. Metacriticism could simply be an element that is incorporated into metafiction. A key factor in self-conscious fiction, especially within *House of Leaves* is the self-aware (fictional) criticism. Criticism has recognised its literariness in its own language which has resulted in an awareness "of the extent to which critical insights are formulated within fiction" (Currie 2). For fiction it has meant a more critical perspective to be assimilated into the fictional narrative, "a self-consciousness of the artificiality of its constructions and a fixation with the relationship between language and the world" (Currie 2). *House of Leaves* combines metafiction and metacriticism to create a self-aware novel that predicts and parodies its own criticism and the wider implications and conventions of academic criticism. Currie continues:

The reciprocity of this relationship indicates that metafiction is only half, the fictional half, of a process of challenging the boundary between fiction and criticism (Currie 2).

Metafiction as part of a critical discourse used to analyse a literary work is therefore problematic. Where do we place the boundary between theory and fiction? In *House of Leaves*, the text is essentially structured as an academic thesis albeit one with a distinct story-like narrative but the insights from Johnny Truant gives the novel a fictional narrative. Danielewski subverts the traditional narrative and pushes it to the footnotes (optional reading, though fundamental to gain a better understanding of the characters' intentions); however, the comment is often more appealing and significant than the content of the thesis and often takes up most, if not all, of the page. The presence of the book in criticism is more obvious to the reader; they are not trying to become immersed in an alternative reality created by a fictional narrative. They are instead looking to gain insight on why a particular medium can tell us more about culture, society and the individual. In fiction, the reader wishes to forget that they are holding a book; this is something that metatexts do not allow the reader to do.

In addition the thesis has an unorthodox structure that often only has one word on a page and sections where the footnotes surround the main body of the text and even enter the page³, representing the intrusion of theoretical discourse into fiction. The theory is written 'into' the text, it is given as much importance in the hierarchy of narrative as the narrative that Zampano is telling. This textual hierarchy is a fundamental factor in understanding Danielewski's novel. It is a textual hierarchy that is constantly in conflict, each narrative continues to challenge for importance. Zampano's narrative appears to be the most significant because of its placement on the page, however Johnny's narrative frequently invades Zampano's and pushes his off the page. Pelafina's narrative is relegated to the appendices but she continues to be a pervasive presence throughout the novel. No singular narrative ever manages to retain its status as the predominant narrative that influences the others. Danielewski makes suggestions that any critical comment dependent upon language is instantly fictional. Criticism is also dependent on other works to back-up opinions; *House of Leaves* references other works and portrays a continual deferral of meaning away from the original text.

³ See Appendix One iii. *House of Leaves* 120. This section is dubbed the 'Labyrinth', something that is represented by the visual image that the narrative units create.

By referencing other non-fictional and fictional works that exist in the reader's reality, the fiction seems 'more real' to the reader. The reader can seek out the texts and read them. *House of Leaves* relies heavily on intertextual games; the footnotes constantly refer to books, journal articles, films and theorists that exist in the reader's 'reality'⁴. However, Danielewski also includes many fictional references that only exist within the confines of the text⁵. The text also refers to itself on many occasions and prompts the reader to look to the exhibits at the end of the book⁶. When the reader looks to the exhibit parts of it are often missing⁷. Of course this is a case of fiction referencing fiction and the parts of the exhibit were never there in the beginning; the author trivialises a convention that is so often relied upon for its integrity. This intertextuality and Danielewski's reliance on making the reader notice what is not on the page rather than what is on the page is a fundamental aspect to understanding why Danielewski chose to write such an unorthodox text. The key, if there can be one, seems to be in the absences of text. It is the absence and presence of text on the graphic surface of the page is fundamental in making the reader understand that they are reading a self-contained fiction and therefore allowing the reader to step-back from the experience and understand the structure of a book. Self-awareness has allowed the metafiction to defamiliarise the method of reading and the nature of prose fiction as a form. By reconstructing narrative conventions and page formats the author can reconstruct the physical artefact and renew the novel's legitimacy as an art form. Through disruptions of the traditional graphic surface of the page, an author can redevelop the nature of literature by exposing its physical construction and the conventions that it contains.

⁴ See Appendix One iv. *House of Leaves* 25. Footnote 32 refers to Martin Heidegger's *Sein und Zeit*. A text in reality that is not directly connected to *House of Leaves*.

⁵ See Appendix One v. *House of Leaves* 3. Footnote 2 at the bottom of the page gives a reference that can only exist within *House of Leaves* because of its connection to 'The Navidson Record'.

⁶ See Appendix One vi. *House of Leaves* 81. Footnote 85 prompts the reader to look to Exhibit 4 which is located on page 533.

⁷ See Appendix One vii. *House of Leaves* 533. Look to footnote 429 that states the information as "Missing. – Ed."

CHAPTER TWO
TEXTUAL SPACE AND THE PRESENCE OF THE BOOK IN *HOUSE OF LEAVES*

The reader of *House of Leaves* will initially notice the variety of different formats, fonts and gaping absences of text that make up the book. In a similar way to the challenge to the function and characteristics of metafiction in the contemporary novel, Danielewski challenges the reader's preconceptions about textual space, the absence and presence of text and multiple narrators. The graphic surface of the page in *House of Leaves* is what distinguishes it from other works of literature. Its unconventional surface and spatial disruptions force the reader to initially 'look' at the aesthetics of the page before looking at the narrative that it contains. This creates a transparency that removes the reader from the narrative and encourages them to recognise the presence of the physical artefact.

In this chapter, I will move away from discussing metafiction and analyse how Danielewski incorporates changes in form and traditional linearity in order to foreground the novel's existence as a work of fiction. By challenging convention and making the reader change their natural reading method, the author draws attention to the physical manifestation of the page and thus, the book as an object. White states:

Graphic devices in narrative texts raise ontological problems for the reader by foregrounding the book as object. The disruption of the graphic surface becomes, for him, a signifier of postmodernism indicating the authorial intention of jolting readers into an awareness that they hold a product of pigment and paper in their hands (White 18).

Danielewski foregrounds the limitations of the novel and therefore the resources of the novel. White's statement indicates how any disruption in the surface of the page acts as a removal device that allows the reader to acknowledge the presence of the book. In *House of Leaves* it is not only the graphic surface inside the book that is disrupted but also the book itself. By implementing sections that are upside down and vertically placed the reader is also encouraged to physically turn the book. In turning the book the reader is hyperaware of the object that they are holding. I will also discuss the significance of what is absent and therefore what is present on the page.

The novel is concerned with presenting space in the narrative with Navidson's labyrinth and it also presents space on the graphic surface of the text itself.

The technique of removing portions of text or constraining certain parts of writing is called a *lipogram*. Christine Brooke-Rose discusses the definition for this form of writing:

The difficult thing I've been doing, on and off, for thirty- six years, has a technical name: a lipogram, though I prefer the word *constraint*. I didn't learn the technical name until well after I'd developed it. A lipogram (from Greek *leipein*, remove, + *gramma*, letter) is a self-imposed omission, and presumably the term can be extended to cover more than a letter, since *gramma* also means "writing" (Brooke-Rose 2).

Danielewski does not necessarily impose constraint on his writing; rather, he chooses a format that allows for graphic disruptions in the form of textual absences which draw the reader's eye, only to paradoxically speed the reader on to the next narrative unit. Some, if not the majority of readers will simply skip to the next portion of text on the page rather than dwelling on the absence as this is more true to the conventional method of reading. We do not read the blank space. It does not appear that he deliberately omits certain letters such as in George Perec's *La Disparition* (1969), a text entirely without the letter *e*. White writes about blank space, or 'redundancy' in text:

The absence of a word, or rather a space interpreted as an absence of a word by our automatised familiarity with the way a paragraph 'should' proceed, allows a rhetorical effect which ultimately enhances rather than disrupts the normal process of comprehending meaning (White 12).

Omissions in *House of Leaves* are indicated in the narrative itself. The reader is told that pages are missing from Johnny Truant's submission to the editors before publication. It is therefore the characters, not necessarily the author, who choose to omit certain parts of the narrative; however, it is Danielewski who chooses to write into his novel periods of textual absence; to our knowledge nobody else participated in the writing of the book. It is through his employment of narrative and textual games that it appears that it is the characters that are the final authority in the text rather than the author. Therefore, a discussion of absence in Danielewski's novel can also be supplemented by a discussion about Danielewski as the absent or invisible

author. Danielewski's name does not appear on the title page; instead it appears on the previous page¹. However, paradoxically, by appearing to distance himself, he is also everywhere in the text, the choice to exclude himself from the narrative and the multiple narratives in the text remind the reader that the book is the work of a single author. If the author wished to completely remove himself from the work, he would choose not to include his name on the front cover or the title page. Danielewski is still present in the text yet his choice to remove his name from the title page signifies that he wishes to fictionalise the authorship.

The lipogram is not an entirely common literary device. The omission of certain parts of a text within the text does not happen often in literature. Two of the most recent novels to be published with noticeable absences of text are written by Danielewski himself. It is worthwhile briefly discussing how the two texts complement *House of Leaves* thematically.

Absence and presence of graphic text is certainly a running theme through his small range of work. *The Whalstoe Letters* (2000) was published in conjunction with *House of Leaves* to supplement the original novel. The letters can be found in Appendix II: E (586-645) in *House of Leaves* but Danielewski chose to publish the letters as a separate book with additional letters that never made it into the original text. Simply by being published this heightens the significance of the letters in the original book. The letters were sent to Johnny by his institutionalised mother, Pelafina Heather Lievre, when Johnny was nineteen. As she progresses into insanity, the form of the letters becomes increasingly chaotic, mirroring the changes of format in The Navidson Record thesis as the explorers move through the labyrinth. Blank space is given equal importance in the narrative. The obituary of Johnny's father on page xvii² is missing many words that would otherwise allow the reader to gain facts that would help them to knowledge about a death that affected a primary character in the original novel. His father's surname, his date of birth, the place of death and company he worked for are all missing. This could be vital information that would allow the reader to make connections between the characters in *House of Leaves*. It also puts emphasis on the pseudonyms that Johnny employs in the text.

¹ See Appendix Two i. Page before the title page of *House of Leaves*.

² Appendix Two ii. *The Whalstoe Letters*. Notice the omission of several significant pieces of information.

The Fifty Year Sword (2005), has no obvious connections to *House of Leaves* except for the noticeable absence of text and the use of colour. Again, the text is a lipogram but not in the conventional sense. It does not appear that any of the narrative is missing but there is an abundance of blank space. The narrative is given by five different voices, forty years after the events that happen in the story. Each voice is represented by different coloured quotation marks. Text only appears on the left hand page, reducing a one hundred page book to a fifty page story. The text that appears on the left page is always justified to the left; it never runs across the full page³. In this way it resembles a poem, as does the style of the writing. Whilst *House of Leaves* only has one instance of a completely blank page (except for a page number), *The Fifty Year Sword* has blank pages on every other page (except for those with illustrations on). Like in *House of Leaves*, what is left out of a text is just as important as what is included. The omissions generate speculation by the readers. The text often has illustrations on the page by the Dutch illustrator Peter van Sambeek⁴. This is the first time that Danielewski chooses to incorporate actual images into his text rather than letting the format of the text provide the reader with a substitute image. After all, *House of Leaves* is concerned with the fact that words are not (just) an image. The use of colour in Danielewski's texts and his choice of character-specific fonts also act as disruptions that also give the reader more information about the narrative.

Because of the multitude of narrators in *House of Leaves*, it is worthwhile noting that each character in the novel writes in a different font: Courier for Johnny Truant, Times for Zampano and Bookman for The Editors. Hagler also comments on these:

Danielewski presents this initial dichotomy through distinct typography. Zampano's text is set in Times font, while Johnny's notes are in Courier. When the anonymous editors make their scattered comments, they appear in Bookman. Thus, at the outset, the text manipulates print technologies to represent multiple voices (Hagler 1).

The font choices have also been chosen for their linguistic meaning – these meanings can be discussed elsewhere, such speculation is not needed in my thesis, what is

³ Appendix Two iii. *The Fifty Year Sword* 8

⁴ Appendix Two iv. *The Fifty Year Sword* 29

important is that they generate discussion from the readers. Such speculation on font type is rare in literature; most publishers decide on the specific font type prior to publication, their names bear no connection to the subject of the novel and thus, the readers and critics have only standardised font. *House of Leaves*' insistence on multiple fonts allows for criticism and speculation, by their inclusion they open the text up for scrutiny in that area. It is another device that Danielewski employs to criticise the conventions of the novel much like his breaking of traditional form. By employing different techniques such as this it broadens the scope of the text in the critical arena and draws attention to the graphic surface of the page.

Like the unorthodox font choices, the pages in *House of Leaves* are not always traditionally strict in their structure; the words in *House of Leaves* are often upside down, vertically descending or ascending and at certain points, span several pages.

This structural method challenges the conventions of reading and the act of reading. The novel will often have to be physically turned in order to read certain points. It also draws the reader's attention to its status as a novel and nothing more. The continual shifts and disruptions in structure allow the reader to step back and make them focus on the form of the novel and its fictiveness. It encourages a literary critique.

The changes in form allow a place for the blank spaces in the text. It appears that the novel is littered with blank space that might otherwise hold the key to understanding the novel – a comment on, or the absence of a comment on the eternal search for the ultimate truth perhaps? By not including something, the absence that takes its place (if absence can take something's place) and what is left present on the page is given more significance. It gives the reader no sense of closure. There is only one page in the book that is completely blank, except for the page number⁵. This page comes near the end of a chapter that features only one word per page, much like frames of animation or cels in a film. The previous page features the word "white" and the page that follows the blank page states "screen". The blank page could represent a white screen in a film. At this stage in *The Navidson Record* documentary, the film simply shows a white screen and Danielewski represents this image by a blank page – the content of the narrative mirrors the (lack of) content of the (fictional) film. However, the blank space often seems like a presence, it is simply

⁵ Appendix Two v. *House of Leaves* 310

blank rather than text, it is present on the page as much as the text is present. The blank page reminds the literary reader of the black page in Sterne's *Tristram Shandy*, in many ways it is the mirror of that page. White discusses how the page in Sterne's novel affects the reader:

To give another example from *Tristram Shandy*, a graphic device such as the black page can live in the memory quite as well as any purely verbal sequence in the novel (White 33).

This is certainly true in Danielewski's novel, by simply changing traditional format, the reader remembers far better than if it was text. This idea seems important to the author. In the saturated market that is literature, the reverence that it once received as providing truth has been dulled by the increase in electronic media. By implementing unconventional features, the author will allow the reader to remember the specific text.

Certain parts of 'The Navidson Record' commentary and the footnotes supplied by Johnny Truant are said to be missing by the editors⁶, which amplifies the feeling that what is missing could hold the key to unlocking the mysteries of the text. The page in the book will always denote how many pages are missing. The reader is then given the opportunity to 'create' at least part of the text by substituting their own ideas of what happened in the missing pages rather than being dictated to about what happened. Alternatively, the reader could choose to simply ignore the missing text and skip to the next part. The text is written so that the absence of text does not detract from the coherent narrative. As Iser writes in *The Reading Process*:

Even in the simplest story there is bound to be some kind of blockage, if only for the fact that no tale can ever be told in its entirety. Indeed, it is only through inevitable omissions that a story will gain its dynamism. Thus whenever flow is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected direction, the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections – for filling in the gaps left by the text itself (Iser 216).

Iser discusses the methods that readers use in order to overcome blockages and omissions. This is particularly relevant in Danielewski's novel where the author draws attention to the gaps in order to emphasise the dynamism of reading:

⁶ Appendix Two vi, vii and viii. *House of Leaves* 373, 377 and 403

These gaps have a different effect on the process of anticipation and retrospection, and thus on the 'gestalt' of the virtual dimension, for they may be filled in different ways. For this reason, one text is potentially capable of several different realisations, and no reading can ever exhaust the full potential, for each individual will fill in the gaps in his own way, thereby excluding the various other possibilities; as he reads, he will make his own decision as to how the gap is to be filled. In this very act the dynamics of reading are revealed. By making his decision he implicitly acknowledges the inexhaustibility of the text; at the same time it is this very inexhaustibility that forces him to make his decision (Iser 216).

The above passage has been quoted in full as it is fundamentally important in realising why Danielewski may have chosen to feature so many literal as well as metaphoric gaps inside the text. By choosing one way of reading, the reader excludes the other possibilities. The reader may choose to visit every footnote when prompted or they may also choose to ignore all the footnotes. Both choices will result in different narrative outcomes yet at the end of the novel all divergent narratives are brought together again.

Whilst the absence will often be blank spaces, it is also suggested that black tar or marker has been applied to the page from an unknown source, raising the question: was it Zampano or Johnny who physically erased parts of the text (or Danielewski for that matter)? Of course ultimately it is Danielewski who decided on the disruptions. In the Minotaur chapter of the book (*House of Leaves* 313-346), Zampano is said to have been the one to have crossed out any mention of the Minotaur or the Minotaur myth; however, the reader can still see these corrected passages; they just have a single horizontal line through them⁷. This obviously draws the reader's attention to these 'unimportant', as deemed by Zampano, passages and gives them greater significance in the context of the narrative. This is emphasised by the choice to include 'Minotaur' as the only other coloured word in the book. The other coloured word is the blue 'house'. The absence of text is not just restricted to single horizontal lines and blank spaces, there are also Xs in place of words and letters⁸ and blank spaces in the middle of words denoted by parentheses that represent burnt holes in Zampano's original notes in the context of the narrative. In this case there actually is not any absence of text after all. The Xs or the erasures of certain words act as substitute text that is as much a part of the narrative as words and letters

⁷ Appendix Two ix. *House of Leaves* 335.

⁸ Appendix Two x. *House of Leaves* 354. Example of absence denoted by X's. See also page 373 onwards for X's and pages missing. This chapter is dedicated to scientific rationale.

yet is still disruptive to a conventional narrative and shows how image and the aesthetics of the page are portrayed in this novel.

On page 421⁹ we see an absence of text denoted by two lines of parentheses that could represent the 'Delial' photograph that plays such an important part in The Navidson Record narrative. By not including the image, the reader is given the opportunity to imagine the photograph. In this case, the photograph is said to be the same as Kevin Carter's prize winning photograph so many of the readers will, or can substitute the real-life image into the text. The reader can use their own knowledge to 'see' the image. Danielewski seems to be intrigued by artistic composition, the placement of objects, people, words and images. His unorthodox typesettings and textual games could be seen as a comment on the nature of image. Danielewski puts emphasis on the visual, he lets the reader visualise the scene in the documentary by allowing the words on the page to mirror the image. The absence or blank space inside the book always represents something that in the context of the book is not absent, thus simultaneously being present. We do not know if the photograph ever existed in the context of the book but we assume it did for the sake of continuity and logical thought. Danielewski's novel is written in such a way that even in the context of the novel, the photograph may not have been included in Zampano's notes intentionally by Zampano, or it could be that Johnny possesses the photograph and did not submit it to the editors with the final copy. Alternatively, it can also be suggested that the editors chose to leave the photograph out of the final copy. The choice is left for the reader to decide or at least to entertain all the possibilities. It is difficult to decide if there is no actual evidence.

Words are simply not enough to describe film, a medium that is reliant on the image; this is perhaps film criticism's main problem, the translation of images to paper. This appears to be a main theme of the novel: language sometimes fails to describe the indescribable. This questions the reader's reliance on language to bring us 'truth', especially in criticism, where knowledge is supposed to exist. The 'Delial' photograph is only one of two absent images that (do not) appear in the text, the second image (does not) appears on page 526¹⁰, in this case the image is not represented by parentheses but simply by blank space above a caption that states,

⁹ Appendix Two xi. *House of Leaves* 42. 'Delial' photograph.

¹⁰ Appendix Two xii. *House of Leaves* 526. "Surviving House, Kalapana, Hawaii, 1993" – Diane Cook. Absent photograph.

“Surviving House, Kalapana, Hawaii 1993” – Diane Cook” (p.526). The reader can not be sure if the absent space represents a photograph or text, the caption certainly suggests a photograph of a house. We are told that Zampano is blind, and therefore the image has no significance to him. An explanation for the reliance on blank space and absence that connects itself to the narrative is Zampano’s blindness. Danielewski begins chapter XX with a quote from Edgar Allen Poe, “No one should brave the underworld alone”, and a quotation in Braille format¹¹ that is translated as follows:

The walls are endlessly bare. Nothing hangs on them, nothing defines them. They are without texture. Even to the keenest eye or most sentient fingertip, they remain unreadable. You will never find a mark there. No trace survives. The walls obliterate everything. They are permanently absolved of all record. Oblique, forever obscure and unwritten. Behold the perfect pantheon of absence (*House of Leaves* 423).

We are told that the braille is translated by the editors. It also acts as another language, one of many that is incorporated into the text such as Latin, French and Old English. The end of the transcription, “Behold the perfect pantheon of absence”, represents the absolute darkness of the labyrinth or the world as seen by a blind person. It is no coincidence that the rest of this chapter presents the reader with unconventional typesettings. Whilst in the context of the novel it is uncertain if the structure of the book is a result of Zampano’s notes or Johnny’s, we could say that Zampano’s physical state could explain his insistence on challenging typical structure. The visual means nothing to a person who cannot see it. This section reminds the reader of an Escher painting, something that is discussed in the footnotes¹²:

An idea Escher beautifully subverts in *House of Stairs*, disenchanting his audience of the gravity of the world, while at the same time enchanting them with the peculiar gravity of the self (*House of Leaves* 441).

The footnote itself is turned on its side. What are important are the constant referrals to the image, a painting, a film, a photograph. These are all very difficult effects to translate to language, and thus, to translate an image to language Danielewski suggests you need to change the structure of language itself and present the reader with an image that incorporates text instead of text that incorporates an image. An

¹¹ See Appendix Two xiii. *House of Leaves* 423

¹² See Appendix Two xiv. *House of Leaves* 441

Escher painting will often require the reader to perceive it at different angles to understand the paradoxes. The combination of blank space and text creates a visual representation. The absence could also be a purely financial symptom, as the book may have simply cost too much to print with photographs inserted into the text. However, this theory proves problematic when photographs and images appear in the appendices later on in the novel.

Along with the prevalent reliance on absence and blank space, there seems to be a running theme of unstable boundaries throughout the text. Danielewski appears to actively challenge what we deem to be the boundaries of a book. By challenging the boundaries, the author can actively try to re-establish the conventions of the novel and tailor it in order to give it relevance in modern literature. The main narrative (The Navidson Record) usually runs from the top of the page until the footnotes, however, it often appears as one word in the middle, on the side and upside down on the page. It can sometimes span two pages (*House of Leaves* 434-435), forcing the reader to change their traditional reading methods and read across two pages. At one point in the novel, Zampano's footnotes are enclosed in a box that is read 'through' the next few pages¹³. At this point in the text, the footnotes threaten to engulf the main narrative, they appear on the bottom of the page, in the margins and, as has been already mentioned, in the middle of the main text. It is in this section, early on in the novel, that the reader's traditional opinions on narrative conventions are suddenly and aggressively challenged. Johnny's footnotes push the boundaries that are traditionally given to academic footnotes. Footnotes are often a few lines long at the bottom of a page, in *House of Leaves* they are often given whole pages, dependent on their narrative importance and they often intrude on the main thesis. The boundaries, both academic and narrative, are changed in order to give precedence to certain narratives at different parts in the text. Danielewski does not allow for one primary narrator, both Johnny and Zampano (and to an extent, Pelafina) both get equal page space throughout the narrative. There is no minority voice as such unless you count the individuals who appear in the footnote, only multiple self-referential voices.

The unstable boundaries link to another key theme of Danielewski's novel: space and the many definitions of the word. Danielewski challenges the traditional spatial boundaries that would normally exist in a traditionally structured text. We

¹³ Appendix Two xv. *House of Leaves* 119.

could say that the important elements concerning literary criticism begin on the page before the title page, the page that simply states “Mark Z Danielewski”. This page is important as it signifies the author’s intention to distance himself from the narrative. The title page states that *House of Leaves* is “by Zampano, with introduction and notes by Johnny Truant”. There is no mention of the author. The page after the title page is the publication and legal details page¹⁴. This page features many elements that concern the narrative ahead and Danielewski fictionalises the traditional conventions of such a page. There are the more obvious challenges of space in the format of the book; it is somewhat larger than a traditional novel, so much so that some people have stated that it resembles an academic text book. It of course features unorthodox text placement that has already been discussed, the text reacts to the events that happen in The Navidson Record, giving the reader an image that otherwise they would never see because of the fictional nature of the documentary. The text is on one occasion spread across two pages, ignoring traditional margins, breaking through conventional page boundaries. There are many discussions about the nature of space inside the narrative, for example:

Even Michael Leonard, who had never heard of Navidson’s house, professed a belief in the “psychological dimensions of space.” Leonard claimed people create a “*sensation of space*” where the final result “in the perceptual process is a single sensation – a ‘feeling’ about that particular place...” (*House of Leaves* 175).

Space in this case is used in the narrative to describe what the characters in the documentary must have felt inside the labyrinth. It is also an example of an academic reference to describe a moment in the film. It is also rare to read a text that not only discusses space and architectural space but also challenges textual space on and in the narrative inside the book.

As well as psychological dimensions of space, the narrative is often concerned with architectural space, Danielewski in the role of Zampano, references Christian Norberg-Schulz’s *Existence, Space & Architecture*:

Christian Norberg-Schulz objects; condemning subjective architectural experiences for the seemingly absurd conclusion it suggests, mainly that “architecture comes into being only when experienced.” Norberg-Schulz

¹⁴ See Appendix Two xvi. *House of Leaves*, publication page.

asserts: "Architectural space certainly exists independently of the casual perceiver, and has centres and directions of its own." Focusing on the constructions of any civilization, whether ancient or modern, it is hard to disagree with him. It is only when focusing on Navidson's house that these assertions begin to blur (*House of Leaves* 170-171).

The previous two examples of space appear on three pages that have large absences of text. The narrative appears at the top of the page leaving a large blank space underneath; therefore, the discussion of space is complemented by the abundance of blank space directly underneath it. The questioning of architectural and psychological space is a key theme of the novel, mirroring the challenges of textual space that are so predominant in the book. There is a focus on the effect of subjective perception on physical structures such as the discussion that the first experience of an area will seem far more expansive than it will on consecutive visits. The Spiral Staircase in the labyrinth will often increase or decrease in size apparently dependent on the individual's mental state. It is sometimes able to be descended in five minutes, at other times it can take several weeks.

What is present and what is absent is a key feature to Danielewski's oeuvre. He experiments with our traditional preconceptions of textual space and what we deem to be the 'boundaries' of a book. He draws attention to the restrictions of language when trying to describe something that can only be appropriately and accurately described by a visual image. He critiques both criticism and the novel by exposing the inherent fictional links between the two areas. By experimenting with a text we can start to renew the form and be able to critique the novel more accurately. Danielewski does this by employing metafictional functions and reconstructing the architectural forms of the novel. Experimentation with narrative, space and traditional academic and prose conventions allow the reader and the critic to evaluate the significance of the book as an object and what an important role it plays in the act of reading. By understanding what it is that makes the book unique from other forms of entertainment are we able to allow literature to evolve and be reinvigorated in twenty-first century culture.

CHAPTER THREE
HYPertext FICTION, INTERTEXTUALITY AND THE FUTURE OF
SPATIAL BOUNDARIES IN PROSE FICTION

This final chapter will argue that by incorporating allusions to hypertext fiction conventions such as 'linking', abundant blank textual space and colour, Mark Z Danielewski's *House of Leaves* reminds the reader of the presence of the physical object in space and its subsequent abilities and limitations. The novel could be seen as a metaphor for reading and the production of hypertext fiction that it resembles. After discussing how the concept of space is of significance in *House of Leaves* and related texts in the previous chapters, it is now important to look at how another literary medium deals with the presence and the absence of text. Danielewski incorporates elements from electronic fiction and ergodic literature into paper-based fiction in order to perhaps comment upon the traditional graphic surface of the text and to remind the reader that they are holding a book as opposed to reading a text on a computer monitor. By doing so the reader is encouraged to analyse what actually constitutes the boundaries and conventions of the contemporary novel. I also wish to argue that the two media differ in the passive and active reading methods that are employed during reading and how the introduction of interactivity in traditional print fiction may allow for a redevelopment of traditional reading methods. The act of reading a paper-based book is a physically passive experience; however, it is important to note that it is a mentally active experience. The reader is required to turn the page and all other physical interactivity is restricted. The act of reading a hypertext fiction is more of a physically active experience by which the reader is required to actively navigate through the text and occasionally collaborate with the author in certain sections of the narrative.

One of the differences between the two forms of literature is the amount of authorial control in each medium. In traditional print fiction the reader navigates the narrative in the way the author wishes him or her to do. The author maintains all of the navigational control and the interactivity is kept to a minimum. Hypertexts offer more plurality. Each navigational choice complicates the linearity of the narrative and the original creation by the author restricts the reader to a single, chosen narrative. The act of 'clicking' a hyperlink also adds a degree of interactivity, as does the choice

of which hyperlink to use. Certain hypertexts allow the reader to actively collaborate with the writer by encouraging a written response from the reader. This is not possible with print fiction and as such, it is a technique restricted by its medium.

The physical act of reading a book and the presence of the book in the act of reading is something that has been challenged in recent years with the advent of hypertext fiction on the internet. The removal of the physical book from the reader is an act of significance although it is a medium that is still relatively in its infancy. The book form has been a tradition for many hundreds of years. The removal of the text onto a virtual space is a transition that initially jolts the reader even though the act of reading the text is essentially the same. The two different forms of fiction are actually more similar than first anticipated. On a very basic level, the two forms require the reader to read a graphic surface of text, on the page of a book or on a computer monitor. The reader receives the author's narrative by this identical method, both are purely graphical and two dimensional, or three dimensional if we are to include the book and the monitor. Both methods have a physical form, the text on the page and the computer monitor with text. Both forms require the reader to read a narrative but this is how the two forms differ somewhat. The conventional book requires the reader to read each page in turn until they reach the end, at which point the reader knows they have reached the end of that particular narrative or at least the end of the physical book. The hypertext navigates and controls the reader through the use of hyperlinking certain words on the screen. A hyperlink is a reference in a hypertext document to another document or resource, it is fundamental in navigating the internet. As such it is similar to a citation in a work of literature or criticism. When the reader clicks on a hyperlink, they are taken to another screen of text, the spatial boundaries are different than that of the physical act of turning a page. There is no turning through pages although, alternatively there is 'clicking' through pages; and there may or may not be more than one hyperlink per screen. The hyperlink encourages a non-linear read that creates a disorientating effect in the reader. There is no centre to the narrative that the reader can reach as such. Because there may be a multitude of hyperlinks to choose, the reader may become anxious and question their choice of narrative direction. In this case the nature of linearity in narratives is also questioned. Narratives often appear linear even in their most fragmented form. In a hypertext, as long as the reader does not use their internet browser 'Back' button, they have to commit to their choice of narrative. This initially seems very different to the traditional book but it is

something that Danielewski does throughout *House of Leaves* in order to provoke in the reader similar feelings to that of the characters inside The Navidson Record's labyrinth. The labyrinth in this case acts as a metaphor for the act of reading, unique to this novel. The reader is forced to double-back on themselves and follow narrative strands that are separate from the main narrative. For example, on pages 119-120¹ the footnotes at the bottom of the page jump from 145 (page 119) to 149 (page 120). Footnote 144 can be found in the box that is off-centre on the page and lasts for twenty-six pages whilst footnote 146 can be found as a sidebar on page 120 and lasts for eight pages. The reader is encouraged to read these footnotes but in doing so they will have to withdraw from the main narrative and proceed several pages ahead. This is similar to the characters taking different paths through the labyrinth, never finding a centre. This example shows that the two media are more similar in structure than initially thought. Hypertext fiction is yet to break away from the majority of the conventions associated with traditional book-based literature that it seems to be forever dependent upon. Therefore, the difference between the two mediums seems to be a spatial one. The act of clicking a hyperlink compresses temporal reality; it allows the reader to develop and challenge their own reading techniques. Conventional physical space is challenged by virtual space.

The links between *House of Leaves* and electronic literature continue to grow when the reader discovers that the first edition of the novel is rumoured to have only existed in various forms on the internet as a hypertext fiction. This has never been confirmed by Danielewski, yet he has never denied its existence. Every edition that has been published as a physical book is always denoted as the second edition – Danielewski's fiction begins on the publication page, even featuring details on different colour editions, many of which do not exist². This page gives the implementation of colour significance. White discusses how different editions expose what actually constitutes the text:

Nethertheless text is set in type, not in stone, and may alter over time, circumstance and reproduction. We should not consider the printing of a text as a one-off. Any decent bibliography will list previous, different, editions

¹ See Appendix Three i and Appendix One iv. *House of Leaves* 119-120. The footnotes of the previous page jump from 145 to 149 at the bottom of page 120. Footnote 146 is a sidebar at the side of the page and footnote 144 appears on page 119 and proceeds in the box for 26 pages.

² See Appendix Two xvii. This page has already been discussed in a previous chapter but it is worth showing the reader at this stage to express the diversity of the fiction in the text.

and will describe the differences between these editions ... The difficulty of variation between editions exposes the lack of fixity in what Bowers and other textual critics call 'accidentals' and raises the question of what actually constitutes the text (White 27).

Never is this more obvious than on the publication page of *House of Leaves*. The version of the novel that the reader holds in their hands is assumed to be the definitive one. However, at the bottom of the page we are told that four different editions exist (see Appendix Three iii). Only two of these editions actually exist: the two coloured edition and the black and white edition. The other two are purely fictitious; however by including reference to them the reader remembers they are holding the book and those different variations of the text could easily exist. This publication page can be argued to be a part of the text even though it does not act as narrative.

The choice of the colour blue to denote each mention of the word 'House' is an important one when considering the book's connections with hypertext fiction. Martin Brick refers to the choice as an anti-rubrication on the author's part and states its connections to hypertext:

Most notably, blue script among black lettering suggests computer hypertext to the twenty-first century reader. Readers are given the impression that the word "house" is linked to other parts of the text, and that the text changes shape to accommodate the reader. Danielewski's novel, then, is not stable, but rather adaptable and plastic. Or more precisely, the novel gives the *impression* of plasticity (Brick 2).

As in *House of Leaves*, the readers of a hypertext take divergent paths that give the impression of plurality and freedom, yet the possibilities and outcomes have already been established. By colouring the word "house" in blue the reader is also forced to acknowledge that the book is not the product of different authors but one single author. The word appears in blue throughout each narrative.

A hyperlink in an electronic fiction is traditionally coloured blue in order to differentiate it from the 'non-hyperlink' words. Hagler also supports the importance of the colouring of words in the text:

Danielewski typically reserves the color blue for any references to the word "house" and its foreign language equivalents...Following hypertext tradition, the appearance of the word "house" in blue serves as a print hyperlink to the House itself...the color red figures more prominently in the text than either blue or purple. It demarcates Zampano's struck passages, which include a

number of references to the labyrinthine resident, the Minotaur (110). Just as blue connects even unrelated text back to the House, the presence of the stricken red text brings the reader's attention back to the Minotaur...Furthermore, Danielewski's use of red to signify this particular link underscores its status as an active link (Hagler 4).

Hagler argues that each coloured section in the text can be represented as a link from a hypertext. The use of these 'links' allows the reader to always return to the setting of the House no matter how far the narrative tries to distance itself from it. Whilst Zampano wished to discard the sections in red, Johnny proceeds to activate it by "refusing to discard it" (Hagler 4). Danielewski presents these passages as something that Zampano did not want to be included in his final work and subsequently "acknowledges the loss of authorial control that emerges in traditional hypertext." (Hagler 4). The word, 'House', could, of course, be any word the author chooses but by choosing to colour this word, and only this word, Danielewski foregrounds a significance about the word's various meanings and its connection to hypertext fiction. Brick discusses the metonymic purpose of colour in this context:

Colour serves a metonymic purpose. It is intended to suggest the presence of a real-world institution. Colour not only tells readers that these words come from an authoritative figurehead, but more importantly, colour informs the reader that these words are significantly and actually different from other words. Substantially, these words *do* things other words cannot do (Brick 4).

"House" comes to mean more than just a graphic sign on the surface of a page in a book. Hyperlinks act as 'clickable' words on a web page that when used, transport the reader to another page that is related to the word. It is in this way, a sort of electronic trace. What *House of Leaves* does is to frustrate the reader who has knowledge of hypertext fiction by presenting them with an 'unclickable' hyperlink. The word 'House' is not connected throughout the book, the reader only skips through the book when provoked by a reference to a footnote that may be several pages ahead or behind in the novel. It is the footnotes (or the number or letter that leads the reader to the footnotes) that act as the hyperlink in the novel or essay. The footnotes are a convention that allows the author to encourage a non-linear reading. Words on the graphic surface of a novel may carry many traces³ that remind the reader of all that

³ The term 'trace' is not used here in its Derridean form. The word itself carries the Derridean connotation but is a useful term to use here in the context of a word's different meanings. In context

particular word's many meanings but hyperlink words on a web page act as a literal trace that carry the reader from narrative unit to narrative unit maybe like a thread in a Grecian labyrinth. The reader makes a journey through the binary code as opposed to turning the pages of a book, leaving an electronic trace behind them.

Each word has a plurality of meanings. There can be more than one signified to a word. How then, is the reader to respond to the text? White states:

According to Barthes, 'To read is to find meanings'. It is not to reduce the text to one meaning, 'a truth', but to emphasise the plurality of the text ... Barthes also suggests that the plurality of meaning varies from text to text on the principle: 'The more plural the text, the less is written before I read it' (1975:11). The conventional 'realist' text (which Barthes terms 'readerly') attempts to make the reader's life easy by lessening plurality and therefore making reading more economical. The de-automatised text (the 'writerly' text) offers various challenges to the reader's ability to limit or contain the text and therefore requires more hypothesising, more forgetting (White 37).

I quote this at length as it concisely presents an important concept in *House of Leaves*. *House of Leaves* attempts to increase plurality on each page, both from a syntactical level - the words and their multitude of meanings and what they do not mean, and from a structural level - the multitude of interpretations gained from different reading methods. The increase in 'choices' for the reader allows for a certain degree of interactivity by which the reader feels like he or she is actively participating in a slightly different narrative. This could allow them to reassess their reading methods, defamiliarise the narrative world and allow them to think differently about the structure and form of the book, and the book in prose fiction.

The only other colour that Danielewski employs is purple and it only makes one appearance in the text, in chapter twenty-one when Johnny states, "Except this story, what I'm remembering now"⁴ (*House of Leaves* 518). Johnny also fails to keep his stricken comments from being published. Hagler argues that the purple text deals with memory, "Fittingly, this purple text deals with memory, just as purple presents hypertext links visited in the past" (Hagler 4). Again, Hagler refers to the coloured text as a hyperlink and it is difficult not to assume that Danielewski also understood that purple is the colour of a visited hyperlink.

with this narrative the trace in a hypertext fiction is purely virtual in the sense that each manipulation of the graphic interface will leave a trace of code behind 'underneath' the interface and in the workings of the computer itself.

⁴ See Appendix Three ii. *House of Leaves* 518. The phrase, "What I'm remembering now" is struck out and is originally in purple in the colour text.

I will begin now to look at examples of hypertext fiction that are readily available from the Electronic Literature Organisation website, one of the largest sources of hypertext fiction on the Internet, so that I can see how they try to defamiliarise traditional narrative and spatial boundaries. I will begin with Mark Amerika's *Grammatron*⁵, a relatively non-linear and complex reading experience. The first thing that the reader notes from accessing the web page is the amount of hyperlinks on the first screen. The multitude of hyperlinks present the reader with a choice straight away, the first-time reader is given a freedom to influence the narrative that they have previously never been given before. The reader influences the narrative by making their independent choices of where the narrative will continue to. It is notable that each screen does not feature a large amount of text; instead the text is minimal in comparison to the traditional page of a book, similar to the more experimental pages in *House of Leaves*. Each screen (page) presents the reader with a different sub-heading such as 'Abe Golam' or 'worth' depending on their choice of hyperlink. This allows the reader to remember which pages they have already visited. After the first screen's numerous hyperlinks to choose from, each following screen in this narrative usually only has one which limits the reader's narrative after their initial choice of hyperlink. The reader's initial choice of hyperlink determines which way the narrative flows from thereon in. Hyperlinks present the reader with several problems. If the hyperlink appears in the middle of a paragraph that makes up a screen, or page, of the text, do they click it right then and refuse to read the rest of the paragraph or do they simply read on to the end and then click on it? This parallels the same decisions that the reader of *House of Leaves* must make. The reader is always asking themselves whether or not to leave the narrative and pursue the citations. Both mediums, or at least hypertexts and *House of Leaves* in particular seem to borrow traditions from each other in order to perhaps re-introduce the reader into the physical act of reading. *House of Leaves* employs a reversal of traditional narrative importance. The page in *Grammatron* entitled 'data' features images that stand alone from the text. The phrases 'it is worthless' and 'it is data that worries me' are presented in white with black square backgrounds but are isolated from the paragraph that forms the page. Unlike *House of Leaves*, the visual image can be appropriately shown in this medium, and it is something that is used in many times in hypertext

⁵ See Appendix Three iii. Example from *Grammatron*. Notice the multitude of blue hyperlinks that lead the reader through different narratives.

fiction. In *House of Leaves* the author appears unable to show an image. Of course, the images in the text only exist in the narrative's reality and therefore could not be shown in a reality that is dependent on the image like ours. The narrative reality is one created by signs, not images. The author can use digital manipulation techniques to create images that can easily be imported from one software programme to the next with ease. For example, the page that is denoted, 'damiana', features a graphic image of an advertisement. Each page in the narrative is disconnected from the last with only a few narrative strands that allow the reader to recognise that they are reading a single narrative; the narrative is noticeably abstract. *Grammatron* is notable for its multiple fonts and reliance on negative white space not unlike that in *House of Leaves*. In fact, these texts, and many other hypertext fictions, feature many of the same characteristics that Danielewski has chosen to include in his own novel.

8 Minutes by Martha Conway⁶ is a much more traditionally structured narrative. The hyperlink that the reader navigates through the text is always an 8 symbol (representative of the number eight theme and the symbol for the infinite) that appears below the section of the text on each screen and can be clicked on by the reader in order to advance to the next page. Like *Grammatron*, there is only a small amount of text on each screen and the text is accompanied by a visual background. Where this particular text and Amerika's *Grammatron* differ is that *8 Minutes* could very easily be in printed form and read as a printed book would be. The text has a beginning and an end although the reader is restricted somewhat by the text's programming. It automatically shifts to the next screen every few seconds, forcing the reader to read each passage quickly. The text is intended as a short fiction, something that is actually forced upon the reader. The narrative does not traditionally flow; instead the reader is presented with separate narrative units connected only by characters and plot points. If we simply substitute clicking a hyperlink using a peripheral device such as a mouse for using one's fingers to turn the page of a book we notice that again, the difference between electronic literature and printed literature is primarily a spatial and interactive one. If one substitutes the citation numbers in *House of Leaves* for blue hyperlinks in a hypertext fiction (if the word 'House' does not already take its place), we find that the methods in reading the two different mediums are essentially the same. The reader still relies on graphic text in order to

⁶ See Appendix Three iv. Example from *8 Minutes*. Notice the large amount of textless space and the inverted 8 that acts as a hyperlink.

read the narrative and the signs on the screen are simply the same words that we have on a printed page. A noticeable aspect of hypertext fiction that differs from the traditional book is the boundaries that encompass each individual work. Whilst a book is constrained by its front and back covers and the financial aspects of printing, a hypertext exists as code on a computer on an infinitesimal space that negates all boundaries. A hypertext could be theoretically endless, and some are, some exist on a constant loop that denies the reader a conclusion much like the constant deferral of meaning with intertextuality.

The role that intertextuality plays in fiction, both electronic and book-based, and in academic writing appears to be a concern for *House of Leaves*. The relationship between two or more texts that quote from one another, allude to one another or connect in other ways, it seems that hypertext fiction and conventional paper-based fiction continue to suggest the interdependency of texts and the continual deferment of meaning through and between them. Fiction often refers to other texts; however, it is rare that the fiction is self-referential to *and* refers to fictional texts. The deferral of meaning in *House of Leaves* is often left to fictional texts that the reader can never read in order to make ‘sense’⁷ such as the page that features this citation:

See Daniel Bower’s “Resurrection on Ash Tree Lane: Elvis, Christmas Past, and Other Non-Entities” published in *The House* (New York: Little Brown, 1995), p. 167-244 in which he examines the inherent contradiction of any claim alleging resurrection as well as the existence of that place (*House of Leaves* 3).

This lengthy citation refers to a text that focuses on the documentaries created by Navidson. This suggests that the documentaries existed in one reality offered by the narrative but not in Johnny Truant’s narrative. This citation could have also been fabricated by Zampano much like the entire narrative could be a fabrication. Danielewski creates a fictional deferral of meaning that can only exist in the confines of the narrative since the House and the documentaries are entirely fictional entities in the reader’s reality.

⁷ See Appendix Three v. *House of Leaves* 3. See footnote two at the bottom of the page for a citation and reference that can only exist within the confines of this particular narrative.

Danielewski takes this concept to the extreme and produces a narrative that is constantly self-referring and constantly intertextual in relation to other works that have come before⁸. The function of the fictional thesis enhances the intertextuality and reminds the reader they are reading a book by referring to external sources through the implementation of footnote citations – academia is inherently linked to citation in order to justify statements. This exposes the connection of citations and reference to previous works that is so common in academia and also shows academia’s continual deferral of meaning and a lack of responsibility for one’s ‘original’ thoughts perhaps. Most novels that feature intertextuality reference earlier, or later, chapters or real texts that the reader may or may not have read, for example in the story *Lost in the Funhouse* (1963-1988) in the collection of short stories by the same name by John Barth, the narrator addresses the conventions of writing by referring to other novels, “When Ambrose and Peter’s father was their age, the excursion was made by train, as mentioned in the novel *The 42nd Parallel* by John Dos Passos” (Barth 73), he refers to another famous text on the next page, “The Irish author James Joyce, in his unusual novel entitled ‘Ulysses’, now available in this country, uses the adjectives *snot-green* and *scrotum-tightening* to describe the sea” (Barth 74). In this case, Barth is simply referring to external fictions in order to comment on the technique of writing and perhaps to ‘jolt’ the reader from the experience of reading and allow them to make an active choice to look for that particular work. Throughout his fictional narrative, Barth punctuates it with asides that question the nature of writing that remove the reader from the story and give insight into the author’s actions at a specific point in the text, much like Danielewski as Johnny or Zampano in *House of Leaves*. *House of Leaves* refers to fabricated texts that neither existed in the reality of the text or in our external reality. This paradoxically draws the reader into the ‘reality’ of the novel and removes the reader from the book to realise the presence of the book. The academic reader will be familiar with academic footnotes, they are a source of further reading on a subject, and in this case the further reading may not exist. The non-fictional references help to give the reader more information if he/she so wishes and draw the reader into the book; the subject matter is given more credence when it is backed up by a real-life

⁸ See Appendix Three vi. *House of Leaves* 44. See footnote 55 for the reference to Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. I have drawn attention to this footnote as it represents a well-known and highly regarded novel in the reader’s reality.

source such as Derrida or Heidegger. Johnny Truant self-referentially refers to his previous comments later on in the book, forcing the reader to physically remove themselves from the narrative and turn to the appropriate page. For example, page 513 of *House of Leaves* shows the reader the front page of their own book that they are holding in their hands. On the next page Johnny makes a comment that is intertextual in relation to his own narrative and in the book within a book:

They had discussed the footnotes, the names and even the encoded appearance of Thamyris on page 387, something I'd transcribed without ever detecting [...] I mean it takes some pretty impressive back-on-page-117 close-reading to catch that one (*House of Leaves* 514).

Not only does the character refer to his own writing on a previous page, he also includes a page number and exposes that he encoded a word without even detecting it. The character recognises that he is writing a book and the reader recognises that he is reading a book about a character writing a book about a character writing an essay on a fictional film.

Established narrative methods are employed by both media but in slightly different methods that are influenced by the differing methods of writing that are required for the different forms. What is exposed is that the concept of space and the boundaries that contain a narrative and the amount of interactivity required by the reader is the defining difference between the two mediums. *House of Leaves* tries hard to leave the confines of the book by continuing the narrative after the main narrative of 'The Navidson Record' ends. The appendices and even the index are as much a part of the narrative as the traditional haunted house story that makes up at least half of the book. The book's boundaries are widened further by the existence of an internet message forum maintained by the author that continues to debate the meaning of the book six years after its publication. The move from the book to the dedicated electronic forums allow for interactivity at a level that the book strives for but cannot completely achieve. However, essentially, the book is restricted by its covers, the narrative does not continue outside of the book. Hypertext fictions do not have a traditional confinement. Instead they have a number of web pages that act as physical pages. The labyrinth featured in the narrative is as much a metaphor for the act of reading as it is a metaphor for hypertext. Hagler argues:

The House at the center of *House of Leaves* is a metaphor for hypertext...Hypertext is an “infinitely networked” labyrinth with no primary axis. The user’s position within the system becomes a provisional center, changing as the person moves throughout the hypertext (Hagler 4).

The narrative has so many similarities with hypertext fictions, not least the use of colour in order to denote ‘links’, it is impossible to dismiss it as speculation. It appears that Danielewski may have been trying to comment on the need for writers of traditional print fictions to embrace technology instead of seeing it as a threat. “As long as writers of print literature are willing to evolve, as *House of Leaves* suggests, hypertext and print traditions will be able to coexist.” (Hagler 5). The two forms need to simultaneously exist in order for each medium to evolve.

The physical act of reading a book and the space that contains it is negated by a hypertext, the time it take to read it is compressed and spatial definitions must be changed. What is interesting is what the changes in spatial boundaries also mean for academic writing. Academic writing has also moved into the realms of the internet which gives the writer the same freedoms as would be given to the author of a hypertext. Like print fiction, academic reading is a physically passive experience; Danielewski appears to want to challenge a universal method of reading. The method of citation that is most commonly used in academic writing is changed in electronic writing. Instead of the reader looking up a footnote at the end of a chapter, the reader can click on the citation number to be instantly transported to that particular citation. *House of Leaves* is an important text because it combines the freedoms of hypertext writing with the restrictions of book-based writing and the conventions of paper-based academic writing. The text comments on the conventions of each medium and creates a unique narrative that often disregards tradition and instead, embraces traditions from technology and hypertext that give the book a renewed relevance to a technologically-minded readership.

CONCLUSION

In the introduction to this thesis I have argued that “the metafictional techniques employed in Mark Z Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*, with its experimentation in terms of textual ‘space’ and its allusions to the conventions of hypertext fiction, explore the limitations and resources of the traditional print novel.” I noted that what makes this novel worthwhile was not its attempts to be innovative but rather the author’s efforts to re-examine and challenge existing conventions in traditional print fiction. This argument was to be followed by a discussion on how the novel possibly seeks to defamiliarise current print fiction’s associated reading techniques in order to provoke a reinvigoration of and challenge to contemporary literature conventions. I stated that I would also endeavour to understand the purpose of the increasing presence of the physical book as an object in literature. Danielewski re-asserts an aspect of traditional print fiction that is rarely explored in contemporary literature: “the physical manifestation of word matter” (Brick 1) and the physical page.

I began by analysing the conventions of metafiction in the first chapter. I argued that Danielewski’s novel adheres to many of the known characteristics that are associated with metafiction, yet at the same time it appears to want to challenge them. It is as if the text encourages a redevelopment of the form from inside it. By self-consciously addressing the conventions of fiction and writing, readers discover that it is more difficult to immerse themselves in the narrative. The section of *House of Leaves* that concerns Johnny discovering that the book he has written is already in publication and in the possession of a rock band allows the reader to recognise the presence of the book in their own hands. Johnny’s character becomes like a secondary reader who mirrors the feelings of the reader who is in possession of the book. By a realisation of reading and writing techniques, the reader is allowed to understand the workings of the novel and the limitations of the medium. The word, ‘metafiction’ was challenged and found to be problematic yet useful in categorising the sub-genre of literature. The word, metafiction, suggests that there is something ‘more’ than the fiction that the book contains. This literal understanding of the word can not be true as there cannot be anything more than the book and its boundaries. However, the word is relevant when trying to understand a concept that addresses the self-conscious writing and reading of a text.

Whilst metafictional techniques do not directly disrupt the graphic surface of the page like the experimentation with page formats, it could be said that metatextual conventions in a narrative disrupt the 'natural' reading methods. The reading experience in *House of Leaves* is continually disrupted by asides and citations and self-conscious comments by the characters. This removes the reader from the 'main narrative' and allows them to re-examine the text from outside of the narrative.

The work of Mark Currie was used to show how fiction and criticism have been assimilated by using each other's conventions which has resulted in self-consciousness being present in both forms of writing. This has resulted in a metacriticism. For fiction this has created a more critical perspective and an increase of theoretical discourse in narratives. *House of Leaves* both satirises and reveres criticism. The narrative is reliant on fictional critical discourse that gives a reality to the text that a fictional narrative would struggle to achieve. Self-awareness has allowed texts to defamiliarise and reinvigorate the novel form. Through a reconstruction of form and narrative conventions the writer of a print fiction can encourage a reader to redevelop their reading methods which gives a renewed relevance to the book as a physical object in an increasingly non-physical culture.

Challenges to textual space and the boundaries of a novel were discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. *House of Leaves* establishes new limits for what the reader naturally assumes to be the boundaries of the book. The reader is encouraged to turn the book around in order to read the narrative that is sometimes upside down and on its side. This momentarily removes the reader from the narrative and challenges the conventional methods that a reader uses to navigate a book. The blank space and absence of text in the novel appears to be as much a presence as the text. The reader naturally skips over these sections to the next unit of available text, yet by making this 'leap' the reader must first acknowledge the aesthetics of the page before proceeding to read what is on the page. This is a postmodern association; the book has now become more of an object that is open for experimentation which encourages a reader to initially look to the page format before the text that it contains.

This chapter discussed the comment by Glyn White, "Graphic devices in narrative texts raise ontological problems for the reader by foregrounding the book as object" (White 18). It is through the disruption of traditional graphic conventions that the author can redevelop the form and the properties of print fiction.

One way of encouraging a reader to look at the aesthetics of the page is to have character-specific fonts. *House of Leaves* has three main fonts: Times for Zampano, Courier for Johnny and Bookman for the editors. These fonts encourage speculation about their choice and draw attention to the physical form of text. As Hagler states, “Thus, at the outset, the text manipulates print technologies to represent multiple voices” (Hagler 1).

The pages in *House of Leaves* often resemble visual images such as a falling rope or the labyrinth in Navidson’s house. The book seems concerned with experimenting with artistic composition and portraying images. ‘The Navidson Record’ is a film and it appears that the author wishes to point out the word’s inability to describe the visual image that has no relation to the reader’s reality. The labyrinth cannot be portrayed simply through words just as Navidson’s Pulitzer Prize winning photograph of the dying Sudanese girl cannot be described, only seen. The photograph is only blank space in the narrative. Zampano’s narrative is immediately flawed when the reader discovers that he was blind and therefore could not have ‘seen’ ‘The Navidson Record’.

Danielewski challenges both conceptual and textual space in the novel. He challenges what the reader commonly perceives to be traditional boundaries by devoting a lot of space that is simply left blank. The novel is supplemented by an internet forum that continues to provide speculation about the text six years after its publication and shows Danielewski’s willingness to use electronic formats. He published *The Whalstoe Letters* as a separate book even though they can be found in the appendices in *House of Leaves*. The narrative continually appears to want to break free of the confines of the book.

The absence and presence of text in the book and experimentation with textual space provide disruptions to traditional reading methods and force the reader to make adaptations to their usual techniques. By featuring text that appears in different places on the page the reader is also forced to physically move the book through space in ways that are uncommon in reading literature. By doing so the reader is continually reminded of the presence of the physical book in their hands and the limitations and resources that it provides. The gaps and ‘redundancy’ of text is similar to a page of a hypertext fiction. The experimentation in *House of Leaves* is similar to the experimentation with form that is usually associated with hypertext fictions.

The third chapter of this thesis presented an argument that concerned the role of interactivity in reading literature. It was argued that traditional print-based literature is typically a physically passive experience (yet not a mentally passive experience). The reader must only turn the page to navigate the narrative yet must still resume a mentally active role in order to read the text on the page. Hypertext fictions require the reader to make ‘choices’ during the navigation of the narrative by featuring multiple hyperlinks per page. Some require the reader to collaborate with the author in the writing of certain sections. *House of Leaves* seems to appear like it wishes the reader to become more mentally active and aware of the act of reading. By allowing the reader to make choices whether or not to extract themselves from the main narrative, pursue the citations and force them to turn forwards or backwards in the narrative, the reader feels a sense of interactivity that is mirrored by the exploration of the labyrinth in ‘The Navidson Record’. It was mentioned that *House of Leaves* could be a metaphor for not only hypertext and electronic fiction but for the acts of writing and reading as well. The labyrinth’s lack of centre and multiple paths are similar to the choices a reader must make in navigating the text or the hyperlinks of a hypertext.

The two mediums differ in the amount of authorial control present in each one. The reader of a print-fiction is given a set narrative by the author and can only navigate the text through the narrative that the author has pre-set. The author maintains control and interactivity is kept to a minimum. Hypertexts offer multiple narrative choices on each ‘page’ by featuring several hyperlinks that result in different narrative paths and potentially different outcomes and conclusions. This non-linear method of narrative navigation allows for a more active reading experience that draws attention to the methods the reader employs to read a text.

Chapter three was also concerned with drawing a comparison between *House of Leaves* and hypertexts by focussing on their use of colour. Each mention of the word ‘House’ is coloured in blue ink, reminding the twenty-first century reader of blue hyperlinks in hypertexts. ‘House’ in the text acts as an ‘unclickable’ hyperlink yet by choosing to colour the word, the author places significance on it. Martin Brick refers to the use of colour in *House of Leaves* as “anti-rubrication”. Like in a hypertext, the reader of *House of Leaves* takes divergent paths through navigation of the citations that create an illusion of freedom and plurality of choice even though the possibilities and outcomes of the narrative are pre-established by the author. By

colouring the word 'House' in blue, the author draws the speculation away from who is the true author by forcing the reader to acknowledge that the word always appears in blue regardless of whose narrative they are currently reading and therefore putting emphasis on there being only one, single author.

Hypertexts negate the physical presence of the book and re-establish textual space. The time it takes to read and the physical construction of the page mean that traditional spatial definitions must be changed. The citations in *House of Leaves* are similar to hyperlinks in a hypertext. They force the reader to move through the text in unconventional ways. The intertextuality in *House of Leaves* continually defers meaning to fictional and non-fictional works. It also acts as another way in which the text tries to break free of the boundaries of the book. By referring to other works, the book keeps growing in size like the labyrinth that it contains. *House of Leaves* embraces conventions from hypertext and the internet that give the book renewed relevance to a more technologically-minded readership that is used to the multiprocessing that the narrative requires. The art mirrors reality.

Brick accurately observes what *House of Leaves* does as a novel and what my own thesis has tried to portray:

Though he eschews the concept of what we may call a meaning, a thesis or – more dangerously – a moral behind his book, it remains true that Danielewski's writing, his unreliable voices and his use of unstable blue script are all signifiers pointing to one signified: the text itself... The text in its material sense – as pages printed with ink, arranged in a certain way, appearing a certain way to the eye – is ultimately all that can exist (Brick 6).

Instead of trying to apply a meaning to a narrative, *House of Leaves* denies providing a significance which allows the reader to understand what it *is* that makes a book. It is instead left up to the individual to decide how they read a text. The reader gains insight into the limitations and resources of the print-based novel and thus the physical book is analysed and recognised for its artistic ability. Danielewski denies the unique qualities of his novel; instead he assures readers that his book should not confuse readers. "His textual layout merely amalgamates what has already been done in medieval manuscripts, modernist poetry, and books of deconstructionist philosophy" (Brick 7). The changes in textual space and the challenge to metafiction are not unique; in fact they have all been done before in experimental fiction. Instead, *House of Leaves* offers information in a similar way to which a twenty-first century

reader is used to receiving it. Television, newspapers, radio and the Internet have led to a society that is able to multi-process many different streams of information. To reiterate my opening paragraph, what makes this text worthwhile is not its attempts to be innovative or 'gimmicky' but the author's efforts to re-examine the typical conventions of the traditional print-based novel to momentarily reinvigorate the form in an increasingly electronic and virtual culture. Danielewski appears to be at conflict with traditional, realist nineteenth-century narrative techniques that seem to have been super-seded by other media, specifically film and television. The novel seems best suited for depicting interior states. Through the natural evolution of the metafictional form to include multiple narratives and the experimentation with text on the graphic surface of the page, *House of Leaves* challenges the conventions of contemporary literature and acknowledges the composition of the physical book. By alluding to hypertextual characteristics the book associates itself with the new form of literature and looks to the freedoms that they provide to the reader. The experimentation with the novel's form and abilities allows the author to push the boundaries of reality and fiction and create an immersive, often hyper-real experience. *House of Leaves* is a novel that is written for the twenty-first century reader who is used to the multi-processing several streams of information, the novel's unorthodox style, reassessment of textual space and adherence to academic conventions reinvigorate the form of fiction and criticises academia for the traditions that so often restrict it in a culture that is constantly changing its physical boundaries.

APPENDIX ONE

appreciate its sad taste and never get in the way of each other's dreams, even though Lude just wants more money, better parties and prettier girls and I want something else. I'm not even sure what to call it anymore except I know it feels roomy and it's drenched in sunlight and it's weightless and I know it's not cheap.

Probably not even real.

Who can guess why Lude and I have ended up friends. I think it's mainly because he recognizes that I'm game for any mis-step he has in mind and he enjoys the company. Of course publicly, Lude likes to throw me plenty of props, invariably focusing on the disjointed life I've led. He's still impressed—and in turn likes to impress others—with the fact that at the age of thirteen I went to work in Alaska and by the time I was eighteen had already slept in a whorehouse in Rome. Most of all though he loves the stories. Especially the way I tell them to the girls we meet. (I already got into that a little with the whole riff on boxing and Birds of Paradise and some guy named Punching Bag.) But they're only stories, the way I tell them I mean. I actually have a whole bunch.

Take the scars for instance.

There are a number of variations on that one. The most popular is my two year stint in a Japanese Martial Arts Cult, made up entirely of Koreans living in Idaho, who on the last day of my initiation into their now-defunct brotherhood made me pick up a scalding metal wok using only my bare forearms. In the past the wok has been heated in a kiln; recently it's been full of red hot coals. The story's an absolute crock of shit, or should I say a wok of shit—sorry; I know, I know I should learn to crawl before I walk; sorry again; I mean for not being sorry the first time or for that matter the second time—but, you see, it's so hard to argue with all those whirls of melted flesh.

"Show them your arms, Johnny" Lude will say, in his most offhand over-the-top manner.

"Aw come on. Well, alright just this once." I roll up my left sleeve and then, taking my time, I roll up the right one.

"He got that in a cult in Indiana."

"Idaho," I correct him. And it goes on from there.

I'm sure most women know it's bull but hey, they're entertained. I also think it's somewhat of a relief not to hear the true story. I mean you look at the horror sweeping all the way up from my wrists to my elbows, and you have to take a deep breath and ask yourself, do I really want to know what happened there? In my experience, most people don't. They usually look away. My stories actually help them look away.

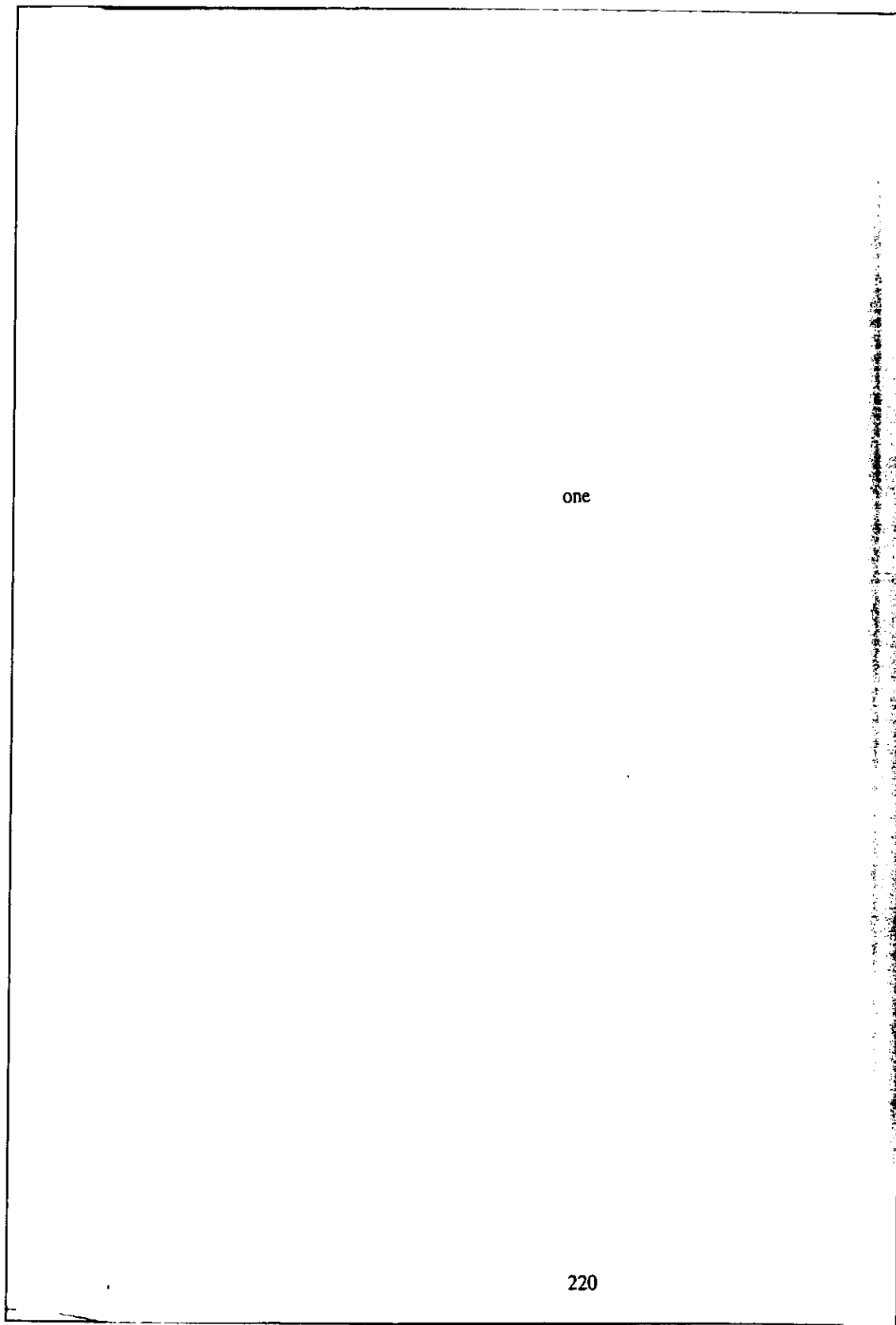
Maybe they even help me look away.

But I guess that's nothing new. We all create stories to protect ourselves.

It's March now. Late March. Three months have gone by since Lude called me up that night. Three months since I dragged away a black, unremarkable, paint spattered trunk, which as I quickly found out was one of those old cedar lined jobbers, built in Utica, NY, special thanks to the C. M. Clapp Company, complete with rusted latches, rotting leather handles and a lifetime of digressions and disappointments.

To date, I've counted over two hundred rejection letters from various literary journals, publishing houses, even a few words of discouragement from prominent professors in east coast universities. No one wanted the old man's words—except me.

1. ii



¹⁴⁶For example, there is nothing about the house that even remotely resembles 20th century works whether in the style of Post-Modern, Late-Modern, Brutalism, Neo-Expressionism, Wrightian, The New Formalism, Miesian, the International Style, Streamline Moderne, Art Deco, the Pueblo Style, the Spanish Colonial, to name but a few, with examples such as the Western Savings and Loan Association in Superstition, Arizona, Animal Crackers in Highland Park, Illinois, Pacific Design Center in Los Angeles, or Mineries Condominium in Venice, Wurster Hall in Berkeley, Katselas House in Pittsburgh, Dulles International Airport, Greene House in Norman Oklahoma, Chicago Harold Washington Library, the Watts Towers in South Central, Barcelona National Theatre, New Town of Seaside Florida, Tugendhat House, Rue de Laeken in Brussels, Richmond Riverside in Richmond Surrey, the staircase hall in the Athens Georgia News Building, the Tsukuba Center Building in Ibaraki, the Digital House, Hiroshima City Museum of Contemporary Art, the interior of the Judge Institute of Management Studies in Cambridge, Maison à Bordeaux, TGV Railway Station in Lyon-Satolas, the post-modernism of the Wexner Center for Visual Arts in Columbus, Ohio, Palazzo Hotel in Fukuoka, National Geographic Society in Washington, D.C., the Amon Carter Museum in Fort Worth, Texas, Sainsbury Wing of the National Gallery, Pyramid at the Louvre, New Building at Staatsgalerie Stuttgart, J. Paul Getty Museum in Malibu, Palace of Abraxas at Marne-La-Vallée, Piazza d'Italie in New Orleans, AT&T Building in New York, the modernism of Carré d'Art, Lloyds Building in London, the Boston John F. Kennedy Library complex, Nave of Vuokseeniska Church in Finland, head office of the Enso-Gutzeit Company, Administrative Center of Säynätsalo, the Eames House, the Baker dormitory at MIT, inside the TWA terminal at Kennedy Airport, The National Theatre in London, Hull House Association Uptown Center in Chicago, Hektoen Laboratory also in Chicago, Fitzpatrick House in the Hollywood Hills, Graduate Center at Harvard University, Pan-Pacific Auditorium in Los Angeles, General Motors Testing Laboratory in Phoenix Arizona, Bullock's Wilshire Department Store in Los Angeles, Casino Building in New York, Hotel Franciscan in Albuquerque New Mexico, La Fonda Hotel in Santa Fe, or Santa Barbara County Courthouse, the Neff or Sherwood House in California, Exterior of the Secondary Modern School, Maisons Jaoul, Notre-Dame-du-Haut near Belfort, The Unité d'Habitation in Marseilles, The Farnsworth House in Plano, Illinois, The Alumni Memorial Hall at Illinois Institute of Technology, Guggenheim Museum in New York, or nothing of the traditionalism of Lawn Road Flats in Hampstead, the Zimbabwe House and Battersea Power Station in London, Choir of the Anglican cathedral in Liverpool or Memorial to the Missing of the Somme near Arras, Viceroy's house in New Delhi, Gledstone Hall in Yorkshire, Finsbury Circus facade, Castle Drogo near Drewsteignton Devon, Casa del Fascio in Como, Villa

redefinition of route, even the absurd way leads away from the living room through a series of lefts, back to where it should be but clearly is not: describes a house reminiscent of any modern floorplans and experiments in design.¹⁴⁶

Sebastiano Perouse de Montclos, however, has a more detailed examination on the house, posing the question: how did the house follow Andrea Palladio's derivations.

By way of a Palladian grammar, Perouse de Montclos shows how space through a series of steps. As Palladio proved, Perouse de Montclos uses his system to generate a variety of layouts such as Villa Emo, Villa Ragona, Villa of course Villa Zenobia. Perouse de Montclos are only eight steps:

1. Grid definition
2. Exterior-wall definition
3. Room layout
4. Interior-wall realignment
5. Principal entrances—pointing exterior wall inflections
6. Exterior ornamentation
7. Windows and Doors
8. Termination¹⁴⁹

Perouse de Montclos relies on these steps to show how Navidson's house was (1.0) first established, (3.0) sub-divided and (4.0) so on. He convinces the reader that the constant redefinition of doorways and walls represents a kind of geometry in the process of working out all possible solutions, likely *ad infinitum*, but never settling because, in his conclusion, "unoccupied space will not change simply because nothing forbids it to undergo continuous internal alterations only prove that a house is necessarily uninhabited."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹For an exemplary look at Palladian grammar in Mitchell's *The Logic of Architecture: Design, Context, and Critique* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1994), see Andrea Palladio's *The Four Books of Architecture* (New York: Dover, 1965).

¹⁵⁰Sebastiano Perouse de Montclos' *Palladian Grammar: Appropriations: Navidson's Villa Malcontenta* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996), p. 2,865. Also see Aristides Quine's *Conceals*

...ngt. Die Angst dagegen holt das Dasein
 ...seinem verfallenden Aufgehen in der
 »Welt« zurück. Die alltägliche Vertrautheit
 ...cht in sich Zusammen. Das Dasein ist ver-
 ...zeli, das jedoch als In-der-Welt-sein. Das
 ...Sein kommt in den existenzialen »Modus«
 ...Un-zuhause. Nichts anderes meint die
 ...ede von der »Unheimlichkeit.«³²

...Sein und Zeit (Frankfurt Am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1977), p. 250-

...glish, thanks to John Macquarrie and Edward
 ...von of Heidegger's Being and Time, Harper & Row,
 ...real bitch to find:

...one feels uncanny. Here the peculiar
 ...ness of that which Dasein finds itself
 ...s in anxiety, comes proximally to
 ...the "nothing and nowhere". But here
 ...ness" also means "not-being-at home." [das
 ...-se-sein]. In our first indication of the
 ...character of Dasein's basic state and in
 ...dication of the existential meaning of
 ...as distinguished from the categorial
 ...tion of 'insiderness', Being-in was defined
 ...ing alongside . . .", "Being-familiar with
 ...s character of Being-in was then brought
 ...re concretely through the everyday
 ...of the "they", which brings tranquilized
 ...ance—'Being-at-home', with all its
 ...—into the average everydayness of
 ...On the other hand, as Dasein falls, anxiety
 ...back from its absorption in the 'world'.
 ...familiarity collapses. Dasein has been
 ...rized, but individualized as Being-in-the-
 ...Being-in enters into the existential 'mode'
 ...of-at-home". Nothing else is meant by our
 ...'uncanniness'.

...prove the existence of crack back in the early
 ...Certainly this geezer must of gotten hung up on a
 ...habit to start spouting such nonsense. Crazier
 ...been wondering if something about this passage may
 ...ted me, which I know doesn't exactly follow,
 ...that would imply something in it really does make
 ...got finished calling it non-sense.

...when I copied down the German a week ago, I was
 ...right I found the translation and this morning, when I
 ...didn't feel at all myself. It's probably just a
 ...that there's some kind of connection between my
 ...Navidson Record or even a few arcane sentences on
 ...a former Nazi tweaking on who knows what. More than
 ...ing entirely else, the real root lying in my already
 ...tions, though I guess those are pretty recent too,
 ...orth between wishful thinking and some private agony
 ...I've no fucking clue.

I

I saw a film today, oh boy . . .

— The Beatles

While enthusiasts and detractors will continue to empty entire dictionaries attempting to describe or deride it, “authenticity” still remains the word most likely to stir a debate. In fact, this leading obsession—to validate or invalidate the reels and tapes—invariably brings up a collateral and more general concern: whether or not, with the advent of digital technology, image has forsaken its once unimpeachable hold on the truth.¹

For the most part, skeptics call the whole effort a hoax but grudgingly admit *The Navidson Record* is a hoax of exceptional quality. Unfortunately out of those who accept its validity many tend to swear allegiance to tabloid-UFO sightings. Clearly it is not easy to appear credible when after vouching for the film’s verity, the discourse suddenly switches to why Elvis is still alive and probably wintering in the Florida Keys.² One thing remains certain: any controversy surrounding Billy Meyer’s film on flying saucers³ has been supplanted by the house on Ash Tree Lane.

Though many continue to devote substantial time and energy to the antinomies of fact or fiction, representation or artifice, document or prank, as of late the more interesting material dwells exclusively on the interpretation of events within the film. This direction seems more promising, even if the house itself, like Melville’s behemoth, remains resistant to summation.

Much like its subject, *The Navidson Record* itself is also uneasily contained—whether by category or lection. If finally catalogued as a gothic tale, contemporary urban folkmyth, or merely a ghost story, as some have called it, the documentary will still, sooner or later, slip the limits of any one of those genres. Too many important things in *The Navidson Record* jut out past the borders. Where one might expect horror, the supernatural, or traditional paroxysms of dread and fear, one discovers disturbing sadness, a sequence on radioactive isotopes, or even laughter over a *Simpsons* episode.

In the 17th century, England’s greatest topographer of worlds satanic and divine warned that hell was nothing less than “Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace/ And rest can never dwell, hope never

¹ More carefully considered in Chapter IX.

² Daniel Bowler’s “Resurrection on Ash Tree Lane: Elvis, Christmas Past, and Other Non-Entities” is found in *The House* (New York: Little Brown, 1995), p. 167-244 in which he examines the inherent fiction of any claim alleging resurrection as well as the existence of that place.

³ That matter the Cottingley Fairies, Kirlian photography, Ted Serios’ thoughtography or Alexander’s photograph of the Union dead.

Reston said much later in *The Reston Interview*. "Just look for a moment did I suspect he was capable of that."⁸⁵ Holloway dropped out, as soon as Holloway saw the tape of "The Five and a Half Minute Hallway", which Reston had sent him, he was more than ready to join in an investigation. Within a week he had arrived in Seattle with two employees: Jed Leeder and Kirby "Wax"

In *The Navidson Record*, Jed Leeder lives in Seattle, originally from Vineland, New Jersey. He had actually been becoming a career truck driver when a trans-continental job took him away to Washington. It was there that he discovered the Cascades, not just some myth conjured up in a magazine. He was in Seattle when he first saw the Cascades. One look was all he needed. He quit his job on the spot and started selling camping gear. He is still a long way from Vineland, and as we can see his passion for the Pacific Northwest and the great outdoors has only grown more intense.

Quietly shy, almost to the point of frailty, Jed possesses an unusual sense of direction and remarkable endurance. Even Holloway would probably out distance him in a packless climb. In his spare time, Jed loves drinking coffee, watching the tide turn, and watching the movie *Boyz n the City* with his fiancée. "She's from Texas," he tells Navidson. "I think that's where we're going to get married."⁸⁶

Wax could not be more different. At twenty-six, he is the youngest member of the Holloway team. Born in Aspen, Colorado, he has a mountain face and in cave shafts. Before he could walk he could drive a piton and before he could talk he had a whole vocabulary of words under his fingers. If there is such a thing as a climbing god, Jed is it. By the time he dropped out of high school, he had more climbing experience than most climbers have claimed in a lifetime. In one interview, he says how he plans to eventually make a solo ascent of Everest's West Face. "I'll tell you this, more than a few people are bettin' I'll

Wax was twenty-three, Holloway hired him as a guide. For the next few years, Wax helped Holloway and Jed lead teams up Mt. Rainier, into Ellison's Cave in Georgia, or across some Nepalese mountains. It was not much to brag about but the experience was worth

Wax sometimes gets a little out of hand. He likes to drink, get laid, and brag about how much he drank and how many times he got laid. "Booze and women are one thing I'm always better than you and if you make it down alive you had a good trip."⁸⁷

"Wax has to be the weirdest," Wax later tells Navidson, right before he drops out of the last foray down the hallway. "When Holloway asked me

⁸⁵ Complete transcript of *The Reston Interview*.

⁸⁶ See *Beyond The Grasp of Commercial Media* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1995), p. 252. The appearance of the first short entitled "The Five and a Half Minute Hallway" was probably copied the tape, gave it to a couple of friends, who in turn passed it on. "The Five and a Half Minute Hallway" (p. 252).

⁸⁷ "The Leader of the Pack" in *Outdoor Life*, v. 195, June 1995, p. 28.

⁸⁸ "The Five and a Half Minute Hallway" in *Sierra*, v. 81, July/August 1996, p. 42.

FOUR

Directions:

§ Reproduce all facsimiles of **The Reston Interview** and **The Last Interview**.⁴²⁹

— Ed.

APPENDIX TWO

MARK Z. DANIELEWSKI'S

Obituary

Local pilot, Donnie _____, died last Sunday on route ___ when the Mack truck he was in swerved into a ditch and caught fire. Reportedly the driver, who survived, had fallen asleep at the wheel.

Throughout his life, Mr. _____ was a dedicated flier. As R. William Notes said of his friend, "Donnie always seemed most at home in the sky."

Born in Dorset, Vermont on _____, 19___, Mr. _____'s family soon moved to Marietta, Ohio where he graduated from _____ high school. After a stint in the Air Force, he worked for several years as a crop duster in Nebraska, a mail carrier in Alaska, and for one winter flew a spotter plane off the coast of Norway. Eventually, he took a job as a commercial pilot for American Airlines, though on time off, he enjoyed performing aerial stunts in regional shows.

Late last year, Mr. _____ decided to take a job as a pilot for _____ in order to spend more time with his family. Tragically, during the standard physical examination, doctors discovered he had unknowingly suffered some time ago—probably in his sleep—a cardiac infarction. The results were sent to Oklahoma where the FAA voted to suspend his ATP license for six months, pending further evaluation. No longer able to earn an income as a pilot, Mr. _____ sought work at a trucking company.

He is survived by his wife, _____, and one son, _____.

— *The _____ - Herald*, July __, 1981

2. iii

“No matter how you cut it,
“no matter,
“Chintana near didn't accept.
“Only at the last moment, for reasons
vague,
“if vaguely professional,
“did she force from herself a reply, in the
affirmative, obviously, to
“acceptate
“yes, accept
“the invitation,
“Mose Dettledown's invitation.

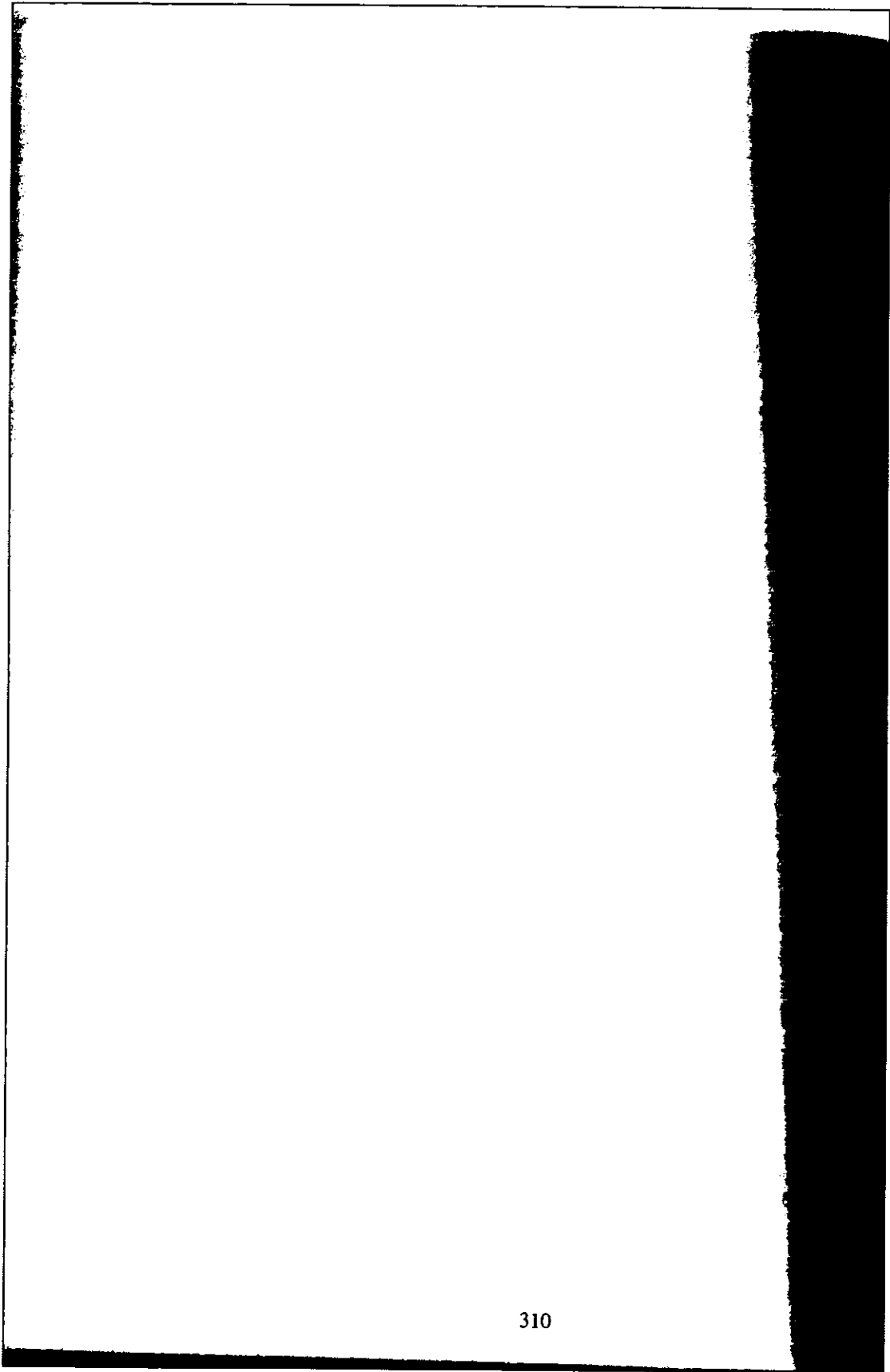
“Fact is what Chintana had discovered
since the divorce was that most everything
required
“Force!
“Opening her eyes, her hands, even
opening her medicine cabinet.
“Forced!
“Force open the can of bitter tea leaves.
Force back the tough tongues of those
walking shoes she kept perched
“by a birdcage.
“Force even a smirk she hoped could
serve, temporarily at least as a not so scored
and hearthunted a
“shimile.
“Especially when in the
acknowledgement of something she
recognized as Social Duty she was forced to
acknowledge,
“yet again,
“to yet another insitrusive customer, her
husband Pravat's surpising departure.
“Hmmm, Pravat.
“Pravat.
“Force back something else too,
“mustn't forget that—
“the terrible agony she wished day out
and night in to lash across the throat of
anyone who forced from her all such
incessant acts of acknowledging
“in the first place.

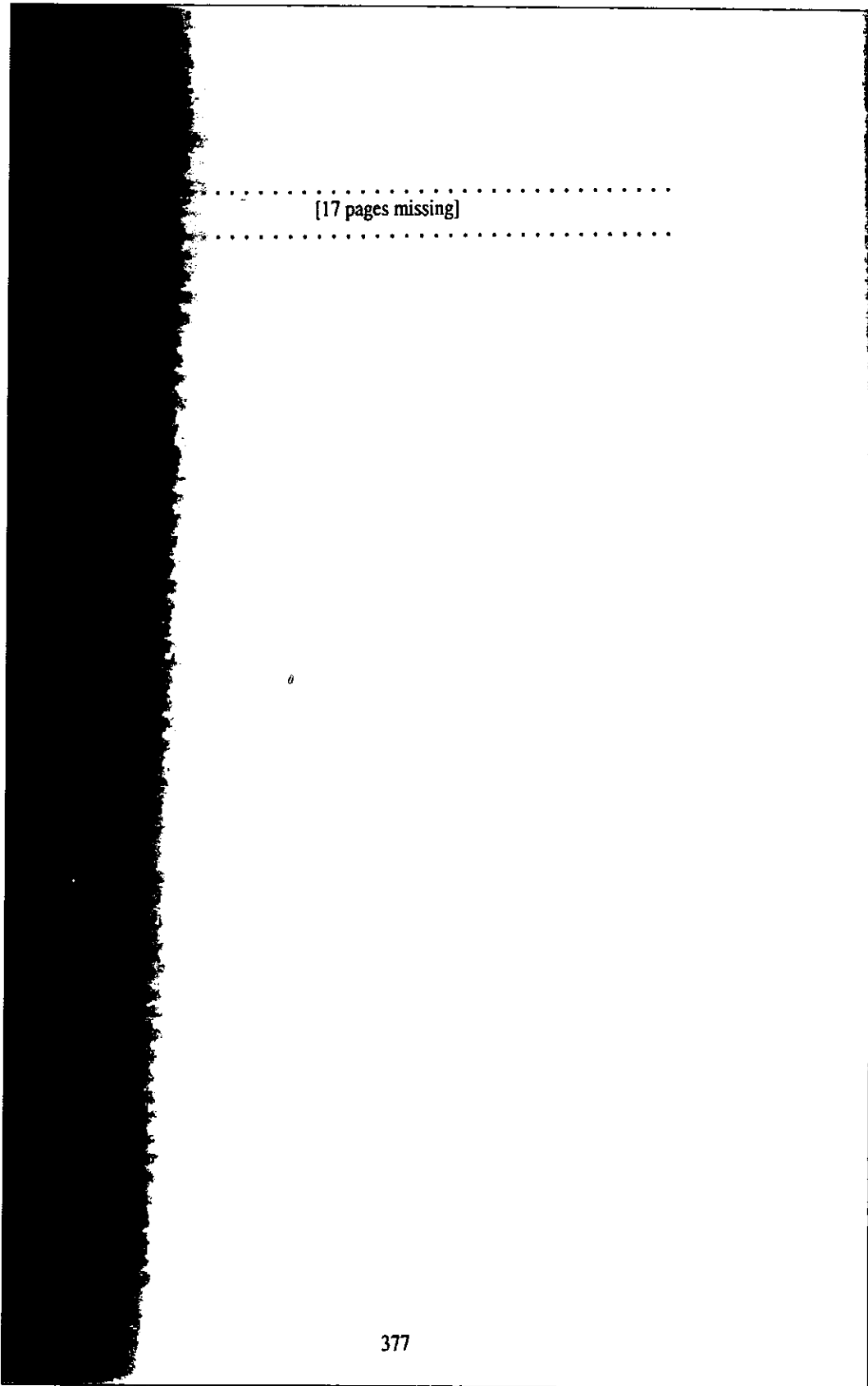
“Despite pacific beliefs, only infliction
promised her peace.

2. iv



2. v





[17 pages missing]

[2 pages missing]³⁸⁹

390

up, slick with sweat. And I'm not talking wet in the
the brow. I'm talking scalp wet, sheet wet, and at that
already lost in a new year—shivering wet. I'm so cold my
before I can really focus on the question of
I realize I've remembered my first dream.
after I find some candles, stomp around my room, splash
face, micturate, light a sterno can and put the kettle
can I respond to my cold head and my general physical
I do, relishing every bit of it in fact. Anything is
that unexpected and awful dream, made all the more
because now for some reason I can recall it. Nor do I have
I cannot imagine what has changed in my life to bring
the surface.

sure as hell were useless, instantly confiscated at
even if I did manage to pick up the Weatherby before my

passes. I'm blinking in the light, boiling more water for
removing my head into another wool hat, sneezing again
I can see is the fucking dream, torn straight out of the old
care of the very brainstem I thought had been soundly

as how it starts:

in the hull of some enormous vessel, wandering its narrow
black steel and rust. Something tells me I've been here a
endlessly descending into dead ends, turning around to find
which in the end lead only to still more ends. This, however,
tells me. Memories seem to suggest I've at one point lingered
room, the container holds, scrambled up a ladder to find
in a deserted kitchen, the only place still shimmering in the
of stainless steel. But those visits took place many years
though I could go back there at any time, I choose instead
these cramped routes which in spite of their ability to lose me
in every turn an almost indiscreet sense of familiarity.

I know the way perfectly but I walk them to forget.
then something changes. Suddenly I sense for the first time
presence of another. I quicken my pace, not quite running but
either glad, startled or terrified, but before I can figure
I complete two quick turns and there he is, this drunken frat
a plum-colored Tophia Beta sweatshirt, carrying the lid of a
in his right hand and a large fireman's ax in his left. He
says, and then with a lurch starts to approach me, raising his
I'm scared alright but I'm also confused. "Excuse me, mind
why you're coming after me?" which I actually try to say
words don't come out right. More like grunts and clouds, big
steam.

when I notice my hands. They look melted, as if they were
plastic and had been dipped in boiling oil, only they're not
they're the thin effects of skin which have in fact been dipped
in oil. I know this and I even know the story. I'm just unable

4[]6[],10 & 1[] centre on Holloway's reiteration of his
 3, however, is different. It only lasts four seconds. With eyes
 voice hoarse, lips split and bleeding, Hol[]y barks "I'm not
 5 fol[]lows up with, "There's something here. I'm sure of it
 with: "It's following me. No, it's *stalking* me." And Part 9:
 strike. It's just out there waiting. I don't know what for. But
 , waiting for me, waiting for something. I don't know why it
] Oh god . . . Holloway Roberts.
 Wisconsin. [chambering a round in his rifle] Oh god[]."²⁹²
 interesting to compare Holloway's behavior to Tom's. Tom
 is []agon with sarcasm, referring to i[] as "Mr. Monster" while
 himself as unpalatable. Humor proved a p[]werful psychological
 Holloway has his rifle but it proves the weaker of the two. Cold
 gunpowder offer him ver[] little internal calm. Never[]less[

Of course, Part 13 or rather "Last" of The Holloway Tape initiates
 rest and perhaps most popular debate surrounding *The Navidson*
 Lantern C. Pitch a[]d Kadina Ashbeckie stand on opposite ends of
 rum, one favoring an actual monster, the other opting for a ratio[]al
 tion. Neither one, however, succeeds in [] a
 e interpretation.

Last spring, Pitch in the Pelias Lecture Ser[]jes announced: "Of
 ere's a beast! And I assure you our belief or disbelief makes very
 erence to that thing!"²⁹³ In *American Photo* (May 1996, p. 154)
 Ashbeckie wr[]te: "Death of light gives birth to a creature-darkness
 accept as pure[]absence. Thus despite rational object[]ions,
 ology's failure is over[]un by the onslaught of myth."²⁹⁴

Except the Vandal known as Myth *always* slaughters Reason if she
 [] Myth is the tiger stalking the herd. Myth is Tom's
 Monster. Myth is Hol[]y's beast. ~~Myth is the Minotaur.~~²⁹⁵ Myth is

Barnholt (*American Cinematographer*, []ber 2, [] 49) has argued that the
 12 is an impossibility, claiming the framing and lighting, though only slightly different
 later parts, indicate the presence of a recording device other than Holloway's. Joe Willis
 [] p. 115) has pointed out that Barnholt's complaint concerns those
 after 199[]. Apparently Part 12 in all prints before [] and after 1993 show a view
 the other twelve. And yet even though the spectre of digital manipulation has been raised in
Record, to this day no adequate explanation has managed to resolve the curious enigma
 12.

Incarnation Of Spirit Things and *Lo[]* by Lantern C. Pitch (New York: Resperine Press,
 at the perils of disbelief.

Kadina Ashbeckie, "Myth's Brood" *The Nation*, [] September, 19[]
 of the labyrinth waits the Mi[]taur and like the Minotaur of myth its name is-[]
 d the maze as trope for psychic concealment, its excavation resulting in (tragic[]
 But if in Chielitz's eye the Minotaur was a son imprisoned by a father's shame, is there then

*Spreta laet silvis pudibundaque frondibus
ora protegit et solis ex illo vivit in untris; sed
tamen haeret amor crescitque dolore repulsae;
extenuant vigiles corpus miserabile curae ad-
ducitque cutem macies et in aera sucus
corporis omnis abit; vox tantum atque ossa
supersunt: vox manet, ossa ferunt lapidis
traxisse figuram. Inde laet silvis nulloque in
monte videtur, omnibus auditur: sonus est,
qui vivit in illa.⁴⁹*

To repeat: her voice has life. It possesses a quality not present in the original, revealing how a nymph can return a different and more meaningful story, in spite of telling the same story.⁴⁹

⁴⁹Eloquently translated by Horace Gregory as: "So she was turned away/ To hide her face, her lips, her eyes/ among the trees/ Even their leaves, to haunt caves of the forest/ To feed her love on melancholy/ Which, sleepless, turned her body to a shade/ First pale and wrinkled, then a sheet of air/ Then, which some say turned to thin-worn rocks; / And last her voice remained, Vanished in forest/ Far from usual walks on hills and valleys/ She's heard by all who call: her voice has life." *The Metamorphoses* Ovid. (New York: A Mentor Book, 1958), p. 97.

⁴⁹Literary marvel Miguel de Cervantes set down this compelling passage in his *Don Quixote* (Part One, Chapter Nine):

... la verdad, cuya madre es la historia, émula del tiempo, depósito de las acciones, testigo de lo pasado, ejemplo y aviso de lo presente, advertencia de lo por venir.⁵¹

Much later, a yet untried disciple of arms had the rare pleasure of meeting the extraordinary Pierre Menard at a Paris café following the second world war. Reportedly Menard expounded on his distinct distaste for Madelines but never mentioned the passage (and echo of *Don Quixote*) he had penned before the war and had subsequently earned him a fair amount of literary fame:

... la verdad, cuya madre es la historia, émula del tiempo, depósito de las acciones, testigo de lo pasado, ejemplo y aviso de lo presente, advertencia de lo por venir.

This exquisite variation on the passage by the "ingenious layman" is far too dense to unpack here. Suffice to say Menard's nuances are so fine they are nearly undetectable, though talk with the Framers and you will immediately see how haunted they are by sorrow, accusation, and sarcasm.⁵⁰

⁵⁰Exactly! How the fuck do you write about "exquisite variation" when both passages are exactly the same?

I'm sure the late hour has helped, add to that the dim light in the room, or how poorly I've been sleeping, going to sleep but not really resting, if that's possible, though let me tell you, sitting alone, awake to nothing else but this odd murmuring, like listening to the penitent pray—you know it's a prayer but you miss the words—or better yet listening to a bitter curse, realizing a whole lot wrong's being ushered into the world but still missing the words, me like that, listening in my way by comparing in his way both Spanish fragments, both written out on brown leaves of paper, or no, that's not right, not brown, more like, oh I don't know, yes brown but in the failing light, appearing almost colored or the memory of a color, somehow violent, or close to that, or not at all, as I just kept reading both pieces over and over again, trying to detect at least one differing accent or

XXIII

"Surviving House, Kalapana, Hawaii, 1993"

— Diane Cook

In *Passion For Pity and Other Recipes For Disaster* (Loose Greenhill Books, 1996) Helmut Muir cried: "They both live. They even married. It's a happy ending."

Which is true. Both Karen and Will Navidson survive their ordeal and they do exchange conjugal vows in Vermont. Of course, is it possible to look at Navidson's ravaged face, the patch covering his left eye, the absence of a hand, the crutch wedged under his armpit, and call it a "happy" ending? Even putting aside the physical cost, what about the unseen emotional trauma which Muir so casually dismisses?

The Navidsons may have left the house, they may have even moved to Virginia, but they will never be able to leave the memory of that place.

"It is late October," Navidson tells us in the closing sequence to *Navidson Record*. Almost a year and a half has passed since he fled from the house. He is still recovering but making progress, pouring his energy into finishing this project. "At least one good thing to come out of all this," he says with a smile. "The skin condition plaguing my feet for all these years has completely vanished."

The children seem to approve of Vermont. Daisy adamantly believes that faeries inhabit the countryside and spirits possess her collection of stuffed animals and dolls, in particular a red and gold one. Chad on the other hand has become obsessed with Lego, spending countless hours with pounds and pounds of their arrangement. When questioned about this new interest, he only says that someday he wants to become an architect.

Karen struggles every day to keep up with everyone's energy. Only recently she was diagnosed with malignant breast cancer. Her mastectomy was considered "successful" and subsequent chemotherapy

Fig. 111.1
continued on p. 112

unappealing he
however, is so

for a little longer. His
continues to push on

Thirty minutes later,
tenacity is rewarded.

rung. A few more
he reaches the last

standing inside a very
seconds and he is

↘ Erich Kästner in *Ölberge Weinberge* (Frankfurt, 1960, p. 95) comments on the force of vertical meanings:

The climbing of a
mountain reflects

redemption. That is
due to the force of

the word 'above,'
and the power of

the word 'up.' Even
those who have

long ceased to
believe in Heaven

and Hell, cannot
exchange the words

'above' and 'below.'

An idea Escher beautifully subverts in *House of Stairs*: disenchanting his audience of the gravity of the world, while at the same time enchanting them with the peculiar gravity of the self.

licated and twisted.□
 enough, however, the farther Holloway goes the more infre-
 quently to take samples or mark their path. Obviously deaf to

the first to voice some
 how quickly their
 moving: "You know
 going, Holloway?"
 just scowls and keeps
 ward in what appears
 unaided effort to find
 something different,
 aiming, or at least some
 notion of an outside-
 place. At one point
 he succeeds in scratch-
 ing and ultimately kick-
 ing a wall, only to discover
 a windowless room with a
 door leading to another hall-
 way, yet another endless

¹⁴⁴Not only are there no hot-air registers, return air vents, or radiators, cast iron or other, or cooling systems—condenser, reheat coils, heating convector, damper, concentrator, dilute solution, heat exchanger, absorber, evaporator, solution pump, evaporator recirculating pump—or any type of ducts, whether spiral lock-seam/standing rib design, double-wall duct, and Loloss™ Tee, flat oval, or round duct with perforated inner liner, insulation, and outer shell; no HVAC system at all, even a crude air distribution system—there are no windows—no water supplies,

empty rooms and passageways, all with walls potentially hiding
 a door leading to a possible exterior, though invariably winding up as just
 another interior. As Gerard Eysenck famously described
 the labyrinth: "In-ness never inside out."¹⁴³

The desire for exteriority is no doubt further amplified by the utter
 emptiness within. Nothing there provides a reason to linger. In part
 because no object, let alone fixture or other manner of finish work has
 been discovered there.¹⁴⁴ Back in 1771, Sir Joshua Reynolds in his *Dis-
 course* argued against the importance of the particular, calling into
 question, for example, "minute attention to the discriminations of Drapery
 whether it is neither Woollen, nor linen, nor silk, satten or velvet: it is
 nothing more."¹⁴⁵ Such global appraisal seems perfectly suited
 to the labyrinthine house which despite its corridors and rooms of various sizes
 is more than corridors and rooms, even if sometimes, as John
 Ruskin observed in the course of translating the labyrinth: "The gal-
 lery is straight but curve furtively."

Corridors, rooms, corridors, and the occasional spiral staircase are
 subject to patterns of arrangement. In some cases particular
 However, considering the constant shifts, the seemingly endless

the aspect of fishing line—a readily available and cheap way to map progress through
 there are of course obvious mythological resonances. *Mines'* daughter, Ariadne,
 a thread which he used to escape the labyrinth. Thread has repeatedly served as a
 lifeline, for life, and for destiny. The Greek Fates (called Moerae) or the Roman
 Parcae) spun the thread of life and also cut it off. Curiously in Orphic cults, thread sym-

"Break Through (not a) Breakthrough: Heuristic Hallways In The Holloway Venture."
Davidson Record Semiotic Conference Tentatively Entitled Three Blind Mice and the
 Federation of Architects. June 8, 1993. Reprinted in Fisker and Weinberg, 1996.
¹⁴⁵ *Discourses on Art* (1771) (New York: Collier, 1961).

TRANSWORLD PUBLISHERS
 61-63 Uxbridge Road, London W5 5SA
 a division of The Random House Group Ltd
 RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA (PTY) LTD
 20 Alfred Street, Milsons Point, Sydney,
 New South Wales 2061, Australia
 RANDOM HOUSE NEW ZEALAND LTD
 18 Poland Road, Glenfield, Auckland 10, New Zealand
 RANDOM HOUSE SOUTH AFRICA (PTY) LTD
 Endulini, 5a Jubilee Road, Parktown 2193, South Africa

Published 2001 by Doubleday
 a division of Transworld Publishers
 First published in Great Britain by Anchor, 2000
 Reprinted three times, 2000

Copyright © 2000 by Mark Z. Danielewski

The right of Mark Z. Danielewski to be identified as the author of this work has been asserted in accordance with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Permission acknowledgements and illustration credits appear on pages 707-708.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 0385 60310 X

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise, without the prior permission of the publishers.

Printed and bound in Great Britain by The Bath Press, Bath

3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

This novel is a work of fiction. Any references to real people, events, establishments, organizations or locales are intended to give the fiction a sense of reality and authenticity. Other names, characters and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, as are those fictionalized events and incidents which involve real persons and did not occur or are set in the future - Ed.

A Note On This Edition

Full Color	2-Color	Black & White	Inconceivable
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •The word <i>house</i> is blue; <i>minotaur</i> and all <i>stroke</i> passages in red. •The only struck line in Chapter XXI appears in purple. •Braille and color plates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Either <i>house</i> appears in blue or <i>stroke</i> passages and the word <i>minotaur</i> appear in red. •No Braille. •Color or black & white plates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Color is not used for the word <i>house</i>, <i>minotaur</i>, or <i>stroke</i> passages. •No Braille. •Black & white plates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •No color. •No Braille. •Elements in the <i>colophon</i>, <i>appendices</i> and <i>index</i> may be missing.

www.houseofleaves.co.uk

APPENDIX THREE

licated and twisted.¹⁴³ Enough, however, the farther Holloway goes the more infrequently to take samples or mark their path. Obviously deaf to

the first to voice some how quickly their moving. "You know going, Holloway?" just scowls and keeps ward; in what appears a ruined effort to find something different, lining; or at least some notion of an outside-place. At one point he succeeds in scratch- and ultimately kick- a wall, only to discover a dowless room with a ding to another hall- yet another endless

¹⁴⁴Not only are there no hot-air registers, return air vents, or radiators, cast iron or other, or cooling systems—condenser, reheat coils, heating convector, damper, concentrator, dilute solution, heat exchanger, absorber, evaporator, solution pump, evaporator recirculating pump—or any type of ducts, whether spiral lock-seam/standing rib design, double-wall duct, and Loloss™ Tee, flat oval, or round duct with perforated inner liner, insulation, and outer shell; no HVAC system at all, even a crude air distribution system—there are no windows—no water supplies,

empty-rooms and passageways, all with walls potentially hiding a door to a possible exterior, though invariably winding up as just a door to another interior. As Gerard Eysenck famously described the labyrinth: "The labyrinth is a place of in-ness never inside out."¹⁴³

The desire for exteriority is no doubt further amplified by the utter emptiness and within. Nothing there provides a reason to linger. In part because no object, let alone fixture or other manner of finish work has been discovered there.¹⁴⁴ Back in 1771, Sir Joshua Reynolds in his *Discourses on Art* argued against the importance of the particular, calling into question, for example, "minute attention to the discriminations of Drapery whether it is neither Woollen, nor linen, nor silk, sattin or velvet: it is nothing more."¹⁴⁵ Such global appraisal seems perfectly suited to the labyrinthine house which despite its corridors and rooms of various sizes is more than corridors and rooms, even if sometimes, as John Ruskin observed in the course of translating the labyrinth: "The gal- lery is straight but curve furtively."

The labyrinthine course rooms, corridors, and the occasional spiral staircase are subject to patterns of arrangement. In some cases particular patterns are observed. However, considering the constant shifts, the seemingly endless

aspect of fishing line—a readily available and cheap way to map progress through the labyrinth—there are of course obvious mythological resonances. Minos' daughter, Ariadne, gave a thread which he used to escape the labyrinth. Thread has repeatedly served as a lifeline, a cord, for life, and for destiny. The Greek Fates (called Moerae) or the Roman Parcae spun the thread of life and also cut it off. Curiously in Orphic cults, thread sym-

¹⁴³ "Break Through (not a) Breakthrough: Heuristic Hallways In The Holloway Venture." *Davidson Record Semiotic Conference Tentatively Entitled Three Blind Mice and the Federation of Architects*. June 8, 1993. Reprinted in Fisker and Weinberg, 1996.
¹⁴⁴ *Discourses on Art* (1771) (New York: Collier, 1961).

Only they hadn't been a dream.
That much—that little much—I now know.

The book is burning. At last. A strange
scans each page, memorizing all of it even as
character twists into ash. At least the fire
warming my hands, warming my face, parting the
waters of the deepest eye, even if at the same
casts long shadows on the world, the cost of
finally heated beyond recovery, shattered into
specters of dust, stolen by the sky, flung to
sand.

Had I meant to say memorializing?

Of course there always will be darkness but
realize now something inhabits it. Historical
Sometimes it seems like a cat, the panther with
moon mad gait or a tiger with stripes of ash
as wild as winter oceans. Sometimes it's the
a wrist or what's left of romance, still hiding
drawer of some long lost nightstand or carefully
in the margins of an old discarded calendar.
Sometimes it's even just a vapor trail speeding
prophetic, over clouds aglow with dangerous light.
course these are only images, my images, and in
end they're born out of something much more akin
Voice, which though invisible to the eye and
frequently unheard by even the ear still continues
day and night, year after year, to sweep through
all.

Just as you have swept through me.
Just as I now sweep through you.

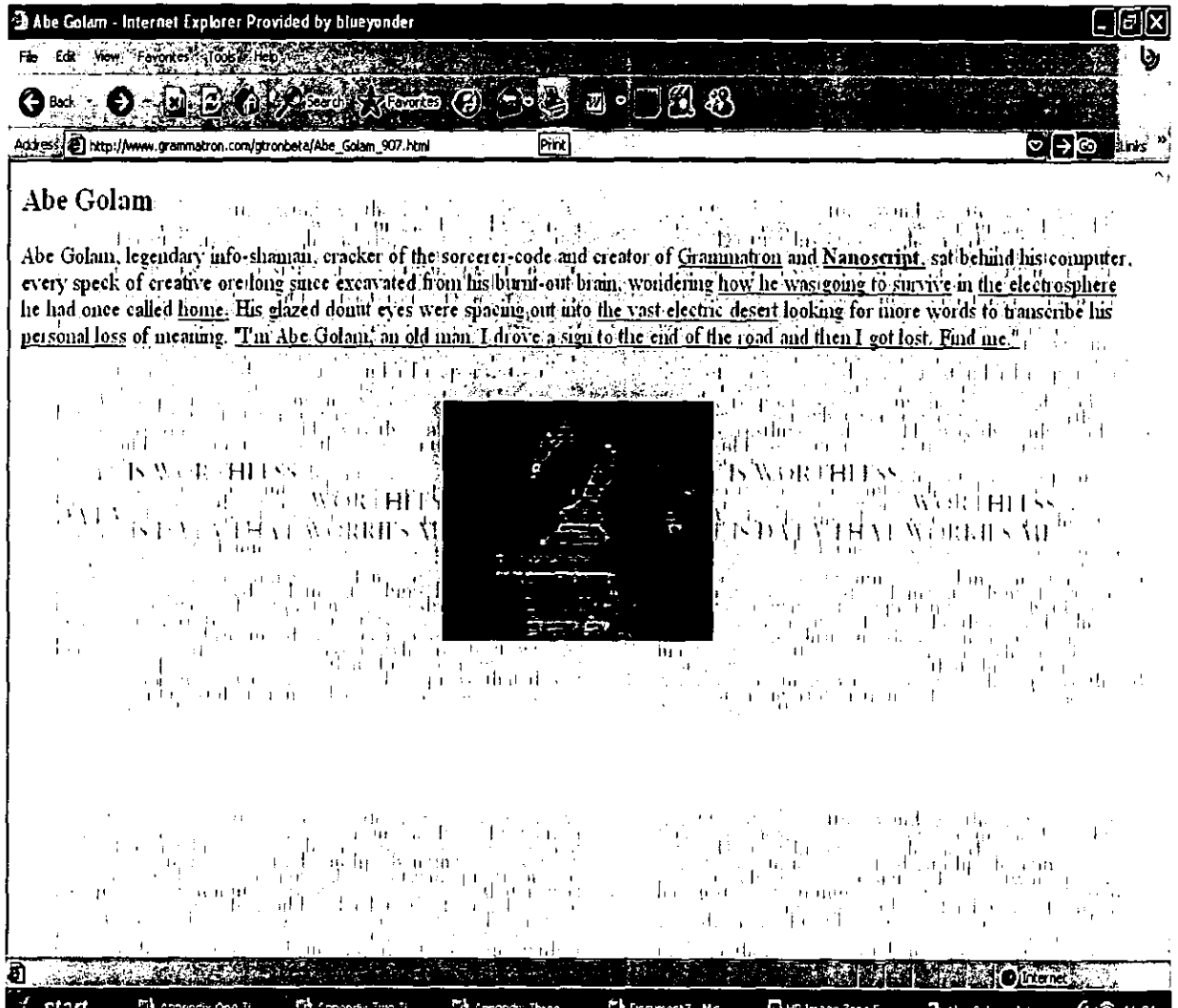
I'm sorry, I have nothing left.

Except this story, what I'm remembering now,
long from the surface of any dawn, the one Doc told
when I was up in Seattle —

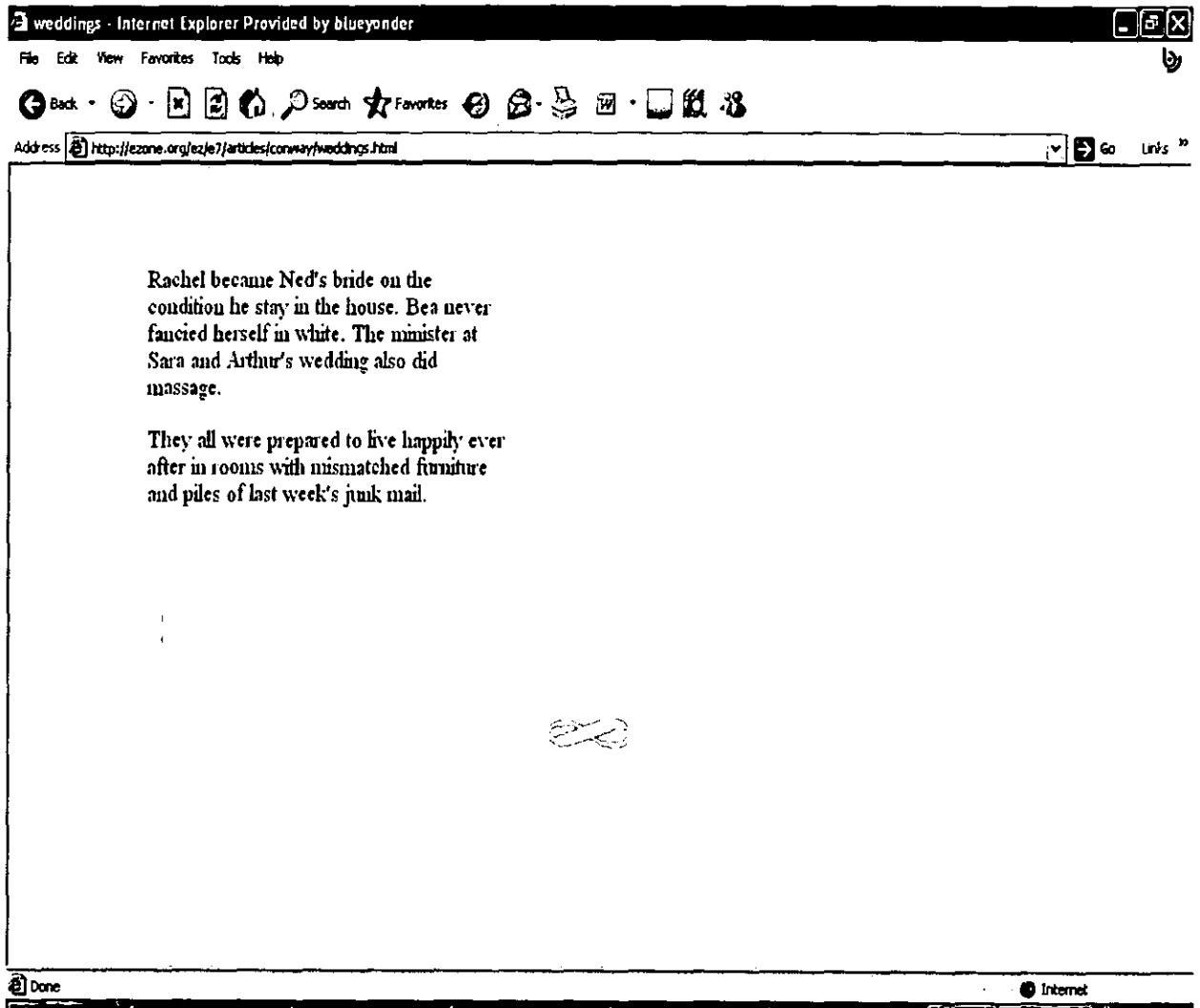
It begins with the birth of a baby, though
healthy baby. Born with holes in its brain and
"showing an absence of grey/white differentiation"
Doc put it. So bad that when the child first
into this world, he's not even breathing.

"Kid's cyanotic," Dr. Nowell shouts and
everywhere heart rates leap. The baby goes onto

3. iii



3. iv



I

I saw a film today, oh boy . . .

— The Beatles

While enthusiasts and detractors will continue to empty entire dictionaries attempting to describe or deride it, “authenticity” still remains the word most likely to stir a debate. In fact, this leading obsession—to validate or invalidate the reels and tapes—invariably brings up a collateral and more general concern: whether or not, with the advent of digital technology, image has forsaken its once unimpeachable hold on the truth.¹

For the most part, skeptics call the whole effort a hoax but grudgingly admit *The Navidson Record* is a hoax of exceptional quality. Unfortunately out of those who accept its validity many tend to swear allegiance to tabloid-UFO sightings. Clearly it is not easy to appear credible when after vouching for the film’s verity, the discourse suddenly switches to why Elvis is still alive and probably wintering in the Florida Keys.² One thing remains certain: any controversy surrounding Billy Meyer’s film on flying saucers³ has been supplanted by the house on Ash Tree Lane.

Though many continue to devote substantial time and energy to the antinomies of fact or fiction, representation or artifice, document or prank, as of late the more interesting material dwells exclusively on the interpretation of events within the film. This direction seems more promising, even if the house itself, like Melville’s behemoth, remains resistant to summation.

Much like its subject, *The Navidson Record* itself is also uneasily contained—whether by category or lection. If finally catalogued as a gothic tale, contemporary urban folkmyth, or merely a ghost story, as some have called it, the documentary will still, sooner or later, slip the limits of any one of those genres. Too many important things in *The Navidson Record* jut out past the borders. Where one might expect horror, the supernatural, or traditional paroxysms of dread and fear, one discovers disturbing sadness, a sequence on radioactive isotopes, or even laughter over a *Simpsons* episode.

In the 17th century, England’s greatest topographer of worlds satanic and divine warned that hell was nothing less than “Regions of sorrow, doleful shades, where peace/ And rest can never dwell, hope never

¹ more carefully considered in Chapter IX.

² Daniel Bowler’s “Resurrection on Ash Tree Lane: Elvis, Christmas Past, and Other Non-Entities” cited in *The House* (New York: Little Brown, 1995), p. 167-244 in which he examines the inherent fiction of any claim alleging resurrection as well as the existence of that place.

³ For that matter the Cottingley Fairies, Kirlian photography, Ted Serios’ thoughtography or Alexander’s photograph of the Union dead.

nostri" to which Echo responds "*sit tibi copia nostri*."⁶ On page 4, he even provides a woodcut from Athanasius Kircher's *Neue Hall-ur- Thonkunst* (Nördlingen, 1684) illustrating an artificial echo machine designed to exchange "*clamore*" for four echoes: "*amore*," "*more*," "*ore*" and finally "*re*."⁴ Nor does Hollander stop there. His slim volume abounds with examples of textual transfiguration, though in an effort to keep from repeating the entire book, let this heart-wrenching interchange serve as a final example:

*Chi dara fine al gran dolore?
L'ore.[∞]*

While *The Figure of Echo* takes special delight in clever word games, Hollander knows better than to limit his examination there. Echo may live in metaphors, puns and the suffix—*solis ex illo vivit in antris*^Ω—but her range extends far beyond those literal walls. For instance, the rabbinical *bat kol* means "daughter of a voice" which in modern Hebrew serves as a rough equivalent for the word "echo." Milton knew it: "God so commanded, and left that Command/ Sole Daughter of his voice."⁵⁵ So did Wordsworth: "stern Daughter of the Voice of God." Quoting from Henry Reynold's *Mythomystes* (1632), Hollander evidences religious appropriation of the ancient myth (page 16):

This *Winde* is (as the before-mentioned Iamblicus, by consent of his other fellow-*Cabalists* sayes) the Symbole of the Breath of God; and Ecco, the reflection of this divine breath, or spirit upon us; or (as they interpret it) *the daughter of the divine voice*; which through the beatifying splendor it sheds and diffuses through the Soule, is justly worthy to be revered and adored by us. This *Ecco* descending upon a Narcissus, or such a Soule as (impurely and vitiously affected) slights, and stops his eares to the Divine voice, or shuts his harte from divine Inspirations, through his being enamour'd of not himselfe, but his owne shadow meerely . . . he becomes thence . . . an earthy, weake, worthlesse thing, and fit sacrificize for only eternall oblivion . . .

Thus Echo suddenly assumes the role of god's messenger, a female Mercury or perhaps even Prometheus, decked in talaria, with lamp in hand, descending on fortunate humanity.

⁶Narcissus: "May I die before I give you power over me." Echo: "I give you power over me."

⁴"O outcry" returns as "love," "delays," "hours" and "king."

[∞]"Who will put an end to this great sadness?" "The hours passing"

^Ω"Literature's rocky caves"⁵⁴

⁵⁴"From that time on she lived in lonely caves." — Ed.

⁵⁵John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, IX, 653-54.

BIBLIOGRAPHY AND RELATED WORKS

TEXTS

Amerika, Mark. *Grammatron*. www.grammatron.com.

Auster, Paul. *The New York Trilogy*. London: Faber and Faber, 1988.

Baker, Stephen. *The Fiction of Postmodernity*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh U.P, 2000.

Barth, John. *Lost in the Funhouse*. New York: Anchor Books, 1988.

Bemong, Nele. 'Exploration #6: The Uncanny in Mark Z. Danielewski's "House of Leaves"'. *Image and Narrative*, January 2003.

www.imageandnarrative.be/uncanny/nelebemong.

Borges, Jorge Luis. *Labyrinths*. London: Penguin, 1964.

Brick, Martin. 'Blueprint(s): Rubric for a Deconstructed Age in *House of Leaves*'. *Philament*, Issue 2, January 2004.

www.arts.usyd.edu.au/publications/philament/issue2_Critique_Brick.htm.

Brooke-Rose, Christine. *Invisible Author: Last Essays*. Ohio State U.P, 2002.

Brunette, Peter and Wills, David ed. *Deconstruction and the Visual Arts. Art, Media, Architecture*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P, 1994.

Calvino, Italo. *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*. London: Vintage Classics, 1998 (originally 1979).

Cervantes, Miguel de. *Don Quixote*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1998 (originally 1605).

Conway, Martha. *8 Minutes*. <http://ezone.org/ez/e7/articles/conway/8min.html>.

- Currie, Mark. *Metafiction*. New York: Longman, 1995.
- Currie, Mark. *Postmodern Narrative Theory*. London: Macmillan, 1998.
- Danielewski, Mark Z. *House of Leaves*. London: Doubleday, 2000.
- Danielewski, Mark Z. *Only Revolutions*. London: Transworld, 2006.
- Danielewski, Mark Z. *The Whalestoe Letters*. New York: Pantheon, 2000.
- Danielewski, Mark Z. *The Fifty Year Sword*. Amsterdam: De Bezige Bij, 2005.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. London: John Hopkins UP, 1976.
- Easton Ellis, Brett. *Lunar Park*. London: Picador, 2005.
- Gass, William H. *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife*. Dalkey Archive, 1968.
- Genette, Gerard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Cambridge U.P. 1997.
- Hagler, Sonya. 'Mediating Print and Hypertext in Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves*'. *Mode*, 2004. www.arts.cornell.edu/English/mode/documents/hagler.html.
- Hansen, Mark B N. 'The Digital Topography of *House of Leaves*'. *Contemporary Literature*, 45, 4, Winter 2004: 597-636.
- Hayles, N Katherine. 'Saving the Subject: Remediation in *House of Leaves*'. *American Literature* 74.4, 2002: 779 – 806.
- Heidegger, Martin. *Being and Time*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980.
- Hofstadter, Douglas R. *Godel, Escher, Bach: an Eternal Golden Braid*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1979.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction*. London: Routledge, 1988.
- Hutcheon, Linda. *Narcissitic Narrative: The metafictional paradox*. London: Methuen, 1984.

- Iser, Wolfgang. *The Act of Reading: a theory of aesthetic response*. John Hopkins U.P. 1978
- Johnson, B.S. *Omnibus*. London: Picador, 2000.
- Johnson, B.S. *The Unfortunates*. London: Picador, 1999 (originally 1969).
- Kamuf, Peggy (ed). *A Derrida Reader: Between the blinds*. Colombia U.P. 1991.
- Lodge, David. *The Art of Fiction*. London: Penguin, 1992
- Lyotard, Jean Francois. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Minneapolis: Minnesota U.P, 1984
- McHale, Brian. *Constructing Postmodernism*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- McHale, Brian. *Postmodernist Fiction*. 3rd Ed. London: Routledge, 1987.
- Nabokov, Vladimir. *Pale Fire*. London: Penguin, 1962.
- Papadakis, Andreas, Cooke, Catherine, Benjamin, Andrew. *Deconstruction: Omnibus Volume*. London: Academy Editions, 1989.
- Phillips, Tom. *A Humument: A Treated Victorian Novel*. London: Thames and Hudson, 1997 3rd Ed.
- Rice, Philip and Waugh, Patricia. *Modern Literary Theory*. London: Hodder Arnold, 2001. Fourth Ed.
- Rivkin, Julie and Ryan, Michael eds. *Literary Theory: An Anthology*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998.
- Sloane, Sarah. *Digital Fictions; Storytelling in a Material World*. Connecticut: Abtex Publishing Corporation.
- Slocombe, Will. 'This is not for you: Nihilism and the House that Jacques built.' *MFS Modern Fiction Studies*. Volume 51, Number 1, Spring 2005: 88-109.
- Sterne, Laurence. *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman*. London: Penguin Classics, 1997 (first published 1759).

Tambling, Jeremy. *Narrative and Ideology*. Buckingham: Open U.P, 1991.

Waugh, Patricia. *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction*. London: Methuen, 1984.

Waugh, Patricia. *Postmodernism: A reader*. New York: Arnold, 1992.

White, Glyn. *Reading the graphic surface: The presence of the book in prose fiction*. Manchester: Manchester U.P, 2005.

WEBSITES

Amerika, Mark. *Grammatron*. www.grammatron.com

www.arts.usyd.edu.au/publications/philament/issue2_Critique_Brick.htm.

www.arts.cornell.edu/English/mode

www.arts.cornell.edu/English/mode/documents/hagler.html.

www.arts.usyd.edu.au/publications/philament

Conway, Martha. *8 Minutes*. <http://ezone.org/ez/e7/articles/conway/8min.html>

www.cyberartsweb.org

www.eliterature.org – The Electronic Literature Organisation

Filling in the Iserian Gap. www.cyberartsweb.org/cpace/theory/canete2/iser.html

www.houseofleaves.com

www.imageandnarrative.be/uncanny/lelebemong.

Ryman, Geoff. *253: A Novel for the Internet about London Underground in Seven Cars and a Crash*. <http://www.ryman-novel.com/>