



Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of American Culture and Literature

**POSTMODERN SPACE REVISITED:
HYPERTEXTUALITY AND MATERIALTY
IN THE SELECTED NOVELS OF
MARK Z. DANIELEWSKI, STEVE TOMASULA, AND LANCE
OLSEN**

Gülşen ASLAN USLU

Ph. D. Dissertation

Ankara, 2018

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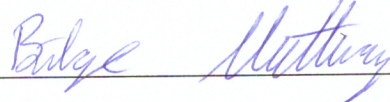
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Gülşen Aslan Uslu tarafından hazırlanan “Postmodern Space Revisited: Hypertextuality and Materiality in the Selected Novels of Mark Z. Danielewski, Steve Tomasula, and Lance Olsen” başlıklı bu çalışma, 05 Şubat 2018 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından doktora tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.



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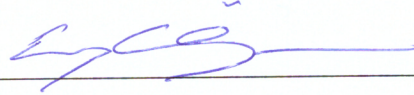
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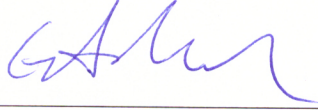
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(Bu seçenekle teziniz arama motorlarında indekslenebilecek, daha sonra tezinizin erişim statüsünün değiştirilmesini talep etseniz ve kütüphane bu talebinizi yerine getirirse bile, teziniz arama motorlarının önbelleklerinde kalmaya devam edebilecektir)

oTezimin/Raporumun.....tarihine kadar erişime açılmasını ve fotokopi alınmasını (İç Kapak, Özet, İçindekiler ve Kaynakça hariç) istemiyorum.

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oTezimin/Raporumun.....tarihine kadar erişime açılmasını istemiyorum ancak kaynak gösterilmek şartıyla bir kısmı veya tamamının fotokopisinin alınmasını onaylıyorum.

☒ Serbest Seçenek/Yazarın Seçimi

21/02/2018



Gülşen ASLAN USLU

ETİK BEYAN

Bu alıřmadaki bütn bilgi ve belgeleri akademik kurallar erevesinde elde ettiđimi, grsel, iřitsel ve yazılı tm bilgi ve sonuları bilimsel ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduđumu, kullandığım verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadığımı, yararlandığım kaynaklara bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduđumu, tezimin kaynak gsterilen durumlar dıřında zgn olduđunu, **Do. Dr. Bilge Mutluay etintař** danıřmanlığında tarafımdan retildiđini ve Hacettepe niversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstits Tez Yazım Ynergesine gre yazıldıđını beyan ederim.



Glřen ASLAN USLU

To my husband...



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ÖZET

ASLAN USLU, Gülşen. *Postmodern Mekâna Yeniden Dönüş: Mark Z. Danielewski, Steve Tomasula ve Lance Olsen'in Seçili Romanlarında Hipermetinsellik ve Maddesellik*. Doktora Tezi, Ankara, 2018.

Bu tez, çağdaş Amerikan kurgusunda hipermetin ve maddesellik özellikleriyle ortaya çıkan mekân kavramını ve mekânsal uygulamaların rolünü postmodern edebi özelliklerle birlikte incelemektedir. Mekân ve mekânsallığın işleyişi, nasıl kullanıldığı ve yapılandırıldığı gibi konularda artan eleştirel uygulamalarla bağlantılı olarak, çağdaş kurgu zengin bir tartışma ortamı sunmaktadır. Bu çalışmada, çağdaş kültürün çok katmanlı, parçalanmış ve ağ-tabanlı mekânı üzerine düşünceler üreten çağdaş Amerikan romanı örneklerinden Mark Z. Danielewski'nin *House of Leaves* (2000) (*Yapraklar Evi*), Steve Tomasula'nın *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (2002) ve Lance Olsen'in *Theories of Forgetting* (2014) eserlerinde postmodern, hipermetin ve maddesel özellikler ele alınmaktadır.

Bu tez, “mekânsal biçem,” “kurgu mekânı” ve “mekânsal tasarım” sınıflandırmaları aracılığıyla mekân anlayışının, romanın biçemiyle, içeriğiyle ve maddeselliğiyle ayrılmaz bir şekilde bağlantılı olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu çalışmadaki ilk sınıflandırma postmodern edebi araçlarla ve hipermetinle kullanılan ve genişletilen mekânsal biçem üzerinedir. İkinci kısım, ev, insan bedeni ve arazi sanatı gibi farklı mekânsal kavramlara odaklanan kurgu mekânıdır. Bu romanlarda öne çıkan üçüncü mekânsal sınıflandırma ise sayfanın ve kitabın fiziksel mekânı olarak da adlandırılabilir mekânsal tasarımdır. Bu araştırma, bu üç sınıflandırma aracılığıyla, kurgudaki mekânın ve edebi mimariler yaratarak roman türünü yeniden şekillendiren deneysel yöntemlerin değerlendirilmesi amacını taşımaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Mekân, mekânsallık, postmodernizm, hipermetin, maddesellik, *House of Leaves* (*Yapraklar Evi*), *VAS: An Opera in Flatland*, *Theories of Forgetting*.

ABSTRACT

ASLAN USLU, Gülşen. *Postmodern Space Revisited: Hypertextuality and Materiality in the Selected Novels of Mark Z. Danielewski, Steve Tomasula, and Lance Olsen*. Ph.D. Dissertation, Ankara, 2018.

This dissertation explores the role of space and spatial practices in contemporary American fiction which are revealed through the use of postmodernist literary characteristics, hypertext and materiality. In connection with the growing critical interest in the workings of space, its uses, and constructions, contemporary fiction offers a rich ground for the discussions of space and spatiality. By focusing on three contemporary novels *House of Leaves* (2000) by Mark Z. Danielewski, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (2002) by Steve Tomasula, *Theories of Forgetting* (2014) by Lance Olsen in three chapters, the characteristics of postmodernism, hypertext, and materiality are investigated in the novels that contemplate on the multilayered, fragmented, and networked space of contemporary culture.

This research outlines three categories, the spatial form, the narrative space, and the spatial design through which the novels show how an understanding of space is inextricably bound to the form, the content, and the material features of the novel. The first category in this study is spatial form which is used and extended with postmodern literary devices and hypertext. The second category of space is the narrative space of the fictional world which contemplates on different places and spaces such as the house, the human body, and the earthwork. The final category of space is the spatial design, or the material space of the page and the book. Focusing on these three categories, this study prompts a re-thinking of the role of space in fiction and the ways it reshapes the novels by creating literary architectures in experimental ways.

Keywords

Space, spatiality, postmodernism, hypertext, materiality, *House of Leaves*, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland*, *Theories of Forgetting*.

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INTRODUCTION

He explained that an Aleph is one of the points in space that contains all other points.

“The Aleph” Jorge Luis Borges

The text was closely printed, and it was ordered in versicles. In the upper corners of the pages were Arabic numbers. I noticed that one left-hand page bore the number (let us say) 40,514 and the facing right-hand page 999. I turned the leaf; it was numbered with eight digits. It also bore a small illustration, like the kind used in dictionaries—an anchor drawn with pen and ink, as if by a schoolboy's clumsy hand.

“The Book of Sand” Jorge Luis Borges

Now that postmodernism has been in the intellectual area for decades, the debates continue as to whether it has completed its dominant phase or still holds an important place in providing significant critical tools to understand works of art and the culture in which they are produced. Because postmodernism is an umbrella term and has been adapted by different disciplines throughout its progress, it is almost impossible to reach an all-encompassing positive or negative answer to this question. Whether the trend has died out or is still present, postmodernism has definitely opened up critical discussions on the accepted and generalized notions, discourses, and tendencies that govern societies, individuals, and arts and sciences. The concepts of space and spatiality are among the discussions effected by the postmodern consciousness. Named as “The Spatial Turn,” there has been a growing critical interest on space, spatiality, and spatial practices in the works of critics such as Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Henri Lefebvre, Fredric Jameson, David Harvey, and Edward W. Soja. From different perspectives, these critics regard space and spatial practices as inseparable from social and cultural contexts.

Similar to other fields of study that are concerned with space and its various constructions and practices in society, culture, and arts, literary studies focus on the use of space and how it is shaped by different spatial practices in creative as well as critical writing. By focusing on three major spatial practices, spatial form, narrative space, and spatial design,

this study aims at analyzing the literary architectures of three contemporary American novels, *House of Leaves* (2000) by Mark Z. Danielewski, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (2002) by Steve Tomasula, and *Theories of Forgetting* (2014) by Lance Olsen. An analysis of spatial practices in these novels shows that they are informed both by postmodernism of the previous decades and more recently by digital media culture. In addition to their use of postmodern literary devices such as metafiction, fragmentation, multiplicity, and intertextuality, the narratives of these novels are connected with, and sometimes disconnected from each other by a specific linking mechanism which is known as hypertext, a writing style commonly used by digital media.

Hypertext is a form of writing that is popularized and frequently used by computers. It is a system of writing in which verbal and visual texts are connected to each other through links. As George Landow defines in his book *Hypertext 3.0*, hypertext “denotes texts composed of blocks of text” and “the electronic links that join them” (3). These links send the reader to different parts of the same text, or to other texts, and they prevent a linear reading of the text. The term hypertext was first coined in 1965 by Theodore H. Nelson by which he meant “non-sequential writing that branches and allows choices to the reader” (0.2). By introducing a new understanding of textuality enriched by the inclusion of visual and audial materials and with multiple textual layers and reading choices, “hypertext brings interactivity to the novel” (Bolter and Grusin 59).¹ In this respect, by incorporating

¹ The term hypermedia was also introduced by Theodor H. Nelson in his essay “A File Structure for The Complex, The Changing and the Indeterminate” (1965). In this essay, hypermedia is used as a general concept that refers to media used by computers. Later, Nelson introduced a more specific definition of hypermedia: when hypertext connects not just verbal texts but also visual and audial media, it becomes hypermedia. Hypertext enriches and extends the notion of textuality according to George Landow who puts forward “hypertext, which links one passage of verbal discourse to images, maps, diagrams, and sound as easily as to other verbal passage, expands the notion of text beyond the solely verbal” (*Hypertext 3.0* 3). Therefore, like Nelson, Landow does not differentiate between the terms hypertext and hypermedia and he uses them interchangeably. Multimedia is the use of various media such as visual or audial in computers. In this respect, multimedia and hypermedia are terms with small nuances. As stated in the web page of University of Delaware Educational Technology Programs, “[m]ultimedia is the use of a computer to present and combine text, graphics, audio, and video with links and tools that let the user navigate, interact, create, and communicate” (*University of Delaware*). According to this definition, there are four basic features of multimedia: first a computer must be used to see and interact with the texts. Second, texts must be connected through links. Third, “there must be navigational tools” to “traverse the web of connected information.” Fourth, in multimedia there should be ways “to gather, process, and communicate” one’s own information by

digital features, and especially hypertext writing, with postmodernist elements, *House of Leaves*, *VAS*, and *Theories of Forgetting* offer polyphonic narrative structures that require a new sensibility towards their material structure. They are novels that find their full manifestation only on the printed page and in the form of a paper bound book. They cannot be reproduced for the web, or cannot be read on the electronic screen in the same way as they can be in print since they experiment with the topography of the page, and use typographic variations and visual materials. Although these novels are structured like hypertexts within themselves, they cannot be recreated as other hypertexts on the web because of their specific material embodiments. They stress the materiality of the book, call attention to their multimedia textuality and turn the book into an art object through their shape, design, and the various materials they use.

The postmodernist, hypertextual and material features of *House of Leaves*, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland*, and *Theories of Forgetting* turn these novels into spatially structured texts and literary architectures. In other words, these three major elements contribute to and are influenced by the works' spatial practices. What is meant by these spatial practices needs to be clarified before discussing how they are used and problematized in the novels. Marie-Laure Ryan's narratological categorizations of space will serve as the basis of the reading and the analysis in this dissertation. In the website entitled *The Living Handbook of Narratology*, Ryan offers an overview of the concept of space, how it has been studied from different perspectives in literary studies and she presents a number of categorizations of space. The three central points she examines among other categorizations of space are: spatial form of the text, the narrative space, and the spatial extension of the text (or spatial design).

actively interacting and processing. As stated in the website, these four components define multimedia and if any one of them is missing, it cannot be called multimedia: "For example, if you have no computer to provide interactivity, you have mixed media, not multimedia. If there are no links to provide a sense of structure and dimension, you have a bookshelf, not multimedia. If there are no navigational tools to let you decide the course of action, you have a movie, not multimedia. If you cannot create and contribute your own ideas, you have a television, not multimedia." ("Defining Multimedia." *University of Delaware*. www1.udel.edu/edtech/multimedia/index.html.)

The first level of space introduced by the critic Joseph Frank is the spatial form of the text as the dominant mode in the modernist works of T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Djuna Barnes. The spatial form has not been abandoned in postmodernist writing. On the contrary, it has been used more frequently and with newer techniques. In postmodernist writing, spatial form is shaped by literary devices such as nonlinearity, fragmentation, multiplicity of narrative voices, and multiple and dense textual layers. The spatial form is a structural metaphor and the reader enters into this conceptual space while reading and putting the elements of fiction together. In modernist and postmodernist texts, the spatial order requires the reader to become more active in this space during the meaning making process.

From modernism to the digital times, spatial form has also been changed and reshaped, and hypertext is the most recent example of spatial form (Ryan). As pointed out by Jay David Bolter in his book *Writing Space* (2001), hypertext and the World Wide Web are generally conceived spatially, “the links constitute a path through a virtual space and the reader becomes a visitor or traveler in that space” (29). Hypertext is not only understood as a space that the readers and navigators visit, it is also spatially organized because it prevents a linear narration of stories:

In digital texts, the notion of spatial design rests upon the hyperlink, a machine-language command that instructs the computer to display a certain fragment of text in response to a certain user action: clicking on specially marked buttons. Rather than forming a synchronically perceived pattern, digital links are navigational tools that control the temporal unfolding of the text. Yet hypertext narratives have been widely described as spatial . . . because the multiple connections between textual units prevent a linear progression through the text and thus disturb the chronological presentation of the story. (*The Living Handbook of Narratology*)

While Joseph Frank acknowledges the significant role of the reader “in synthesizing, by ‘reflexive reference,’ the disparate elements of spatial-form narratives,” (Herman, Jahn and Ryan “Spatial Form”) it can be said that in the digital era, the role of the reader in reading the spatially organized texts is more challenging than Frank accepted in his time for modernist novels. Bolter points out that hypertext is conceived spatially and it is a spatial

construct the reader enters into (*Writing Space* 29). As the most recent example of spatial form, hypertext has “put even greater demands on readers to identify schemas of coherence” (Herman, Jahn and Ryan) and it extends spatial form of the text even further. Surfing and navigating the hypertext, the reader has to adapt a reading strategy that is not linear and which necessitates jumps and returns.

The second level of space is the narrative space and it is one of the most inclusive definitions of space. It is defined as “the physically existing environment in which characters live and move” (Ryan). The narrative space includes a number of elements such as spatial frames which are “the immediate surroundings of actual events, [and] shifting scenes of action” (Ryan). It also contains the setting which is “the general socio-historico-geographical environment in which the action takes place,” and the story space which is “the space relevant to the plot, as mapped by the actions and thoughts of the characters” (Ryan). Narrative space can be understood as the narrative world which is “the story space completed by the reader’s imagination on the basis of cultural knowledge and real world experience,” and the narrative universe which is “the world (in the spatio-temporal sense of the term) presented as actual by the text, plus all the counterfactual worlds constructed by characters as beliefs, wishes, fears, speculations, hypothetical thinking, dreams, and fantasies” (Ryan). The narrative space can also be thought as the “referential” space which is the fictional world of the novel. This space ranges from the smallest place like a room in which an event takes place to the narrative universe including all the physical and mental spaces created in fiction.

The third category of space that is going to be focused on is the spatial extension of the text which is seen physically and materially on the space of the print book. In the novels under scrutiny here, the material space of the novels and the technology of the print book become metaphorical components to the structural and narrative spaces of the novel. Ryan maintains that there are four levels of material spatiality that different forms of narratives present:

Spatial extension ranges from zero spatial dimensions (oral narratives, excluding gestures and facial expressions; music) to quasi one-dimensionality (a text displayed on a single line with letters moving from right to left, as in television news lines, electronic billboards, and some digital literary texts), two-dimensionality (printed narratives, film, painting), all the way to genuine three-dimensionality (theatre, ballet, sculpture). (*The Living Handbook of Narratology*)

As for the printed narratives, two-dimensionality in material space has been open to experiments especially since the avant-garde movements of the twentieth century like Dadaism and Futurism (Davidson 127). Concrete and visual poetry take the lead in terms of the topographic experiments on the page. By using the white space of the page as a design field, concrete poetry uses verbal text with an emphasis of its visuality on the page.² Prose writing has also turned to the materiality of language and its manifestation on the page and Brian McHale coins this kind of writing “concrete prose” or “concrete fiction” (184). Important initiators and representatives of this genre include William Gass’ *Willie Masters’ Lonesome Wife* (1968), Donald Barthelme’s *Snow White* (1968), Raymond Federman’s *Take It or Leave It* (1976) and *Double or Nothing* (1971) (McHale 179-194). These writers bring back the already inherent materiality of language into the surface by merging their fictional stories with a consciousness of the technology of the printed book.

Through spatial form, narrative space and spatial design which all interact and complete one another, *House of Leaves*, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* and *Theories of Forgetting* present different levels of space. First, they use spatial form through postmodern elements of metafiction, fragmentation, intertextuality, and multiplicity presented as hypertext. Second, their narrative space focuses on spatial constructs like the house in *House of Leaves*, the body in *VAS*, and the earthwork *Spiral Jetty* in *Theories of Forgetting*. These narrative spaces, the house, the body and the earthwork turn into concrete metaphors through the spatial/material design of the books which is the third category in focus. With

² The outlines of concrete poems depict a shape on the page for the reader. The visual appearances on the page complement the meaning of the poem. Giving up on the tradition of using the poetic line, concrete poets use geometric and graphical elements viewing the page as an open space for creating new structures of composition. Scottish Ian Hamilton Finlay and Brazilian Augusto de Campos are among famous concrete poets of the twentieth century.

the inclusion of visual material, photographs, pictures, drawings, and topographical and typographical variations, the novels turn to a house of leaves, a book of the body, and a spiral book and become concrete fiction with their use of materiality of the print book. Moreover, they carry such visual activities on the page to another level with their use of hypertext. In this respect, these works are the very products of the digital era with an eye on postmodernism and the tradition of visual writing in print.

There are significant examples of web-based hypertext novels that progress through links, printed word-image novels that incorporate verbal and visual texts, and artists' books with specific material features that are printed in small numbers. The terms that are used to refer to the kind of novels that use verbal and visual images increase as new examples appear. The terms, the word-image novel, imagetext novel, multimedia novel, hypertext novel, and multimodal novel are such examples. While all these terms highlight similar and significant aspects of these narratives, there are small differences in their usages. For instance, the word-image novel uses verbal and visual texts. The visual texts can be pictures and photographs, and the visual devices can be variations in typography or the topography of the page. The imagetext novel can be used as a synonym for the word-image novels, however, the word "imagetext" sounds as if the term only considers verbal texts as "texts," and images are considered outside the text, or as non-text, or paratext.³ In fact, there are not major differences between these terms and they can be used interchangeably. Some examples for the word-image or imagetext novels are Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing: A Real Fictitious Discourse* (1971), Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* (1973), Kathy Acker's *Blood & Guts in High School* (1984), Carole Maso's *The Art Lover* (1990) and *Ava* (1993) and Philip Zimmerman's *High Tension* (1993), L. A. Ruocco's *Document Zippo* (1998), Lance Olsen's *Girl Imagined by Chance* (2002) and Salvador Plascencia's *The People of Paper* (2005).

The terms, multimedia novels and hypertext novels, can be used interchangeably for the narratives that are produced in computers. However, there are also hypertext novels in

³ Footnote 21 explains Gerard Genette's definition of the paratext.

print which cannot be called multimedia because they are not created through software programs and do not include media like videos or sound clips. There are early examples of hypertext writing in print by Michel Butor, Marc Saporta, Robert Coover, and Jorge Luis Borges (Bolter *Writing Space* 132-139). According to George Landow their works are “quasi-hypertextual” because their works “might not require hypertext to be fully understood, but they reveal new principles of organization or new ways of being read to readers who have experienced hypertexts” (*Hypertext 3.0* 219). The contemporary hypertext novels in print such as Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close* (2005), Reif Larsen’s *The Selected Works of T. S. Spivet* (2009), and J. J. Abrams’s and Doug Dorst’s collaborative novel *S.* (2015) are prominent examples.

There are also critics like Alison Gibbons who name such experimental novels “multimodal novels.” As Gibbons points out, multimodality is “the coexistence of more than one semiotic mode within a given context” (8). Therefore, multimodal novels include at least two major semiotic modes, the verbal and the visual (1). Gibbons considers Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*, Tomasula’s *VAS: An Opera in Flatland*, Foer’s *Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close*, and Graham Rawle’s *Woman’s World* (2005) as examples of the multimodal novel. She also refers to Alex Garland’s *The Coma* (2004) and Marisha Pessl’s *Special Topics in Calamity Physics* (2006) as multimodal novels “that use pictures in an illustrative fashion” (2). The term word-image novel will be used in this dissertation while analyzing *House of Leaves*, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* and *Theories of Forgetting*. However, depending on their function, other definitions mentioned above will also be used interchangeably.

The focus of this study will be on the three word-image novels that have been written since the year 2000 when the influence of digital technologies was deeply felt in social and cultural contexts. *House of Leaves*, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* and *Theories of Forgetting* are chosen because use they hypertextuality and call attention to their materiality with a consciousness of space. This consciousness of space is reflected through spatial practices—with the interaction among spatial form, the narrative space and the material space—in their narratives. Examining the space of the novel as a background to the setting,

plot, or characterization would yield an insufficient reading of these novels. One cannot think about space in the novel independent from spatial form, the narrative space or the material space. The space of the novel is multi-layered, fragmented and networked just like the space experienced in real life. Such a perception of space redefines the form, content, and shape of the novel by turning it into a site for collaboration of various textual layers.

Within this framework, the aim of this study is to analyze space and spatiality on different levels in the novels *House of Leaves*, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland*, and *Theories of Forgetting* and illustrate that these word-image novels offer critiques of contemporary space by problematizing their own fictional/narrative space and material space, and by remodeling the politics of the page through three major features: postmodernist elements, hypertext and material features. In different ways, these works contemplate on space and offer an understanding of it that is plural, heterogeneous, simultaneous, random and chaotic. The spatial dynamics are activated first through postmodern features like metafiction, fragmentation, and plurality; second hypertextuality, and third through visual and material elements on narrative and physical levels. Following the spatial categorizations of spatial form, narrative space, and material space, this comparative study places the concept of space in the center while examining the interactions between each spatial category and their contribution in reshaping and redefining the form and content of the novel. By doing so, it will be shown that each novel makes a contribution to understanding and interpreting postmodern and or late-postmodern space that bears the mark of the digital and the virtual.

While there is a significant body of critical work on these novels, especially on Danielewski's *House of Leaves* and Tomasula's *VAS*, which focus on their multimodal structures and experimental narrative techniques, there is no comparative study of these novels including *Theories of Forgetting* that has concentrated on their spatial dynamics and their literary architectures through an understanding of postmodern space. In this respect, this study aims at contributing to the discussions of hypertext fiction in print and its treatment of space which appears in rich and multilayered ways.

In the following sections of this introduction, the focus will be first on the spatial turn that both characterizes and is characterized by postmodernism. Critics such as Michel Foucault and others provide critical insights which are discussed in this section. The second section will focus on spatial form in literature and how it has been expanded with postmodern narrative devices. In the third section, a historical overview of hypertext and its textual workings will be covered. In the final section, materiality that shapes the space of fiction will be discussed in relation to hypertext.

POSTMODERNISM AND SPATIAL TURN

Postmodernism has become an umbrella term that embraces various specific definitions for each disciplinary field. However, there are two major approaches to what postmodernism is: it can be defined as the cultural condition or the dominant mode of the contemporary society or as a critical and artistic tool used by artists and authors first to understand and then deconstruct the power mechanisms, set of norms, naturalized assumptions and systems of knowledge. In works of art, both of these contexts can be observed; we can see how the works of art raise discussions of the cultural condition and also provide tools to look at and understand it. This cultural condition, or the postmodern condition, has been shaped by a preoccupation with space and spatial forms.

Michel Foucault points out to the change in epistemology since the nineteenth century which was characterized by the past, the different concepts of time and its accumulation, and topics such as crisis and cycle in history. However, that *zeitgeist* with an interest in history came to an end with the twentieth century, which Foucault thinks is the age of space (Foucault “Different Spaces”). Space has come to regain its important status and thus life in the present epoch “develop[s] . . . like a network that connects points and weaves its skein” (Foucault 175). The twentieth century is “an era of the simultaneous, of juxtaposition, of the near and the far, of the side-by-side, of the scattered” (175) which all bring along a spatially organized context.

Foucault’s heterotopias, or “different spaces” are a way to understand how society functions within and through a set of places. For example, cemeteries, prisons, rest homes,

psychiatric hospitals are the heterotopias of the twentieth century and they function in the classification of “marginalized” people as well as containing them within the discursively shaped social places. Foucault argues that heterotopias function “in relation to the remaining space,” by which he means that they are in a way shaped by the space they exclude. These heterotopias either become illusory or compensative:

[T]he last trait of these heterotopias is that they have a function in relation to the remaining space. This function is spread between two extreme poles. Either the heterotopias have the role of creating a space of illusion that denounces all real space, all real emplacements within which human life is partitioned off, as being even more illusory. Perhaps it is this role that was played for a long time by those famous brothels which we are now deprived of. Or, on the contrary, creating a different space, a different real space as perfect, as meticulous, as well-arranged as ours is disorganized, badly arranged, and muddled. This would be the heterotopia not of illusion but of compensation, and I wonder if it is not somewhat in that manner that certain colonies functioned. (184)

Foucault’s discussion of the spatial turn and his reading of social structures through spatial elements, and especially heterotopias, have influenced social critics, and geographers, as well as literary critics. In his book *Postmodern Geographies*, Soja proposes that there is “the reassertion of critical spatial perspective in contemporary social theory” (7). He thinks that geography should be “one which recognizes spatiality as simultaneously . . . a social product (or outcome) and a shaping force (or medium) in social life” (7). The key words in his description such as a kind of simultaneous spatiality, and of it being a social product and a medium become very significant in analyzing literary works as well.

With the change from the nineteenth to the twentieth century, and specifically from modernism to postmodernism, the concepts of time as a unifying element and history as a progressive formation have lost their prominent place in the critical agenda. Influenced by the two world wars, social, historical, cultural and literary criticism left the meta-narratives of progressive history and time and moved towards space and spatial elements as focuses of analysis. As the critic Robert T. Tally points out, postmodernism introduced the superiority of space over time as a critical tool to understand societies and the power mechanisms that shape them:

Postmodernism is characterized by the subversion of time by space [and] . . . a profound sense of spatiality whereas modernism is the era of time, of temporal flux, memory, and historical possibility, the postmodern is all about space, juxtaposition, extension, and positions. In the postmodern, space has usurped time's constitutive role in human experience; one must then figure out one's place in an evermore-complex network of interrelations. (8-9)

The spatial turn that has been said to be dominating the social and cultural spheres of postmodernism is characterized by such spatial notions of fragmentation, plurality, and simultaneity. It is also described as a place of disorientation in which everything exists in such excess that people need to develop new tools to adapt to it in order to survive. The feeling of loss and disorientation one feels in the postmodern space is also articulated by Fredric Jameson in his book *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (1991). Jameson sees postmodernism as the dominant of capitalist societies and he provides critical insights into the aspects of postmodern space, or "hyperspace" as he calls it. Jameson regards postmodernism in general and postmodern art in particular as the cultural products of late capitalism and feels that they are devoid of the grand aims of the high modernist period which it follows. With the change from modernism to postmodernism, he argues "aesthetic production . . . has become integrated into commodity production" (4). Despite his negative stance towards postmodernism, Jameson analyzes the workings of postmodern space and spatial features of postmodern culture.

According to Jameson, postmodern space is the crystallization of our contemporary moment which he calls "the postmodern condition." Without an understanding of space, it would not be possible to observe the workings of various discourses that give birth to art works, literary works and our contemporary moment. Jameson differentiates between modernism and postmodernism with their focus on time and space, respectively. Within the context of literature and literary criticism, postmodernism discards the modernist occupation with time by concentrating on synchronicity and spatiality. He claims that now that postmodernism has taken over modernism, "our psychic experience, our cultural languages, are . . . [now] dominated by categories of space rather than by categories of time" (Jameson 16). Drawing on the French critic Henri Lefebvre, Jameson continues to

argue that the present epoch is “more spatial than everything else,” because space plays a major role in the present modes of production more than ever:

[F]or Lefebvre *all* modes of production are not merely organized spatially but also constitute distinctive modes of the “production of space”; postmodernism theory, however, infers a certain supplement of spatiality in the contemporary period and suggests that there is a way in which, even though other modes of production (or other moments of our own) are distinctively spatial, ours has been spatialized in a unique sense, such that space is for us an existential and cultural dominant, a thematized and foregrounded feature or structural principle standing in striking contrast to its relatively subordinate and secondary . . . in earlier modes of production. So, even if everything is spatial, this postmodern reality here is somehow more spatial than everything else. (365)

In addition to pointing out the spatial turn, Jameson also defines “postmodern hyperspace” following his experiences in a postmodern space crystalized in architecture through John Portman’s Westin Bonaventure Hotel (1976) in Los Angeles (fig. 1 and fig. 2). This place, according to Jameson, is a postmodern hyperspace per se due to its glass skin that “distort[s] images of everything that surrounds it” (42), with crowds of people wandering around the hotel and always at a loss, and with its entrances that force people to find their way to the lobby with elevators and many other disorienting features of “spatial mutation” (44). According to Jameson, postmodern hyperspace is the “latest mutation in space” and it

has finally succeeded in transcending the capacities of the individual human body to locate itself, to organize its immediate surroundings perceptually, and cognitively to map its position in a mappable external world. It may now be suggested that this alarming disjunction point between the body and its built environment . . . can itself stand as the symbol and analogon of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds, at least at present, to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects. (44)

The hotel’s aspiration to be a “miniature city” and a “new total space” (40) that substitutes the city of Los Angeles adds to its fictional quality that is echoed by postmodernist architecture. In other words, Westin Bonaventura becomes a world building, a fictional enterprise unlike the functional motives of modernist architecture.

These approaches and critical readings of postmodern space by different critics show a common sensibility towards the use of space and characteristics of the spatial elements in contemporary culture. The postmodern spatial turn and postmodern understanding of space as fragmented, simultaneous and multilayered are performed in various ways in postmodernist fiction as well. In his meticulous reading of postmodern culture, David Harvey suggests that in contemporary society, the coming together of various cultures, styles, and the simultaneous existence of “other” cultures in the same space show a certain kind of eclecticism and fragmentation (97). While eclecticism could be observed in “fragmented spaces of the contemporary city,” it is also present in postmodernist fiction:

Spaces of very different worlds seem to collapse upon each other . . . [and] [d]isruptive spatiality triumphs over the coherence of perspective and narrative in postmodern fiction, in exactly the same way that imported beers coexist with local brews, local employment collapses under the weight of foreign competition, and all the divergent spaces of the world are assembled nightly as a collage of images upon the television screen. (Harvey 302)

Referring to the literary critic Brian McHale, Harvey suggests that postmodernist fiction is crowded with plural universes, and with characters wandering in these universes “without a clear sense of location” (301) which remind us of the experiences of Fredric Jameson and the wandering crowds in the Westin Bonaventura Hotel. Harvey emphasizes that the fictional elements of postmodern architecture and space have their counterparts in the spatial elements of postmodernist fiction. While postmodern space and architecture turn to fictional and narrative elements, fiction turns to handling space and spatiality in numerous practices through narrative, textual and material tools.



Fig. 1. Westin Bonaventure Hotel & Suites. “Exterior.” *The Bonaventure*, www.thebonaventure.com/gallery.



Fig. 2. Westin Bonaventure Hotel & Suites. “Lobby.” *The Bonaventure*, www.thebonaventure.com/gallery.

SPATIAL FORM AND POSTMODERN NARRATIVE ELEMENTS

Spatial form in literature usually refers to narratives that depart from “chronological sequence” as put forward by Jeffrey R. Smitten and Ann Daghistany in their book *Spatial Form in Narrative* (13). These narratives do not follow a strict chronological method of

recounting events, yet they move through “such devices as image patterns, leitmotifs, analogy, and contrast” (13). These elements provide the narratives with a sense of organization. Moreover, spatial form “implies the creation of an effect in the reader’s mind, and thus . . . [it] includes not only objective features of narrative structure but also subjective processes of aesthetic perception” (Smitten and Daghistany 13). Therefore, spatial form in this context should be understood as methods of narrative organization using non-linear literary devices and the perceptive process the readers go through in the reading of such narratives.

Such an understanding of spatial form has been introduced firstly by Joseph Frank, in his influential essay “Spatial Form in Modern Literature.” Published in 1945, Frank’s essay marks a critical awareness of the change in the nature of narrative. In his reading of Djuna Barnes’s novel *Nightwood* (1936) and examples from modernist poetry, Frank points out the change in narrative organization and structure. He suggests that *Nightwood* departs from any naturalistic tendency in narrative structure and leaves its readers with a puzzling text because of the spatial organization of the novel:

[the] chapters are knit together, not by the progress of any action—either physical action, or, as in a stream-of-consciousness novel, the act of thinking but by the continual reference and cross-reference of images and symbols which must be referred to each other spatially throughout the time-act of reading. (439)

According to Frank, just like the experiments in the paintings of Georges Braque and later abstract expressionists, spatial form in *Nightwood* departs from the naturalistic tendencies of reflecting the world and people as they really are, thus it becomes a self-reflexive and self-conscious narrative. The worlds created by such artists, painters and writers invite us to consider the art work “as an autonomous pattern giving us an individual vision of reality” (Frank 435). In this way, by doing away with the constraints of time as in the form of chronology and linearity, literature is also freed from the assumption that it should imitate and reflect outside reality.

Frank also discusses how modernist poetry uses spatial form. Modernist poetry, as in the poems of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound depend on spatial structuring elements. As Jeffrey R. Smitten comments, modernist poetry “undermines the inherent consecutiveness of language, forcing the reader to perceive the elements of the poem not as unrolling in time but as juxtaposed in space” (17). Thus, these modernist works invite their readers into a new field where it is difficult to locate “characters and events in time and space” because of “the suppression of causal/temporal connectives, those words and word groups by which a literary work is tied to external reality and to the tradition of mimesis” (Smitten 17).

According to Smitten, the use of spatial form in narrative consequently requires the reader to “work out a syntax for the text” (18), similar to Fredric Jameson’s “perceptual organs” that are needed for moving along in postmodern hyperspace. This syntax has to recognize spatial elements and their contribution to either the progression or regression of the narrative. Smitten maintains that Frank’s readings of modernist poetry as spatially organized works of art also holds true for narrative fiction:

Any time the novelist suppresses causal/temporal connectives or—what amounts to the same thing—makes his work self-referential or nonreferential . . . he forces the reader to discover the syntax of the work by paying extraordinary attention to the synchronic relationship among the seemingly disconnected word groups. (19)

Joseph Frank’s approach to space and spatial form in modernism is assessed by Fredric Jameson by a differentiation between the spatiality of modernism and postmodernism. Frank’s understanding of the spatiality of high modernism, according to Jameson, is a “totalizing construction,” for Frank sees the whole through the particular, in other words, the autonomous work “includ[es] a battery of re- and pre-tensions linking the sentence or the detail to the Idea of the total form itself” (420). This kind of “mnemonic” spatiality, in which the work of art becomes the individual precursor of the idea that “everything [is] present simultaneously in the mind with precision” is not compatible with postmodernism

and its rejection of “totalities” or “metanarratives”⁴ of any kind (Jameson 420). Postmodernist fiction and spatiality alike depend upon multiplicity and fragmentation.⁵

Drawing on Frank’s arguments, the critic Jerome Klinkowitz discusses spatial form through its predominant elements like self-reflexivity and self-consciousness in fiction in his article “Spatial Form in Contemporary Fiction.” As Klinkowitz observes, “the ideal spatial fiction” is free of “the responsibility of representing some action in the world” (38). The reader enjoys the work because of its self-reflexive “elements of composition” as she/he would do with a painting as a “spatial affair,” and not because she/he can find a reflection of the “familiar world” in the world of fiction. Such novels as Kurt Vonnegut, Jr.’s *Slaughterhouse-Five* (1969), Jerzy Kosinski’s *Steps* (1968) Donald Barthelme’s *Snow White* (1967) mainly use spatial form (Klinkowitz 39). Klinkowitz views Ronald Sukenick, Gilbert Sorrentino, Clarence Major, Steve Katz, Walter Abish as writers who reflect a special interest in spatiality. Their works

Discard conventional notions of character, action, thematic development, narrative sequence, and ultimately illusion itself (“suspension of disbelief”) in favor of a fully self-conscious form of writing. . . . Their works cancel themselves, make fun of their continuing creation, refuse interpretation . . . and engage both author and reader in self-reflexive game-playing. The very disruptions of conventional technique, though practiced for the effect of reestablishing the truly fictional (and not historical) basis of fiction, has made this new writing dominantly spatial in form. (Klinkowitz 39-40)

These writers mentioned by Klinkowitz are also the early postmodernist writers of American fiction. It can be said that the spatial turn in postmodernist social and cultural theory coincides with or is echoed through the use of spatial form in postmodernist fiction. It is crucial to note, however, the differences between spatial form as argued by Frank as a dominant feature of some modernist novels and poetry and the kind of spatiality that is

⁴ Jean François Lyotard’s *The Postmodern Condition A Report on Knowledge* (1979) discusses meta- and petit-narratives.

⁵ Frank’s other essays provide further analysis of spatial form: “Spatial Form: Thirty Years After” in Smitten and Daghistany’s *Spatial Form in Narrative*, 202-243; “Spatial Form: An Answer to the Critics” in *Critical Inquiry*, 4, 1977, 231-252; “Spatial Form: Some Further Reflections” in *Critical Inquiry*, 5, 1978, 275-290.

observed in postmodern space and in postmodernist fiction. These differences establish the defining characteristics of modernist and postmodernist literature as well. Certain formal characteristics of postmodernist fiction such as metafiction; multiplicity of narrative frames and verbal/visual elements shape the postmodern spatial form which differs from modernist spatiality.

First uttered by the American writer and critic William H. Gass in his essay “Philosophy and The Form of Fiction” (1970), metafiction refers to fiction’s awareness of itself as being fiction. It is defined as “a fiction that includes within itself commentary on its own narrative and/or linguistic identity” (Hutcheon *Narcissistic Narrative* 1). Also termed as “self-reflective, self-informing, self-reflexive, auto-referential, auto-representational” (Hutcheon 1-2), metafiction has long been practiced in literature.⁶ There has been a growing interest in metafiction with the advent of postmodernism. From the 1960s onwards, American novelists such as John Barth, William H. Gass, Donald Barthelme, Don DeLillo, and Raymond Federman have produced several examples of self-reflexive works.

The use of metafiction can be observed in the use of several narrative devices. For instance, it could be done with “direct addresses to the reader” (Hutcheon xvi) in the form of comments on the writing and creation process or comments on the reader and the writer. In this way, the metafictional novel draws attention to the writing process and thereby posits its fictionality and textuality by breaking the suspension of disbelief. With its focus on the artistic process of creation, this technique also abolishes the traditional assumption that literature imitates outside reality.

Metafiction is also performed with intertextual allusions (Hutcheon vxi) that stress once again the textuality of the work. The workings of text and language are of special concern to postmodernists due to postmodernism’s interaction with the poststructuralist school of

⁶ Linda Hutcheon’s *The Poetics of Postmodernism* (1988), especially chapters six and seven offer an analysis of a specific kind of metafiction which she coins as historiographic metafiction. Chapter III, Footnote 40 discusses Hutcheon’s definition of the term.

thought and deconstructive methods. Besides enriching the text, intertextual elements in metafiction also support the idea that no text could exist without any relation to other texts and that “[t]here is nothing outside the text [there is no outside-text; *il n'ya pas de horstexte*]” as Jacques Derrida famously puts forward (*Of Grammatology* 158).

Another metafictional technique that has been used extensively by postmodernism is to multiply the narrative frames. This technique is very influential in calling attention to the spatiality of the novel, because the reader cannot depend upon a chronological or linear narration now that the narrative is halted through different narrative lines. The novel becomes a metaphorical space, for example, as in Jorge Luis Borges’s “forking paths” which can increase ad infinitum. This device of destabilizing representational functions of literature by breaking chronology with multiple frames not only brings multiplicity into the space of the novel through characters, narrative voices, and narrative threads but it also reinforces the fragmented and heterogeneous nature of postmodern space and spatial form. An inspirational source for postmodernist narratives is *A Thousand and One Nights* where the narrative continuously branches out to other narratives. As the Russian critic Victor Shklovsky observes in his book *Theory of Prose*, Scheherazade’s narration in *A Thousand and One Nights* “slow[s] down and prolong[s] the telling of the stories in order thereby to defer the carrying out of the death sentence” (42). This kind of “framing as a device of deceleration” is a way of lingering and “deferring” the narrative which is also observed in ancient Indian stories or Greek myths (42-43).⁷

A similar point is made by Joseph Kestner in his article “The Novel and the Spatial Arts” (1981). He argues that framing not only delays the narrative as Shklovsky and Tzvetan Todorov remark but it also stresses “the spatial-pictorial quality of the plot” (110). First of all, with framing the writer treats narrative as a picture in which s/he has to put events and

⁷ Todorov’s arguments echo Shklovsky’s in that he views framing as a method of delay. “The Categories of Literary Narrative.” Trans. Joseph Kestner, *Papers on Language and Literature*, vol. 50, no. 3/4, Summer-Fall 2014, p.381. EBSCO, connection.ebscohost.com/c/literary-criticism/99787336/categories-literary-narrative.

characters in by taking issues of composition and perspective into account.⁸ Kestner calls this “the pictorial illusion” (110) where framing becomes “a spatial practice opposing the temporal movement of the narrative” (111).

When it comes to postmodern works, the functioning of the multiplicity of narrative frames is not progressive but rather regressive. In such narratives and in the novels in this study, the number of frames that are nested within each other are increased tremendously to parody this literary tendency. The reader has to make sense of and decide which of the narrative threads she/he will follow within a number of narratives. To complicate matters even more, in postmodernist fiction, these narratives do not occupy the same narrative spaces with each other; each time a frame is added to the narrative, the “ontological status” of the narratives is destabilized. Brian McHale’s understanding of postmodernism and its ontological questions about world building and world construction is what separates postmodernism from modernism. Modernist fiction was interested in “epistemological questions” such as “How can I interpret this world of which I am a part? And what am I in it? . . . What is there to be known?; Who knows it?; How do they know it, and with what degree of certainty?” (McHale 9). However, the dominant element in postmodernism is ontological, or “post-cognitive” (Higgins qtd. in McHale 9) and postmodernist fiction asks such questions as

Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves do it? . . .
What is a world?; What kinds of world are there? . . . What is the mode of an
existence of a text, and what is the mode of existence of the world (or worlds)
it projects?; How is a projected world structured? (10)

Therefore, these multiple and nested frames that are like Chinese boxes or Russian *babushka* dolls have “the effect of interrupting and complicating the ontological ‘horizon’ of the fiction, multiplying its worlds, and laying bare the process of world construction” (McHale 112). This metafictional device, putting representation within representation like a story within a story, a novel within a novel, a play within a novel and etc. causes the

⁸ Michel Butor discusses the analogy between the novel and painting in his article “The Space of the Novel.” *Inventory: Essays*. Cape P, 1968, pp. 31-49.

world of the novel to be “interrupted so often by nested representations in such diverse media . . . that the fiction’s ontological ‘horizon’ is effectively lost” (McHale 113-114). At this point, we can see that the postmodernist style of metafiction of framing not only destabilizes the narrative world of fiction with various layers but also constantly stresses the fictionality of the literary work by including different levels of fictionality within itself.

These fragmented, multiple worlds and plurality of narrative voices complicate the fictional, narrative and material space of the novel. *House of Leaves*, *VAS*, and *Theories of Forgetting* exemplify the processes of problematizing reality as well as unsettling the sense of space by referring to their own textuality by “reframing” and creating multiple ontologies. These novels not only project a fictional world on the physical pages of the book, as all previous works of fiction have done, but they expand and add to the fictional stories by making use of visual materials like a rich variant of typological experimentations and pictures. The fictional stories are thus conveyed to the readers via multimodal narratives which are based on a spatial arrangement. Unlike realist fiction that diminishes the role of the book as an object which can be seen as the fourth wall of fiction, this new mode of writing constantly reminds the reader of the book’s material presence and breaks down the fourth wall.

HYPERTEXT

Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the term “hypertext” as “an arrangement of the information in a computer database that allows a user to get information and to go from one document to another by clicking on highlighted words or pictures” (“hypertext”). This definition gives the three major characteristics of hypertext: it uses computer as a medium, although this study focuses on the print examples, progression in reading and viewing of the text is maintained through the links on screen, or page and it not only uses written text but also visual and audial elements such as pictures, songs, videos, and animation thereby enriching the notion of textuality. With these three major features, hypertext constructs a space in which the readers have to navigate through hyperlinks.

The term came into use following the technological developments in computer sciences at the end of the 1940s, and continued in the 1950s and the 1960s. With the integration of language programs into computers, computers have started to serve as machines to produce texts not just by the contributions of computer scientists but also by people from other disciplines. The 1980s finally witnessed the first examples of hypertexts that were used for educational as well as literary purposes. As Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Montfort point out, with collaborations between the humanities and science, the coming of Hypercard and note-card based systems and application programs, “the 1980s marked a new era in the expressiveness of the medium, by opening up the encyclopedic and spatial properties of the computer to wider communities of practices, communities composed not of programmers but of artists, writers and educators” (*The New Media Reader* 9).

The term was envisioned and “idealized” (Rasmus Blok “A Sense of Closure” 169) by Vannevar Bush who was a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a science administrator to the government during World War II. In his seminal essay “As We May Think” published in 1945, right after the end of the war, Bush asks some crucial questions regarding the future of scientists in the field of physics now that the war is over. He goes on to state his future ideals regarding technological developments and the use of technology for the betterment of humanity. One of his projects is “memex” which is a personal storage desk that could contain thousands of books, pictures, newspapers compressed in smaller formats, a project preceding the personal computer. Bush defines “memex” as a “supplement to [one’s] memory,” “which is mechanized so that it may be consulted with exceeding speed and flexibility” (45). He introduces memex as a desk:

Consider a future device for individual use, which is a sort of mechanized private file and library. It needs a name, and, to coin one at random, “memex” will do. . . . It consists of a desk, and while it can presumably be operated from a distance, it is primarily the piece of furniture at which he works. On the top are slanting translucent screens, on which material can be projected for convenient reading. There is a keyboard, and sets of buttons and levers. Otherwise it looks like an ordinary desk. (Bush “As We May Think” 44)

Apart from being a desk of storage that could be consulted as an aid to human memory, memex is to mimic the human mind and its associative capabilities. This brings Bush's "trails of information" to the stage for future scholars to work with in their studies. According to Bush, these trails would be formed by linking, first of all, two things together. Longer trails could then be saved, returned and integrated with various other trails of scientists. This method of indexing is to mimic the human mind's associative capabilities but they would be permanent as they will not be subject to loss of memory. Building trails of information and thought by association, a researcher could reach anything s/he wants to find with speed. Bush thinks that new kinds of encyclopedias would emerge as a result of these trails of thoughts that could be stored in a memex:

Wholly new forms of encyclopedias will appear, ready made with a mesh of associative trails running through them, ready to be dropped into the memex and there amplified. The lawyer has at his touch the associated opinions and decisions of his whole experience, and of the experience of friends and authorities. . . . The historian, with a vast chronological account of people, parallels it with a skip trail which stops only on the salient items, and can follow at any time contemporary trails which lead him all over civilization at a particular epoch. There is a new profession of trail blazers, those who find delight in the task of establishing useful trails through the enormous mass of the common record. The inheritance from the master becomes, not only his additions to the world's record, but for his disciples the entire scaffolding by which they were erected. (Bush, *The New Media Reader* 46)

According to Noah Wardrip-Fruin, Bush's idea of trails of information rather than his project of memex has inspired new media studies with the concept of "hyperlinking." The trails that have been envisioned by Bush which contain "both public documents and personal notes, diagrams, and photographs" will be connected to each other in the memex. Thus, memex will become "a means of turning an *information explosion* into a *knowledge explosion*" by providing scholars with easiness for handling information, sharing it and creating "more sophisticated knowledge" (*The New Media Reader* 35). Another critic Jan Van Looy also argues that Bush's interest in creating memex was "encyclopedic" and in this way "he wants to facilitate access to the record," however, his "associative indexing" is what makes Bush's ideas inspirational in the development of hypertext (*Close Reading New Media* 13). Bush's ideas have been put into practice as can be seen in the

development of the Internet with millions of websites that are connected to each other via links, or in popular websites like Wikipedia or Encyclopedia Britannica Online where texts are connected through links (anchor-links and reference links) forming a web of information.

Vannevar Bush's ideas blazed the trail for future scholars such as Theodor H. Nelson who coined the term "hypertext" for the first time. Nelson introduces the terms "hypertext" and "hyperspace" in his 1965 article "A File Structure for the Complex," twenty years after Bush's "As We May Think." Nelson discusses the need for a personal filing system that was envisioned by Bush but still unavailable by 1965 and the philosophical implications of "the dream file" or "evolutionary file structure," a file system he proposes that could hold information in complicated ways. It will contain lists with index numbers which makes it "evolutionary." In his article, Nelson explains the basics of his project:

What was required we may call an *evolutionary file structure*: a file structure that can be shaped into various forms, changed from one arrangement to another in accordance with the user's changing need. . . . Making the file out of lists would allow different categories of personal notes, separate drafts, outlines and master indices all to be handled as lists of some sort; their segments could then be manipulated through automatic handling of index numbers. The resulting file structure I will accordingly call the Evolutionary List File, or ELF, since it is an evolutionary file structure constructed with lists. The system proposed here is not the only ELF possible. It is built upon a specific technique of attaching lists together which has a natural resistance to becoming confusing and messy. (*The New Media Reader* 137-138)

Nelson's "Evolutionary List File," or shortly ELF, enables the users not only to store information, but to handle it in complex ways and develop ideas by "integration, understanding, channeling [and] . . . planning" (142). The entries in this system can be connected to each other with "links." Nelson defines the link as "a connector," and through links "[a]n entry in one list may be linked to only one entry in another list" (138). Nelson puts forward that this system of information management should "be thought as a place . . . with many little locations which may be rearranged with regard to one another" (139). Below is a figure from Nelson's article that shows how a historian can make use of EFL

while making and keeping a record of his/her research. The system connects findings, notes, sources and so on from certain lists with the others through the links.

The management of complex information through links as an activity realized in space and through spatial terms, Nelson maintains, would enable the creation of “complex and significant new media” such as the hypertext and hyperfilm (143). According to Nelson, hypertext is an alternative to paper and books in their codex (print) format and a better tool for education and enjoyment. Nelson defines hypertext as

a body of written or pictorial material interconnected in such a complex way that it could not conveniently be presented or represented on paper. It may contain summaries, or maps of its contents and their interrelations; it may contain annotations, additions and footnotes from scholars who have examined it. . . . The ELF is such a file structure. (143-144)

Nelson’s ELF is similar to Bush’s memex in that it is used to record and keep track of ideas and information. Nelson, however, takes one step further in naming and defining compared to Bush’s system of “associative capabilities.” Hypertext, according to Nelson, will incorporate texts with images in a complicated way that would make computers more useful than books because they present material that cannot be presented in books. That is to say that hypertext will open up a new phase for textuality by developing, enriching and redefining it.

Nelson develops the idea of hypertext further in his book *Literary Machines* (1987). Here, Nelson offers hypertext as an alternative to sequential or conventional texts and he believes that it is the ideal text to be used in the coming decades. What is promising about hypertext, he maintains, is its nonsequentiality which is not limited to but will best be developed by computers and read on the computer screens (17). According to Nelson, people have been trained to think that a “text is intrinsically sequential because of the sequentiality of language and of printing and binding” (14). However, “*the structure of ideas* is never sequential,” and the human mind does not work in a sequential order. Non-sequentiality is a significant feature of hypertext and is parallel to how the human mind works:

[O]ur thought processes are not very sequential either. True, only a few thoughts at a time pass across the central screen of the mind; but as you consider a thing, your thoughts crisscross it constantly, reviewing first one connection, then another. Each new idea is compared with many parts of the whole picture, or with some mental visualization of the whole picture itself. (Nelson 16)

Any non-sequential writing such as magazines, the front page of newspapers, “funny arrangements of poetry” is hypertext because they use non-sequential layouts, “pieces of writing connected by lines or many other things” (Nelson 15). In other words, hypertext is not limited to computers, an idea he did not bring up in his 1965 article. Within time, however, the computer screens, Nelson suggests, “will have the richness and resolution of paper” (15) and “computers will be involved with hypertext in every way, and in systems of every style” (17), an idea proved by today’s computers and hypertexts.

Nelson also explains the two kinds of hypertexts, one being the “chunk style hypertext” and the other being the “compound/windowing hypertext” (15). The first one is that “connects chunks of text by alternative choices,” through links. The reader of this type of hypertext “moves through it by reading one chunk, then choosing the next” (15). In the second type that is the compound hypertext, the reader views the materials on the screen which are “combined with others” (15). Nelson states that “a good way of visualizing this is a set of windows to original materials from the compound texts themselves” (15). This is why he also calls compound texts “windowing” hypertexts. It is the compound/windowing hypertext that Nelson sees “as the vital and basic new information system of the future” (16).

According to Nelson, the production of hypertexts by computers will eventually turn computers into “literary machines” (*Literary Machines*). Here Nelson could be said to be predicting the first examples of hypertext fiction that would be published in the 1990s. *afternoon: a story* (1990) by Michael Joyce, *Marble Springs* (1993) by Deena Larsen, *Victory Garden* (1992), *Hegirascope* (1995) and *The Unknown* (1998) by Stuart Moulthrop, *Patchwork Girl* (1995) by Shelley Jackson and *Grammatron* (1997) by Mark Amerika are the first examples of hypertext fiction, most of them published by Eastgate

Systems, Inc., a literary publishing company that defines itself as “committed to developing the best hypertext software and to publishing the best hypertext fiction” (*Eastgate.com*).

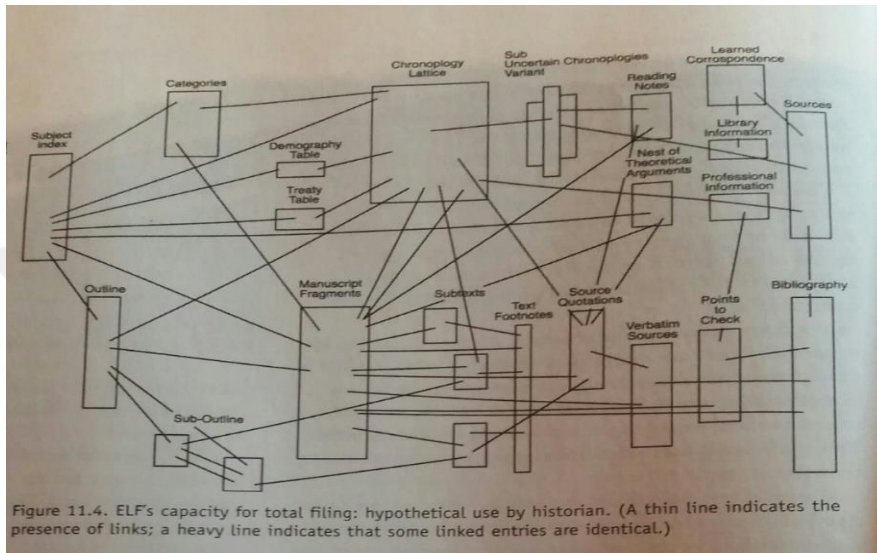


Fig. 3. Theodore Holm Nelson, ELF's structure and organization "A File Structure for the Complex" (1965); rpt. in Noah Wardrip-Fruin and Nick Monfort, *The New Media Reader*. The MIT Press, 2003, p. 142.

These developments in hypertext novels that use software systems and computer as media necessitated critics to evaluate these works sometimes in existing frameworks and sometimes by creating new terminologies to handle them. In their book *Close Reading New Media* (2003), Jan Van Looy and Jan Baetens summarize the differing approaches to hypertext fiction in the 1980s and 1990s. In these decades, critics like George Landow, Jay David Bolter, Stuart Moulthrop and Michael Joyce viewed hypertext as the implementation of poststructuralist literary conventions (7). They considered links as “the materialization of intertextuality” (Van Looy and Baetens 10). Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's concept of “rhizome” reminded them of the nature of hypertext as having neither a beginning nor an end, but “a web of interlinked nodes or rhizome” (7).⁹ Methods like “bricolage” and

⁹ Hypertext constructs a spatial plane in which texts are arranged. The spatiality that is extended by hypertext is discussed by Jay David Bolter in his book *Writing Machines*. In this respect, the spatial nature of hypertext is also reminiscent of Deleuze and Guattari's definition of “smooth space.” In their book *A Thousand Plateaus*, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari define two kinds of space: smooth and striated. A powerful mechanism against the state apparatus, smooth space is heterogeneous with multiple connections dispersed

“tinkering” championed by Sherry Turkle in her book *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* (1995) were thought to be the “liberation of the act of writing” and hypertext was very much in line with Roland Barthes’s ideas such as “decentering, writerly reader” as argued in *Image Music Text* (1977), and “différance” as defined in “Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences” (1966) by Jacques Derrida (Looy and Baetens 10). George Landow combines views from hypertextuality and poststructuralist literary criticism and maintains that the hypertext depends upon textual elements of “multilinearity, nodes, links and networks” instead of “conceptual systems founded on ideas of center, margin, hierarchy, and linearity” (1). The consensus seems to be that hypertext¹⁰ defies traditional notions of the text, narration and the roles of the reader and writer as the poststructuralist school has already introduced (Landow 2).

The reading and analysis of hypertexts through poststructuralist premises could be seen as the beginnings of a major change in the methods with which literary works are created and a new kind of media has emerged through the use of the computer. The aim of this study, however, is not just to understand and foreground the characteristics of hypertext fiction, but to see how printed fiction is inspired by the characteristics of hypertext and invented

over a rhizomatic field as opposed to striated space which is homogenous with definite borders and under the control of the state apparatus. “Smooth space is precisely the space of the smallest deviation: therefore it has no homogeneity, except between infinitely proximate points, and the linking of proximities is effected independently of any determined path. It is a space of contact, of small tactile or manual actions of contact, rather than a visual space like Euclid’s striated space. Smooth space is a field without conduits or channels. A field, a heterogeneous smooth space, is wedded to a very particular type of multiplicity: nonmetric, acentered, rhizomatic multiplicities that occupy space without ‘counting’ it and can ‘be explored only by legwork.’” They do not meet the visual condition of being observable from a point in space external to them; an example of this is the system of sounds, or even of colors, as opposed to Euclidean space” (Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus* 371). (Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Trans. by Brian Massumi. U of Minnesota P, 1987.)

¹⁰ The definitions of hypertext by Theodore H. Nelson, George Landow and Gérard Genette differ from each other in that Genette’s defines “hypertext” as a literary work that appropriates the features of a previous work through the use various structural and narrative elements. Genette’s definition of hypertext is still important because it illustrates how a hypertextual work depends on a former literary work which he calls “hypotext.” An example he analyzes in detail is James Joyce’s *Ulysses* as “hypertext” which draws on Homer’s *The Odyssey* that functions as a “hypotext.” Genette’s ideas can be found in *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*. Trans. by Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky. U of Nebraska P, 1997.

creative ways to use them in print. While building a network of texts, the hypertext novel is organized and structured with links and frames. The increasing number of links sending the reader to newer narrative frames is a postmodernist way of reframing and regressing the narrative as discussed before. Therefore, it can be said that postmodern metafictional characteristics are now performed with hypertextual elements that are introduced by computers but refashioned in print.

Named “concrete” in poetry and “hypertext” by Theodore Nelson, the kind of writing that is dominated by “nonlinearity” (Espen Aarseth, *Cybertext* 10) experiments with the topography of the page through typography and graphic images highlighting the visual and material features of the book. Thus, *House of Leaves*, *VAS*, and *Theories of Forgetting* not only use spatial form with techniques of metafiction and hypertextuality and mediate on postmodern space through their fictional narratives, but they also add a third dimension to the discussion of space by using the page and the material presence of the book as spaces of experimentation.

MATERIALITY

House of Leaves, *VAS*, and *Theories of Forgetting* can be said to be highly inspired by book arts or artists’ books. These are the kind of novels which not only include written text, but also pictures, drawings, photographs, and objects as well as topographical and typographical experiments. Printed in very small numbers, artists’ books foreground the materiality of the book, call attention to their multimedia textuality and turn the book into an art object through their shape, design, and various materials. With these features on the foreground, an artist’s book is not only read, but also felt and experienced as one would do with an art object.

Although the tendency to experiment with the materiality of the page and book dates back to the avant-garde art movements of modernism, book art started to be “a form of artistic expression” (Drucker *The Century of Artists’ Books* vii) in the 1960s and 1970s. As Joan Lyons states in her book *Artists’ Books*, book arts started to increase in number as a result of the political and cultural changes in the 1960s. The artists whose works were not

accepted to the museums and galleries found new ways to reach wider audiences. Book art was a solution as it provided “a forum and venue” for the pictures and photographs of those artists. It also coincided with the understanding that “the books could be artworks in and of themselves” (Lyons 7). Artists’ books¹¹ remodel textuality through the use of visual and material components, and turn narrative into a multilayered construct, and the book into its own metaphor.¹²

In her book *Writing Machines* (2002), Katherine Hayles points out the necessity to focus on electronic literature not only because it is a field full of new possibilities in producing literature, but also because electronic literature gives us a chance “to think more rigorously about the interactions between content and digital environments” (7). She thinks that the outcomes of analyzing electronic literature “could be reflected back onto print to see it more clearly as well” (7). To be able to do this, she introduces Media Specific Analysis, shortly MSA, a critical agenda with which to evaluate digital as well as printed literature. Through MSA, literary criticism can focus on the technologies that produce the book and material features of the books that contribute to the meaning of the narratives told in them.

Hayles argues that literary studies and criticism disregarded the physical properties of the page and the book for a long while because of the firm belief in the separation between representation of the fictional worlds and the material through which they are portrayed. However, the emergence of digital media necessitated critics to evaluate the nature and properties of the book because digital literature introduced textual elements that cannot be found in print while the reverse, that some of the textual elements in print cannot be reproduced digitally, also holds true. Hayles outlines the different kinds of approaches to materiality in *Writing Machines* that have viewed literature as “immaterial:”

¹¹ Appendix 1 lists a number of artists’ books which I have examined at J.W. Marriot Library’s Special Collections during my stay in Utah as a visiting scholar.

¹² Joan Lyon’s *Artists’ Books: A Critical Anthology and Sourcebook* (1985), Johanna Drucker’s *The Century of Artists’ Books* (1994), Renée Riese Hubert and Judd D. Hubert’s book *The Cutting Edge of Reading: Artists’ Books* (1999) and Krystyna Wasserman’s *The Book as Art* (2007) offer a detailed history and prominent examples of artists’ books.

[W]ithin the humanities and especially in literary studies, there has traditionally been a sharp line between representation and the technologies producing them. . . . [L]iterary studies has generally been content to treat fictional and narrative worlds as if they were entirely products of the imagination. Significant exceptions include the tradition of artists' books and the exuberant experiments of such materially-based practices as concrete poetry. A few theorists attentive to these developments have argued eloquently for the importance of the book as a physical object and for criticism as material practice. Yet they remain the exception rather than the rule. By and large literary critics have been content to see literature as immaterial verbal constructions, relegating to the specialized fields of bibliography, manuscript culture, and book production the rigorous study of the materiality of literary artifacts. (19)

Hayles defines MSA as “a mode of critical attention which recognizes that all texts are instantiated and the nature of the medium in which they are instantiated matters” (“Print Is Flat, Code Is Deep” 67). By drawing attention to the importance of the medium, whether it is electronic or print, Hayles emphasizes that the meaning-making process is inevitably bound by the materials that a work of literature uses. In other words, materiality is not to be regarded as something outside of the critical framework in which we analyze literature. She sees materiality as “the interplay between a text’s physical characteristics and its signifying strategies” (67). With this definition at hand, texts can be considered “as embodied entities” while at the same time remaining open to interpretation.

In his book *Cybertext* (1997), the Norwegian critic Espen Aarseth addresses a similar need in literary criticism to recognize the material aspects of fictional works. With the terminology he creates for the study of media, he differentiates between the study of textual media and the study of textual meaning, which he names “textonomy” and “textology” (15). Aarseth believes in the necessity “to construct a map of the new area” (15) which has been under the influence of computer technologies and a re-evaluation of the texts in print. According to these critics, the materiality of language, the page and the book can no more be considered extrinsic to literary criticism.

While the novels in this study offer digital textual elements, in other words, hypertextual elements, they also resist being “re-produced” for the web or in a digital environment

because of their physical embodiments and material structures. Mark Z. Danielewski's novel *House of Leaves* makes use of hypertextuality and breaks the narrative line several times through the use of footnotes and endnotes in the form of links. With its drawings and pictures and many other visual devices, the novel changes the topography of the page and typography of words. Steve Tomasula's novel *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* includes pictures, graphics and statistics that are linked to the written word. Lance Olsen's novel *Theories of Forgetting* presents two narrative voices starting their stories at different ends of the book, and the narratives progress by crisscrossing each other. Therefore, these works strongly resist a reproduction of their texts on the digital screen: they would not be the same work if they are produced for the electronic screen due to their material elements. These specific textual-material elements of the novels contribute to and strengthen the existence of the books as physical entities and finally as art objects.

The material practices encountered in the works under analysis here are very much in line with what the American writer and critic Raymond Federman defines as "surfiction" because of their conscious efforts of changing previous assumptions about reading fiction, using the print page as a site of experimentation, reshaping the material of fiction and disseminating meaning. In his book *Critifiction: Postmodern Essays* (1993), Raymond Federman proposes four propositions of surfiction which he sets as "arbitrary starting point[s] for the possibilities of a new fiction." These propositions are related first to the reading of fiction which has been renewed by specificities of "the typography and topology" of writing on the printed page (9). His second proposition is related to the shape of fiction which is no longer "chronological and linear" but "simultaneous and digressive" (11) which frees the novel from the responsibility of "mirror[ing] life" (10). This second proposition is related to spatial form that is extended in postmodernist novels. Federman's third proposition is about the material of fiction. Federman believes that the writer has no limits in making up the material he needs for his fiction. He is not bounded by the necessity to reflect reality, but is free to tell "the story of the fiction he is inventing" (which also makes fiction self-conscious) and fill "a space (the pages)" because they are his medium of art (12). What Federman proposes in this part explains the ground for the rich

material and polyphonic structure of the novels of this study. He suggests that the writer of surfiction

can, at any time, introduce material (quotations, pictures, diagrams, charts, designs, pieces of other discourses, doodles, etc.) totally unrelated to the story he is in the process of telling; or else, he can simply leave those spaces blank, because fiction is as much what is said as what is not said, since what is said is not necessarily true, and since what is said can always be said another way (12).

Federman's final proposition "The Meaning of Fiction" puts forward that fiction will no longer be "meaningful, truthful, or realistic; nor will it attempt to serve as the vehicle of a ready-made meaning" (13). Rather, the reader is required to be an active participant in the meaning making process, because the novel "will not create a semblance of order, it will offer itself for order and ordering" (14). In other words, this new text will require the joint efforts of the writer, the reader, as well as the characters and narrators of fiction (13). As Anthony Enns points out, Federman "links experimental typography to poststructuralist theory by arguing that it produces "writerly texts," which allow the presumably passive reader to assume the more active role of the author" (Enns 53). While Federman's propositions are important in considering and evaluating the change in fiction writing, they also show how this change in writing is inseparably linked to the changes in the role of the writer, the reader and the meaning of the works.

Such kind of a literary approach that takes into account the material qualities of the medium through which fiction is produced changes the way readers understand and make meaning of literature. The reading of such fictional works differs greatly from reading realist or popular fictional novels that require only a passive consumption as Federman observes. The complex structures, narratives and shapes of these novels together with an overall self-reflexiveness render a smooth reading impossible, thereby causing the reader to consciously and actively participate in the meaning making process. The reading of these networked novels like *House of Leaves*, *VAS*, and *Theories of Forgetting* complies with Roland Barthes's ideas on writerly texts. According to Roland Barthes, the reader is one of the components of a text to exist. As he discusses in his essay "The Pleasure of the

Text,” while some texts require a basic and easy reading, others necessitate a more careful and conscious participation from the readers resulting with “jouissance.” Jouissance is a term Barthes uses to describe the joy derived from this process-oriented-interaction with the text. Barthes calls this second type of text a “writerly” one, and this kind of text urges the reader to participate in a performative activity of reading and to write his/her own text. It should also be noted that the reader to interact with this text in a writerly manner is not a physical being, but a hypothetical one performing “textually conditioned and culturally sanctioned mental operations . . . upon the text” (Malmgren 52). This reader has a set of expectations about the nature of fiction and “perform certain operations upon fictional texts to insure the fulfillment of those expectations” (Malmgren 51). To able to perform such operations, this reader, whom some critics call “the ideal reader,” is expected to be exposed to various conventions of literature. The reading process of *House of Leaves*, *VAS*, and *Theories of Forgetting* and similar hypertext novels is an activity requiring performative contributions and the reader needs to collaborate with the author in the meaning making process.

House of Leaves, *VAS*, and *Theories of Forgetting* are hypertext novels that have rich and complex narrative components that render them examples of postmodernist surfiction. In this respect, they should be viewed not only as a continuation of the postmodernist novel that offers complex ways of handling space in general and spatial form in particular, but an extended and enriched version of it under the influence of digital technologies. The interaction between the textual and visual components requires the reader’s active participation instead of passive consumption. The reader has to move between the pieces of the text through links, which is a process embodied in spatial terms. This process of making sense of the different layers of the space in the novel is like making sense of postmodern space, of postmodern cities, of postmodern buildings which have all been paralleled by the existence of virtual space in the digital world.

In the following chapters, the novels will be analyzed first through their use of structural space which is shaped by spatial form, second through their narrative space which is shaped by postmodern and deconstructive space, and third through their material space

which is shaped by spatial design. In the first chapter of this dissertation, Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* will be analyzed in these three categories. *House of Leaves* makes use of spatial form that breaks down linearity and extends the spatial form with the use of hypertext which also decelerates narrative time. Its narrative space centers on a strange labyrinthine house which later becomes a model for the design of the book. With its topographical experiments in page design, typographical variation, and the use of visual elements, *House of Leaves* turns the labyrinthine house into a concrete structure and becomes a labyrinthine house of papers. In the second chapter, Steve Tomasula's *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* will be analyzed within the same framework. *VAS* makes use of spatial form by an intertextual hypertext, multiplicity, and genre blending. Its narrative space focuses on the human body and treats it as a spatial construct shaped by the society. Various representations of the body in multimedia that are presented through a special book design turn *VAS* into a body to be read and looked at. In the third chapter, Lance Olsen's *Theories of Forgetting* will be discussed within the same framework. *Theories of Forgetting* employs spatial form shaped by metafiction and multiplicity of narrative threads. Its narrative space focuses on Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*. Its material design is inspired by the shape of *Spiral Jetty* and this is observed in the spiral shaped book design. These novels combine various visual, topographical and typographical devices on the material space of the books, continually blurring the boundaries of fiction, criticism, the fictional and the real, and turning the texts into criti-fiction.

CHAPTER I

A PARABLE ABOUT SPACE: MARK Z. DANIELEWSKI'S *HOUSE OF LEAVES*

I thought of a labyrinth of labyrinths, of one sinuous spreading labyrinth that would encompass the past and the future and in some way involve the stars.

"The Garden of Forking Paths," Jorge Luis Borges

In his "The Garden of Forking Paths," Jorge Luis Borges tells the story of a labyrinthine book that was written by Ts'ui Pên, who was a Chinese governor who deserted the power and the riches he could have enjoyed in order to write. However, for years, neither his novel nor his labyrinth had been appreciated by his family and his countrymen. His novel could not be understood by people who found it too confusing and considered it as "an indeterminate heap of contradictory drafts" (32). As for the labyrinth, no one could find it anywhere in the country. One of his descendants, a spy who worked for the German army during the First World War, Dr. Yu Tsun understood the true nature of Pên's works, the novel and the labyrinth, and he figured out that the book and the labyrinth that Ts'ui Pên created were one and the same thing, the book was the maze and the maze was the novel. Reading a letter of Ts'ui Pên, Dr. Yu Tsun explained the enigma behind his novel as follows:

I lingered, naturally, on the sentence: I leave to the various futures (not to all) my garden of forking paths. Almost instantly, I understood: 'the garden of forking paths' was the chaotic novel; the phrase 'the various futures (not to all)' suggested to me the forking in time, not in space. A broad rereading of the work confirmed the theory. In all fictional works, each time a man is confronted with several alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others; in the fiction of Ts'ui Pên, he chooses—simultaneously—all of them. He creates, in this way, diverse futures, diverse times which themselves also proliferate and fork. Here, then, is the explanation of the novel's contradictions. . . . In the work of Ts'ui Pên, all possible outcomes occur; each one is the point of departure for other forkings. Sometimes, the paths of this labyrinth converge . . . (Borges 33)

Ts'ui Pên's labyrinthine novel set in an "infinite series of times, in a dizzily growing, ever spreading network of diverging, converging and parallel times" (34) is indeed Borges's envisioning of "the chaotic novel" with multiple possible endings in the form of an infinite labyrinth. Whereas Borges only imagines that such a novel could have been written and existed once upon a time in his short story, the contemporary American author Mark Z. Danielewski achieves to create this chaotic novel with his debut novel *House of Leaves* (2000) where he can be said to recreate Borges's labyrinth both in the form and content of the novel.

Mark Z. Danielewski was born in 1966 in New York City. He studied English literature at Yale University and later moved to Los Angeles, California where he still resides. Having written his first novel at the age of ten, Danielewski has always been interested in writing (*Contemporary Authors Online*). After graduating and working at different jobs, he finally published his first novel in 2000 and today he is the author of nine novels. Danielewski's intellectual upbringing had been shaped by his father Tad Danielewski who was a filmmaker and traveled to European countries on business. In an interview with Michael Sims, Danielewski states that the heritage he got from his intellectual father included "seeing movies, reading books, and always bringing those subjects into long discourses at the table." So these discussions included "Freud and Nietzsche and Borges and Sartre" ("Building a House of Leaves").

These names along with many others have left traces in Danielewski's fiction which is highly informed in the Western literary, philosophical, and artistic tradition. These traces can be observed both in the content of his fiction and in the form of remediating other media such as film and photography. Danielewski's novel *House of Leaves* is an encyclopedic first novel in which readers can detect these influences. The novel offers both the Danielewskian techniques which are new and experimental and are also shaped within a context of literary, philosophical and artistic traditions.

House of Leaves has received critical as well as popular acclaim since its publication as can be observed in numerous academic articles and a devout online community of fans of

the novel. Before the novel was published in print form, parts of it had circulated on the Internet. After the publication in print, the community of followers has grown who had the chance to post comments on the novel on its web page entitled www.houseofleaves.com (Pressman 107). With an idealized reader in mind, Danielewski asserts that he expects a meticulous attention for “taking in every single note, noticing every twist of phrase, appreciating all the intrinsic complexities of . . . [his] narrative, [and] understanding every modulation and harmony” (“Haunted House” n. p.). Whether he has found his ideal reader among the many readers of *House of Leaves* since its publication or not, Danielewski continues to write novels with a similar demand from his readers as can be seen from his experiments in his following novels.

Danielewski’s next novel after *House of Leaves* is *The Whalestoe Letters* and it was also published in 2000. *The Whalestoe Letters* originally comes from one of the appendixes of *House of Leaves* which is composed of letters. Written in the epistolary form, *The Whalestoe Letters* focuses on the relationship between two characters from *House of Leaves*, the mentally disturbed Pelafina Heather Lièvre and her son Johnny Truant whom she writes letters to from The Three Attic Whalestoe Institute. Seven years after the publication of *House of Leaves* and *The Whalestoe Letters*, Danielewski made a comeback with *Only Revolutions* (2007) with parallel and synchronic narratives and an unusual book design that fittingly hosted those narratives. In the novel, the stories of Sam and Hailey are told from the front and back ends of the book and to follow each story, one has to turn and reverse the book upside down before the two narratives are finally connected to each other in the middle of the book. Written in the genre of suspense thriller, Danielewski’s next novel *The Fifty Year Sword* came out in 2012 and it similarly used Danielewskian techniques of variations in the topographical design of the pages and variations in typography accompanied by visual elements. Danielewski’s most ambitious project since *House of Leaves* came out in 2015. From the twenty-seven volumes—the total number envisioned by Danielewski—of *The Familiar* series, five volumes have been published so far: *The Familiar Volume I: One Rainy Day in May* (2015), *Volume II: Into the Forest* (2015), *Volume III: Honeysuckle & Pain* (2016), *Volume IV: Hades* (2017) and *Volume*

V: *Redwood* (2017) which has recently come out. Volume V: *Redwood* of *The Familiar* series may be said to connect to *House of Leaves* in that the novella “Redwood” which Danielewski wrote in 1990 partly paved the way for *House of Leaves* as he remarks in an interview (“Haunted House”). The repeating elements of Danielewski’s fiction can be observed in his other works which function to connect and weave his novels into a web.

Danielewski remarks that he is writing *The Familiar* series with a perspective he names “signiconic” (Danielewski *Thefamiliar.Wordpress*) which can also be observed in his previous works including *House of Leaves*. The term “signiconic” introduces Danielewski’s writing in which he pays attention to not just what language tells us through its words but also how it tells what it tells through the visuality and materiality of words and language. With his conscious approach to written and visual texts, he offers a third dimension that comes together with the combination of these two:

Signiconic = sign + icon. Rather than engage those textual faculties of the mind remediating the pictorial or those visual faculties remediating language, the signiconic simultaneously engages both in order to lessen the significance of both and therefore achieve a third perception no longer dependent on sign and image for remediating a world in which the mind plays no part.

In order to understand what Danielewski means by remediating the pictorial and visual faculties, it is necessary to look at the concept of remediation itself. In their book *Remediation: Understanding New Media* (1999), Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin define remediation as a process used by new media which depends on its viewers’ abilities and ways of understanding former types of media to be understood. According to the writers, remediation is not a phenomenon that is introduced by digital media and this process can be observed in “the last several hundred years of Western visual representation” (11). As the writers point out, each new medium “promises to reform its predecessors by offering a more immediate and authentic experience” (17), therefore by claiming a stronger hold on representing the reality. Thus, a new medium depends not only on its predecessors to be understood but also claims to go beyond them in terms of showing something more authentic and closer to reality by claiming “immediacy.” For example, photography remediates painting, in that, it both depends on similar perceptual

tools to be understood and claims that it is closer to reality than painting is. Bolter and Grusin compare three forms of media, painting, photography and computer graphics and show how they are interconnected in a chain of remediation:

A painting by the seventeenth-century artist Pieter Saenredam, a photograph by Edward Weston, and a computer system for virtual reality are different in many important ways, but they are all attempts to achieve immediacy by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act of mediation. All of them seek to put the viewer in the same space as the objects viewed. The illusionistic painter employs linear perspective and “realistic” lighting . . . while the computer graphics specialist mathematizes linear perspective and creates “models” of shading and illumination. . . . Furthermore, the goal of the computer graphics specialists is to do as well as, and eventually better than, the painter or even the photographer. (11)

In their reading and analysis of digital media, Bolter and Grusin suggest that it is not possible to understand new media forms by disconnecting them “from other social and economic forces” (15) and the new in new media can best be understood by looking at “the particular ways in which they refashion older media and the ways in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media” (15).

In this respect, “signiconic” can be thought of as a process during which the mind uses and combines ways of perceiving verbal and visual languages offered by the text. When reading literature, the mind “remediates” pictorial elements such as metaphors, descriptions, and literary images so that the reader can visualize things; or when viewing visual art works one tries to understand the story it tells through its narrative elements like linearity and point of view. Danielewski remarks that with signiconic writing, he uses images and texts at the same time to “remediate a world in which the mind plays no part” which is the world of his chaotic fiction. By remediating that world, his novels also remediate electronic writing in the print form.

Danielewski’s combination of signs and icons, or the verbal and visual components, starts with *House of Leaves*. In a similar spirit with the production methods of its age, *House of Leaves* employs multi-media that is presented as a web of texts in which the readers are sent back and forth through hyperlinks. Critics such Mark B. N. Hansen, Sinda Gregory

and Larry McCaffery agree upon the fact that *House of Leaves* has introduced new possibilities of writing when our age is rapidly digitalized. Although Danielewski does not accept notions such as “unconventional” or “experimental” for describing his book, suggesting that all the tools he uses are age old conventions of literature and other forms of art, the novel’s inventive techniques show that writing does not have to follow the conventions of five hundred years of printing, but instead it can incorporate textual/visual/material elements much more conveniently than it was in the previous ages thanks to the advent of the computer.

The focus of this chapter will be *House of Leaves* which is a web and a labyrinth constructed with forking paths, in other words, hypertextual links. While “The Garden of Forking Paths” is about “an enormous riddle, or parable, whose theme is time” (Borges 34) which is experienced along the forking paths, Danielewski’s novel offers a parable about space in which different levels of space such as spatial form, the narrative space, and the material space intersect and sometimes converge into each other. The treatment of space on various levels in the novel shows the characteristics of postmodern and deconstructive space. Moreover, as a product of the millennium, *House of Leaves* cannot escape the influence of digital media in its use of space, and therefore combines postmodern and digital features of space by using hypertextual and material elements within the scope of the print book.

House of Leaves is now regarded as a cult novel in experimental American fiction due to its “unconventional” narrative techniques and its labyrinthine fictional, narrative and material space. Many critics refer to the novel’s experimental features. Martyn Bedford describes this space as “the fictional equivalent of an earthquake zone,” as it is not only a stable labyrinth but one that is in the process of forever shifting. Another critic Mark B. N. Hansen states that *House of Leaves* is “a tour de force in typographic and media experimentation with the printed word” (597). It is also viewed as “experimental fiction” as well as “a textual artifact” because of its topographical layout (Hamilton 3). In their interview with Mark Z. Danielewski, Sinda Gregory and Larry McCaffery claim that with

House of Leaves, Danielewski has opened up a new space for fiction writers in the age of media flux:

House of Leaves seems likely to have a major impact on the current generation of American authors; among its other accomplishments, it offers a convincing model for those writers struggling to find a means to use the novel to produce a convincing sense of our age's exponential increase in sensory input—this blizzard of white noise, data, random codes, and competing narratives that has made it difficult enough to locate anything (including yourself), much less create art about it.

Considering the date of their interview in 2003, it can be said that Gregory and McCaffery's predictions about the role Danielewski would play have proved right. *House of Leaves* influenced American fiction writers such as Steve Tomasula and Lance Olsen whose works are also the topics of this study. As Gregory and McCaffery suggest, *House of Leaves* became an inspirational work by combining its subject matter with its technology of production and its material features which exhaust and replenish the capacity of the print book in an age of computers and under the "blizzard" of information and media proliferation.

House of Leaves has been analyzed by critics from three major perspectives. Firstly, there are thematic readings of the novel by such names as Katherine Cox (2006), who focuses on the issues of family and the mother in the textual labyrinth of the novel, and Natalie Hamilton (2008) who looks for Borgesian themes and motifs, particularly the labyrinth, in *House of Leaves*. People like Irmtraud Huber and William G. Little focus on the postmodern elements of the novel, although they believe that the postmodern moment is now a thing in the past but its effects are with us. They situate *House of Leaves* within a context that is marked by the waning of postmodernism and the transition to a digital culture. In her book *Literature after Postmodernism: Reconstructive Fantasies* (2014), Irmtraud Huber discusses that *House of Leaves* is between postmodernism and the reconstructive shift it is followed by and the novel "suggests venues for thinking (and living) which continue to take postmodernist insights into account while searching out new communicative and communal connections and meanings" in a digital age (79).

Similarly, in his article “Nothing to Write Home About: Impossible Reception in Mark Z. Danielewski’s *House of Leaves*,” William G. Little puts forward that any attempt to classify *House of Leaves* as a postmodernist novel will be futile despite “its encyclopedic range and formal experimentation” (169). This is because the novel was published in the year 2000 when postmodernism has been thought to be left behind, and thus, the novel “threatens to appear dead on arrival” (169). The problematic nature of classifying the novel leads to a crisis on the concept of the genre as well as on the divisions between cultural periods. Little claims that the treatment of space in the novel is unsettling and displacing and this shows that Danielewski is deconstructing defined genres and divided periods:

House of Leaves may be a death-bound postmodern text, but it throws into crisis the very concept of a wake. . . . An effort to situate *House of Leaves* as a postmodern novel or as something clearly other than a postmodern novel (a post-postmodern novel?) is a placement project that leads . . . to a dead end. Indeed, the novel tells the story of cryptic spaces that appear within a private home and unsettle the concept of assuming residence, a dramatization of architectural displacement which suggests, among other things, Danielewski’s determination to question the possibility that his literary leaves might be housed securely within a particular genre and, more broadly, to question the possibility of constructing firm walls between cultural periods. (170)

In his book *Rewiring the Real*, Mark C. Taylor makes a parallel claim and states that with its experimental tools *House of Leaves* “eludes every established genre” (112). The novel shows that Danielewski “recognizes the inseparable relation of post-structural theory and postmodern art to . . . ‘network culture’” (8). *House of Leaves* connects itself to the network culture, or to the World Wide Web, by becoming an “infinite” network itself (155) with its use of hypertext and also by its connections to web sites and other types of media such as the music album *Haunted* by Danielewski’s sister Poe.

The novel’s web-like structure and the use of links in the form of footnotes for connecting the points of this web have led a number of critics to focus on the novel’s hypertextual structure and the fact that the novel remediates the World Wide Web (WWW), albeit in print form. This approach to the novel’s hypertextual elements constitutes the second major critical approach to the novel. One of the prominent names in this approach is

Katherine Hayles. In a number of books and articles, she explores concepts such as hypertext and technotext (a term she coins) and she frequently attracts attention to the importance of MSA (Media Specific Analysis) in understanding literature that is dispersed among various media in the digital age.

In her article “Saving the Subject: Remediation in *House of Leaves*,” Hayles states that as a typical hypertext, *House of Leaves* hosts a multiplicity of texts. The multiple texts are given through a hypertextual structure and it can be observed in the “multiple reading paths, chunked text, and a linking mechanism connecting the chunks” (795). Similarly, Mark B. N. Hansen and Jessica Pressman focus on the digital elements and media in *House of Leaves* in their articles. Hansen defines *House of Leaves* as a work “obsessed with technical mediation and the new media ecology” (598) and Pressman refers to how the novel builds a network in itself and with other media on the Internet.

Being initially an electronic writing tool, hypertext is remediated in print form in *House of Leaves* with its own specific tools and this creates a space in which material elements of the text should be taken into consideration. Hayles states that *House of Leaves* uses the tools and effects of different media such as “film, video, photography, tattoos, typewriters, telegraphy, handwriting, and digital computers” within the scope of the print book (780). This requires focusing on the technology of the print book as well as “the materiality of inscription” (803). Therefore, an analysis of the themes in the novel without having an eye on its materiality would be inadequate because “[e]ven when technology does not appear as a theme, it is woven into the fictional world through the processes that produce the literary work as a material artifact” (803).

Hayles remarks that *House of Leaves* bears the mark of the digital *Electronic Literature* (2008) through four characteristics. It is “richly multimodal, combining text, graphics, color, and nonlinguistic sound effects” (175) and she thinks that because of these characteristics *House of Leaves* both remediates electronic text and its features strengthen the “specificities of print” (175). These interactions between electronic and print forms prepare a ground for a discussion of media technologies but also the “dynamics that

interrogate and reconfigure the relations between authors and readers, humans and intelligent machines, code and language” (186). As products of their era, *House of Leaves* along with the other novels of this study highlight significant issues of our age such as authorship, the reading process and the text as a site of performance for authors and readers in creating meaning.

All three of these critical approaches to *House of Leaves*, thematic readings, postmodernist approaches and the digital influence illuminate certain issues in the text, both in content and in form. There have been studies that touched upon the issue of space while analyzing thematic and formal elements. However, the idea of space and spatiality in the novel has not been covered in detail yet. This chapter aims at filling this gap in the critical approaches to the novel and analyzing the concept of space and spatiality on three different levels: the structural space, the narrative space and the material space built by postmodernist, hypertextual and material elements.

The first category of space in the novel is formed via spatial form and it is the structural space of the novel which is informed by postmodern narrative elements like self-reflexivity, fragmentation, and plurality of narrative voices and hypertext. The narrative space, which is the second category of analysis, is occupied by a strange and frightening house which happens to be bigger inside than it is on the outside. This house bears postmodern and deconstructive characteristics. The spatial extension of the text or material space is the third space and it becomes a metaphorical component to narrative and structural spaces of the novel. The material space is also shaped by hypertext and visual elements. These three levels of space are interconnected and they comment on and enrich one another. Focusing on the postmodernist, hypertextual and material characteristics of these spaces will illustrate that they are condensations of the plural, fragmented and disorienting postmodernist space and post-postmodern space that is being reshaped by the virtual space of the digital world.

1.1. STRUCTURAL SPACE: POSTMODERN NARRATIVE ELEMENTS AND HYPERTEXT

Classified both as a horror story by the critics and a love story by its own author, *House of Leaves* starts with the first person narration of Johnny Truant, one of the three major characters in the novel. Truant is in his thirties, lives in Los Angeles and works at a tattoo parlor. He is adrift in night life, drugs and sex. He has written poems and has an interest in literature, which causes him to edit the notes he finds in a dead man's house. This dead man is Zampanò and he has written extensively on a film called *The Navidson Record* by drawing on a variety of secondary sources ranging from Homer to Jacques Derrida along with a number of real and faux critics.

From these writings, Truant learns about *The Navidson Record*, a documentary film about Will Navidson and his family and their experiences in a house on Ash Tree Lane in Virginia where Will and his wife Karen have recently moved to mend their relationship. Having won the Pulitzer prize with his photograph of a dying Sudanese girl with a vulture lurking behind her, Will Navidson records their experiences in their new house which is, as they happen to find out, bigger inside than it is on the outside. Appalled by this strangeness, Navidson begins his search and shoots scenes from the house and the hallway which appears in their living room. The hallway leads to a labyrinthine darkness which causes Navidson to hire a group of discoverers to search inside the darkness. The house gets stranger as time passes, the dark labyrinth inside the house is not a fixed one and keeps changing shape, absorbs sound, light, and objects, sometimes collapses and turns into an abyss, growls and swallows people. Their explorations in this strange house turn out to be a tragedy killing two of the explorers and Will's brother Tom. What kills these men is not a kind of minotaur as in the Labyrinth on the island of Crete, which is frequently referred to in the novel, but their own fears and anxieties on the face of an endless darkness that keeps on expanding forever.

While editing Zampanò's account, Truant also tells his own story through footnotes. The readers observe how his life starts to change by reading Zampanò's account as well as his

traumatic childhood and his relation with his psychologically disturbed mother Pelefinia, which are disclosed through the letters in one of the Appendixes of *House of Leaves*. While he is still editing Zampanò's notes, Johnny goes to Virginia from Los Angeles to see if the house in *The Navidson Record* really exists. Unable to find either Ash Tree Lane (499) or the Navidson house, he takes some pictures of the houses he sees there which are given in the Appendixes (figure 4). Johnny finally manages to edit and compile Zampanò's notes and enables the publication of the book named *House of Leaves* with the help of some editors who also intrude in the narrative from time to time.

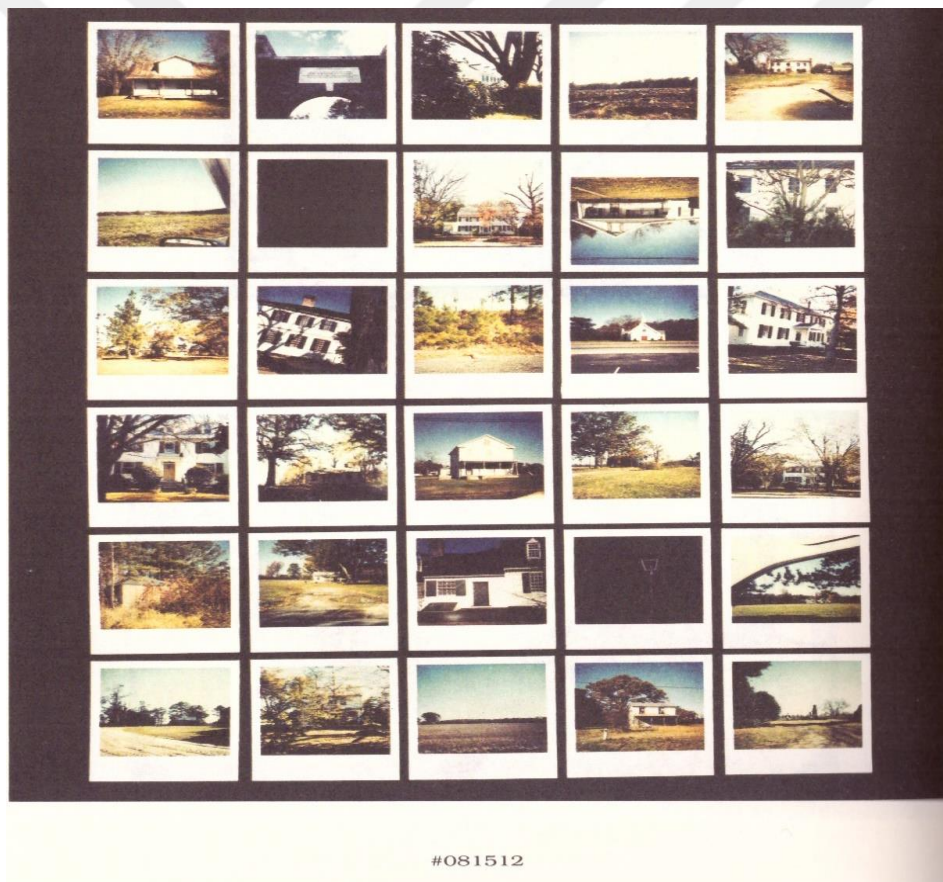


Fig. 4. Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (Pantheon Books, 2000), p. 572.

In the last sections of the novel, the Navidson family is in a new house after one and a half years. Although they have left the house on Ash Tree Lane, “they will never be able to leave the memory of that place” (526). The following sections in the book include Exhibits and Appendixes including some of Zampanò's notes (figures 5 and 6), some pictures and

photographs Truant finds at Zampanò's house, Truant's poems, the photographs he took in Virginia, art works and collages that have been inspired by the Navidson house, Pelefinà's letters, and various literary quotes in various languages.

However, as stated in the beginning of the novel, the script named *The Navidson Record* does not exist even within the world of the novel. The novel plays with the ideas of fictionality and reality on many instances. After doing research, Truant sees that nobody has ever heard of either a man named Navidson or a film by him. It turns out that *The Navidson Record* which employs imagery details like "light, space, shape, line . . . color . . . [and] composition" (xxi), is all made up by Zampanò who was as "blind as a bat" (Danielewski xxi). Zampanò is reminiscent of the Argentinian author Jorge Luis Borges became blind in the later years of his life. Danielewski pays homage to Borges with his narrative techniques as well as his characters.

Like the film mentioned in *The Navidson Record*, some of the secondary sources put by Zampanò into the script do not exist, there are "false quotes or invented sources" (xx). Although it is fictional and the readers know that the film is another fictional work within the fictional world of the novel, *The Navidson Record* still occupies an important place within *House of Leaves*. As Truant states, "[T]he irony is, it makes no difference that the documentary at the heart of this book is fiction. Zampano knew from the get go that what's real or isn't real doesn't matter here. The consequences are the same" (xx). The blending of fact and fiction and the acceptance of its inevitability in the novel exemplify the postmodern and poststructuralist sensibilities about the role of the language. Poststructuralism posits that no reality can be constructed outside the borders of language, and everything created through language is bound to be fictional in one way or another.

As a work of the late postmodern period and early digital era, *House of Leaves* uses spatial form to the fullest with postmodern elements and hypertextual form. First of all, it is a polyphonic novel in which multiple narrative voices are given synchronically through footnotes. The readers enter into the fictional space of the novel through Truant's first person narration and move forward with Zampano's critical reading of the film *The*

Navidson Record. While Zampanò's work is given on the top sections of the page, Zampanò's footnotes as well as Truant's are given at the bottom of the page. With the usage of a substantial body of footnotes, *House of Leaves* is likened to Vladimir Nabakov's 1962 novel *Pale Fire* where footnotes or endnotes to a poem make up a second narrative. American writers such as William H. Gass in his novel *Willie Masters' Lonesome Wife* (1968)¹³, David Foster Wallace in his novel *Infinite Jest* (1996), Juno Díaz in his *The Brief, Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007) (Clark) and Paul Auster in his novel *Oracle Night* (2003) used footnotes in their fiction as a narrative tool.

As Brianne Bilsky states, the footnotes in the narrative "often traverse several pages and compete with the 'narrative proper' for the reader's attention" (*Revolutionary Leaves* 141). *House of Leaves* uses different fonts in order to identify each voice in the larger narrative. Zampanò's critical work is fittingly given in Times New Roman and Truant intrudes into Zampanò's narrative with an increasing number of footnotes given in Courier by identifying him as "a courier of Zampanò's otherwise dead letters" (Little 195). The Editors also provide additional information in some cases which are given in Bookman type font. Therefore, the use of different fonts informs the reader about "the shifts in narrative voice" (Graulund 383). Despite this differentiation in typology, there are still instances in the novel in which type fonts merge into each other such as "when the checkmark from Johnny's mother appears in the narrative (*House of Leaves* 97), or the SOS in the diegetic level of the expedition into the House permeates Johnny's world (*House of Leaves* 103)" (Huber 126).

These synchronic narratives given on the same page side by side and their intrusion on and taking over each other are examples of postmodern fragmentation because they disrupt the narrative voices. They also break linearity and chronology by forcing the readers to move between different narrative voices. Besides the three main narrative voices, other voices are playfully added to the narrative. In this plural space, it becomes hard to privilege one

¹³ In his book, *Visual Devices of Contemporary Prose Fiction* (2015), the critic Simon Barton refers to the use of footnotes in Gass's novel while analyzing visual characteristics of the novel.

narrative over the other. The use of such multiplicity extends spatial form in the novel. As Bilsky's statement given above shows, there is no "narrative proper" (141) or a major narrative voice which can be taken as the center, as the authority. In other words, there is no master narrative in the novel. Upon being asked about the authenticity of Pelefina's letters in the novel because their topographical design seems artificial, Danielewski asserts that there is nothing authentic or "sacred" about Pelefina's letter or any other text in the novel. This challenge of originality and authenticity is reminiscent of Jean-François Lyotard's definition of incredulity towards master and metanarratives as a dominant sensibility in the postmodern times. In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979), Lyotard puts forward that

[s]implifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. . . . The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements--narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on. Conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valencies specific to its kind. Each of us lives at the intersection of many of these. However, we do not necessarily establish stable language combinations, and the properties of the ones we do establish are not necessarily communicable. (72)

Devoid of its great "functors," narrative along with the meaning it carries are disseminated in language elements in the postmodern world of fragmentation. The grand narratives of the previous eras are now under the attack of unstable and uncommunicable language combinations. These can be the different interpretive activities we impose on texts and narratives actually in a state of not knowing what is real, sacred or grand. Echoing Jacques Derrida's ideas on the deconstruction of the text, and with it, systems of knowledge and belief, Danielewski states

[l]et us say there is no sacred text here. That notion of authenticity or originality is constantly refuted. The novel doesn't allow the reader to ever say, "Oh, I see: this is the authentic, original text, exactly how it looked, what it always had to say." That's the irony of the mother's letters: at first you probably just assume that, okay, this is the real thing, but then the artifice of the way they look starts to undercut everything, so you're not sure. Pretty soon you

begin to notice that at every level in the novel some act of interpretation is going on. The question is, why? Well, there are many reasons, but the most important one is that everything we encounter involves an act of interpretation on our part. . . . In *House of Leaves* you're always encountering texts where some kind of intrusion's taking place. The reason? No one--repeat no one--is ever presented with the sacred truth, in books or in life. And so we must be brave and accept how often we make decisions without knowing everything. ("Haunted House")

In self-reflexive moments, questions regarding the authenticity of the texts and to what extent the narratives we read have undergone changes and editing in *House of Leaves* are frequently addressed in the novel. Through his characters, Danielewski challenges the assumptions regarding authentic and original texts illustrating that everything the reader regards natural, original or sacred are indeed under the workings of language. One significant example occurs in the section when Truant states that he adds the word "water" to Zampanò's text and changes the wording as "water heater" (12). Here, in a direct address to the reader, Truant admits his intrusion into Zampanò's "original text:" "Now there's an admission, eh? Hey not fair, you cry" (16). In another instance, starting from page 354, some of the footnotes in Zampanò's text are missing and they are given in a "mass of black X's" (376). To footnote 326 that ends with a note of missing information is added another explanatory footnote, this time by the Editors, stating "[c]rossed out with what looked *suspiciously* like black crayon and tar" (My italics 354). Twenty pages later, Truant confesses that he had accidentally spilled black ink on one of the batches of Zampanò's notes and thus lost some of the material including Exhibit 3 (376-379). The suspicion towards authenticity also shows "the problem of determining the extent of the editor's authorial role in delivering a project to publication" (*Little Mourning After* 195). While the Editors are suspicious of Truant's intrusion into Zampanò's narrative, the readers should be suspicious of all levels of narrative and be more concerned with their fictionality.

The relationship between Zampanò and Truant attains a greater significance as Truant goes on to edit Zampanò's notes. Being already dead when the narrative starts, Zampanò exemplifies "the death of the author" in a literal sense. Now that he does not exist, his text

is to be read, edited, and rewritten by Truant. As Roland Barthes maintains in his essay “The Death of the Author” (1967), during the process of writing “the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his death, writing begins” (142). In *House of Leaves*, since the writer Zampanò is already dead and his voice is lost, a new writing process is initiated by Truant. Truant becomes the modern scriptor whom Barthes introduces as an alternative to the author. “The modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text,” Barthes states, and s/he starts to “perform” the role of scribbling with a consciousness of the language he is using and without having a concern for originality (145-146). The novel deliberately starts with Truant finding Zampanò’s text, and the readers get to know Truant only through his activity of scribbling both Zampanò’s and his own text.

As Zampanò analyzes *The Navidson Record*, he presents a number of critics and quotes from their work. He creates an intertextual work drawing on a number of real and fake critics. Critical views on architecture, literature, Greek mythology, poststructuralist theory are some of the topics that can be found in the novel. Readings about the house and its influence on the characters in the novel, discussions of photography and film, and potential philosophical referents are already within Zampanò’s text. Even famous philosophers, critics and writers such as Jacques Derrida, Harold Bloom, Paul Auster are interviewed about the house and its meaning. Psychoanalytic readings of the characters like Navidson, his wife Karen and other minor characters are also given within the novel showing the reader how their past lives are under critical examination as well. This encyclopedic range of topics and readings turn *House of Leaves* into a treatise on critical theory.

Providing almost all possible critical readings within its fictional and narrative space, the novel not only anticipates external reading tendencies but also becomes a text about its own textuality. Self-reflexivity reminds the reader that what he/she is reading is a text. This act of reading and interpreting the events within the scope of the novel is another way of enriching the text with multiple layers and viewpoints, discrediting as well as mocking outside over-interpretive activities. This metafictional tendency in fiction is called “overinterpretation,” (Malmgren 192) which is a tool for the author to preempt any outside

critical reading. In his book *Fictional Space in the Modernist and Postmodernist American Novel*, the critic Carl D. Malmgren maintains that

contemporary metafiction is aware of the prestige accorded the critical activity and devotes some of its energies to debunking critical authority. One way to accomplish this end may be termed overinterpretation. The metafictionist incorporates within his fictional space so much evidence pointing at a particular reading that the reading is paradoxically invalidated; it becomes gratuitous, superfluous, or too easy. . . . The systematic deployment of such elements makes for a text that resists, defies, or ridicules interpretive activity. (192-194)

House of Leaves incorporates and problematizes many critical approaches already within its scope. Therefore, it can be said that most of the approaches have already been predicted by Danielewski. Critical theory on textuality, writing, and editing has an important place in *House of Leaves*. These discussions have been masterfully given through the three main characters; Truant, Zampanò, and Will Navidson. Their narratives have been embedded within each other's and in the frames of stories, the characters are dealing with the problems of textual construction, textual analysis, and representation. The device of reframing halts linear narrative progression and instead provides a cyclical or a dispersed narrative structure. The novel highlights not the successive events taking place in the lives of the characters but the processes of reading, writing and creating they are going through.

After Truant finds Zampanò's notes, he becomes not only a reader and editor of his notes but also the mediator who brings the story of Navidson to the reader. Zampanò is the critic analyzing a film and making references to numerous critical sources, and Navidson is the chronicler of his experiences in the house with his camera. Each character not only reads one another's stories in the novel but also writes on what they are reading or experiencing. The creation of accounts and stories depends on different texts, whether they are written or visual. For instance, after Truant discovers Zampanò's notes, he tries to arrange them into a coherent whole like a puzzle. In the introduction of *House of Leaves*, Johnny describes Zampanò's notes as dispersed among various pieces of papers, and old napkins, and how within time the notes start to cohere as he reads them. The way Truant describes Zampanò's notes is very illuminating for the reader of *House of Leaves* as the novel itself

branches off into different small narrative units or chunks of texts, or nodes of the hypertext:

As I discovered, there were reams and reams of it. Endless snarls of words, sometimes twisting into meaning, sometimes into nothing at all, frequently breaking apart, always branching off into other pieces I'd come across later—on old napkins, the tattered edges of an envelope, once even on the back of a postage stamp; everything and anything but empty; each fragment completely covered with the creep of years amended; handwritten, typed; legible, illegible; impenetrable, lucid; torn, stained, scotch taped; some bits crisp and clean, others faded, burnt or folded and refolded so many times the creases have obliterated whole passages of god knows what—sense? . . . At first only curiosity drove me from one phrase to the next. Often a few days would pass before I'd pick up another mauled scrap, maybe even a week, but still I returned, for ten minutes, grazing over the scenes, the names, small connections started to form, minor patterns evolving in those spare slivers of time. (xvii- xviii)

Framing and reframing in *House of Leaves* act as dominant modes of self-consciousness and self-reflexiveness, turning the text into a novel-in-the-making, in other words, a meta-novel. Framing functions both to enrich the various spaces presented in the novel making it a “heteroglossia” as referred to by Mikhail Bakhtin (196) where different voices and discourses come together and remind the readers of the fictionality and textuality of what they are reading. Halting the linear progression of narratives, framing and the constant transitions between the frames create a spatially organized narrative structure.

House of Leaves constantly plays with the idea of textuality and fictionality with postmodern narrative elements. The Chinese box embedded narratives of Truant, Zampanò and Navidson act as metafictional devices. Examples throughout the novel show that all the stories recounted are somehow changed, played upon or fictionalized. Not one story is to be relied on during the reading process, and almost all of the narrator characters are unreliable. Truant proves to be an unreliable narrator, sometimes confessing that he is changing Zampanò's story, and sometimes writing during his panic attacks and hallucinations which distort the sequence of events. In spite of his blindness, Zampanò writes about a visual text and he draws on a number of critical sources that do not exist in

the fictional world of the novel. The readers encounter crucial moments in the novel when the characters confess that they are created with the stories they are reading and writing.

While Truant is reading *The Navidson Record*, he is not only saving Zampanò's and Navidson's stories from perishing, he is also so immersed in their stories that he is searching for answers to his personal and existential problems. Truant explains how he needs the narrative he is reading and editing. Referring to *The Navidson Record* he states

needing me now like a child, depending on me despite its age. After all, I'm its source, the one who feeds it, nurses it back to health—but not life, I fear bones of bond paper, transfusions of ink, genetic encryption in Xerox; monstrous, maybe inaccurate correlates, but nonetheless there. And necessary to animate it all? For is that not an ultimate, the ultimate goal? Not some heaven sent blast of electricity but me, and not me unto me, but me unto it, if those two things are really at all different, which is still to say—to state the obvious—without me it would perish. (326)

Zampanò's text needs Truant in order to exist and to be read by other people. However, as Truant states a couple of sentences later, he is also in need of the text to exist. He is not only creating the story, but is also being created by the text which exemplifies the tenet of postmodernist literature that there is nothing that could be discussed outside the borders of language and textuality:

More and more often, I've been overcome by the strangest feeling that I've gotten it all turned around by which I mean to say—to state the not-so-obvious—without it I would perish. 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 Zampanò's work implies something that just can't be, namely that this thing has created me; not me unto it, not now it unto me, where I am nothing more than the matter of some other voice, intruding through the folds of what even now lies there agape, possessing me with histories I should never recognize as my own; inventing me, defining me, directing me until finally every association I can claim as my own. (326)

Truant is reading and editing *The Navidson Record*, a text that needs him in order to exist. This moment of Truant's stating the "obvious," that without him the text would not exist reflects an understanding that values the reader's role in the production of a text. His

relationship to the text, that he needs it as the text needs him, suggests a larger understanding: when the reader does not choose to read a text, it will perish, it would not exist. After all, it is not only the writer who creates a work, but also the reader who recreates a text by reading and interpreting it. The act of recreation begins when s/he chooses to read a particular text. As Steven Belletto remarks in his article, “Danielewski creates a novel in which meaning is always tied to various kinds of interpretation, and in which scholarly interpretation gets special consideration because of its self-awareness” (101). The fact that the novel incorporates not a single narrator but various narrators, Truant, Navidson and Zampanò being the major ones, illustrates that the texts are not created by authors who had authority over them, but by different readers and interpreters.

The recursive narrative device of multiple narratives embedded in each other constructs a web of stories that are connected to each other, although these narratives do not occupy the same narrative levels in the novel. As Brian McHale suggests in his book *Postmodernist Fiction*, when embedded worlds do not occupy the same narrative and fictional worlds, they destabilize each other’s ontological status and create numerous fictional worlds. Because these worlds create a cyclical narrative structure rather than a linear one, embedded narratives construct a spatial plane of narration. There are two major examples in the novel that show how embedded narratives create narrative loops and bring “the possibility of infinite regress” (McHale 114).

During Exploration #5 in the labyrinthine house, Will Navidson is alone and after long hours and even days of exploring nothing in the house, he runs out of batteries, food and supplies. At a moment when he decides to take a rest in his sleeping bag, he starts to read a book. “Taking a tiny sip of water and burying himself deeper in his sleeping bag, he turns his attention to the last possible activity, the only book in his possession: *House of Leaves*” (Danielewski 465). As Navidson reads *House of Leaves* in the labyrinthine house with the light of the matches, he runs out of them. In order to continue reading he has to burn the pages he has already finished from the book:

As Navidson reports, he soon begins falling behind. Perhaps his reading slows or the paper burns unevenly or he has bungled the lightning of the next page. Or maybe the words in the book have been arranged in such a way as to make them practically impossible to read. Whatever the reason, Navidson is forced to light the cover of the book as well as the spine. He tries to read faster, inevitably loses some of the text, frequently burns his fingers. . . . First, he reads a few lines by match light and then as the heat bites his fingertips he applies the flame to the page. Here then is one end: a final act of reading, a final act of consumption. And as the fire rapidly devours the paper, Navidson's eyes frantically sweep down over the text, keeping just ahead of the necessary immolation, until as he reaches the last few words, flames lick around his hands, ash peels off into the surrounding emptiness, and then as the fire retreats, dimming, its light suddenly spent, the book is gone leaving nothing behind but invisible traces already dismantled in the dark. (Danielewski 467)

The narrative threads, in which Truant is reading and editing the critical study on *The Navidson Record* where Navidson reads the book Truant is editing, overlap and render the borders of narrative frames ambiguous and they create infinite regress. By employing the strategy of recursiveness,¹⁴ *House of Leaves* shows that it is a nested chain of representations, a critical account on a film that is about a house, and within the house there is a book called *House of Leaves*. This creates a regressive structural narration, or as McHale defines a "heterarchy:"

Like M. C. Escher's famous lithograph of Drawing Hands (1948), in which a left hand draws a right hand while at the same time the right draws the left . . . A heterarchy is a multi-level structure in which there is no single "highest level." This means, in the case of a literary text, that it is impossible to determine who is the author of whom, or, to put it slightly differently, which narrative level is hierarchically superior, which subordinate. (McHale 120)

The second example of the narrative looping happens when Truant stops at a bar in Flagstaff, Arizona after his trip to Virginia to find the house in *The Navidson Record*. At a bar, while he listens to a music band, he hears a song with the lyrics "I live at the end of a Five and a Half Minute Hallway" (Danielewski 512). Since the Five and a Half Minutes

¹⁴ By employing recursiveness through the use of nested narratives, critical readings within the novel, or mentioning the title of the novel or the name of the author within the novel, the postmodernist novel blurs the boundaries between fiction and fact. This strategy destabilizes the world created by fiction, and it becomes difficult to notice for the reader where the boundaries of fiction introduce into the real world occupied by the writer and her/himself. By constantly referring to the novel within its own fictional world, recursiveness becomes a metafictional tool to remind the fictionality of the text.

Hallway is part of *The Navidson Record*, Truant is surprised by the possibility that there are other people who also know about the Navidson house. He approaches the band and inquires about the song and the film called *the Five and a Half Minutes Hallway* within *The Navidson Record*. What he comes across there once more destabilizes the narrative sequence and creates a cyclical structure. The drummer of the band says that the lyrics of the song “were inspired by a book he’d found on the Internet quite some time ago” (Danielewski 513) and he gives some papers to Truant:

“Take a look for yourself,” he said, handing me a brick of tattered paper. “But be careful,” he added in a conspiratorial whisper. “It’ll change your life.”

Here’s what the title page said:

House of Leaves

by Zampanò

with introduction and

notes by Johnny Truant

Circle Round A Stone Publication

First Edition

(Danielewski 513)

Truant’s discovery of the book he is still editing and keeping in his trunk once again blurs the narrative frames and introduces ambiguity. Truant is surprised by the fact that he has become a character in the story he is editing. An idea he was entertaining himself which seems to have become real. As the band members inform him, the book *House of Leaves* has been circulating on the Internet for a while and they met people in different states who happened to have read the book and talked to them after they played that specific song. After glancing over the pages they gave him, he reads them:

I thumbed through the pages, virtually every one marked, stained and red-lined with inquiring and I thought frequently inspired comments. In a few of the

margins, there were even some pretty stunning personal riffs about the lives of the musicians themselves. I was amazed and shocked and suddenly very uncertain about what I had done. I didn't know whether to feel angry for being so out of the loop or sad for having done something I didn't entirely understand or maybe just happy about it all. There's no question I cherished the substance of those pages, however imperfect, however, incomplete. Though in that respect they were absolutely complete, every error and unfinished gesture and all that inaudible discourse, preserved and intact. Here now, resting in the palms of my hands, an echo from across the years. (514)

Spatial form has been developed and used in *House of Leaves* with the postmodern narrative elements. In this structural space, the narratives are non-chronological and non-linear. The metaphor of a spiral is very revealing in understanding the positioning of embedded narratives that are created ad infinitum. Spatiality is further developed in *House of Leaves* with hypertextual design. As Jay David Bolter and Marie Laure Ryan maintain, the most recent type of spatial form is hypertext as it breaks down chronology and linearity with links between narrative units or nodes.

Hypertext creates a spatial platform in *House of Leaves* which necessitates the reader to move back and forth among the pages to follow the footnotes and thus the narrative threads. As has been stated before, Truant's account is given in footnotes at the bottom of the pages. There are also three different sets of footnotes: footnotes added by Truant to his own text, footnotes added by Zampanò to his critical account, footnotes added by the Editors to Truant's text. The footnotes function as the major linking mechanism in *House of Leaves*. As Theodore H. Nelson describes in his book *Literary Machines*, hypertext is a non-sequential layout in which "pieces of writing [are] connected by lines" (15). Hypertext not only includes chunks of written texts but also visual and audial media connected to the written text. Because of the rich media it includes, hypertext can also be called hypermedia (Ladow 3).

In this respect, *House of Leaves* is both hypertext and hypermedia since the footnotes are connected to written texts as well as to visual media such as pictures, photographs and collages (figures 4, 5, 6, and 10). For instance, Footnote 70 on page 59 sends the reader to the Exhibit 6 on page 535. Then Exhibit Six sends the reader to Appendix II-c which starts

on page 548. In this appendix, there are pictures of Zampanò's original manuscript, pictures of papers on which he wrote pieces of *The Navidson Record* (as seen in figures 5 and 6). Such examples which necessitate the reader to navigate through the text abound throughout *House of Leaves*. This navigation, however, does not always reach anywhere. Some of the footnotes to footnotes are reported missing, and in those cases, hypertext in the novel can be said to reach nowhere which echoes the futile search of the explorers within the labyrinthine house of Navidsons. This shows that in *House of Leaves* there is no linear progression that the reader can reach with hypertext, instead there is a synchronicity of narrative voices which should be heard simultaneously with all the components of compound hypertext as defined by Nelson.¹⁵ As Katherine Hayles comments, narrative multiplicity in *House of Leaves* "is indicated through spatial form" (794) enabled by hypertext. Such a design through hypertext creates a "simultaneity" of voices through "spatial discontinuity:"

Rather than a spatially continuous narrative in which different voices speak in turn, as when dialogue is indicated by paragraph breaks in a realistic novel, *House of Leaves* creates spatially distinct narratives with multiple cross connections, as if multiple voices were speaking simultaneously. Instead of temporal sequence indicated by spatial continuity, *House of Leaves* uses spatial discontinuity to indicate temporal simultaneity. ("Saving the Subject" 794-795)

Without a hypertextual design, it would have been almost impossible for Danielewski to sustain the multiplicity of narrative voices synchronic. In this respect, the form of the novel can be said to respond to its content. Hypertextual links also enable intermediality with the inclusion of visual media as well as intertextuality with the inclusion of numerous texts, lists and quotations within the novel. Danielewski uses most of the characteristics of hypertext in the printed book as listed by George Landow in his book *Hypertext 3.0*. These characteristics of hypertext are "non- or multilinearity, its multivocality, and its inevitable blending of media and modes, particularly its tendency to marry the visual and the verbal" (220). If Danielewski had not used hypertext, he would not have been able to create such a textual variety by extending spatial form as much as he could.

¹⁵ Ted Nelson's compound hypertext is mentioned in the Introduction.

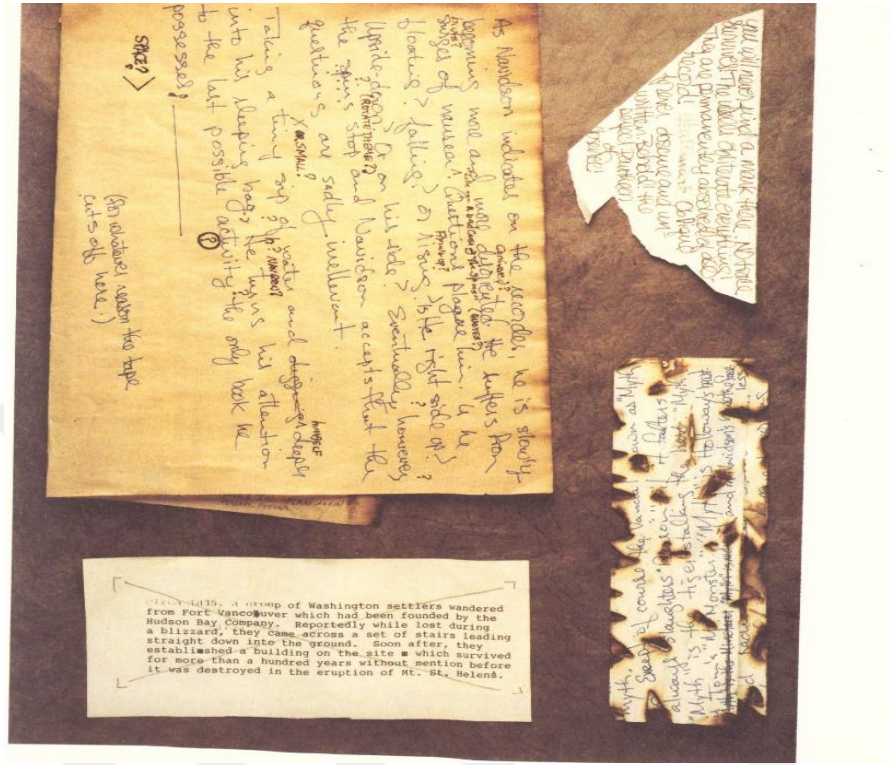


Fig. 6. Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (Pantheon Books, 2000), p. 551.

1.2. NARRATIVE SPACE: THE HOUSE AND DECONSTRUCTIVE ELEMENTS

The labyrinthine house in *House of Leaves* is treated as a character and indeed it has a more significant place than most of the characters in the novel. As narrative space can have a wide range of elements and meanings, the focus in this section will be on the labyrinthine Navidson House since it has a special importance in the novel. If there was a center, the center of *House of Leaves* would be the Navidson house that forever keeps on shifting. However, as post-structuralist theory and deconstruction maintain, one cannot talk of a definite and stable center in the issues constructed through language.

As his criticism of *The Navidson Record* shows, Zampanò is well informed in contemporary critical debates on deconstruction. He has a number of people reading to him as he cannot read and write on his own due to his blindness. From his journals, which are given in one of the appendixes, it is stated that he desperately wants to read Derrida's work *Glas* but the libraries from which he requests the book do not send it to him. He analyzes the house from different points of view and quotes from Heidegger. He reads the house as

the crystallization of Heidegger's concept of "unheimlich" or the uncanny which he discusses in his book *Sein und Zeit*. At another instance, he quotes from Derrida's famous essay entitled "Structure, Sign and Play in the Discourse of Human Sciences." The critical consciousness Zampanò has towards the material he is writing on guides the readers to understand that the house is a product of deconstructive logic and architecture, as the names Heidegger and Derrida suggest.

After the Navidson family comes back to their house in Virginia from Seattle where they went for a short period of time, they realize that there is something strange in the house. The book shelf they placed in one of the rooms has fallen because the distance between the walls of the room has changed. The family later comes across a new door in their living room which opens into a dark hallway. As they explore further, they find out that the house measures bigger inside than it does on the outside. This impossibility ignites a curiosity in Navidson who becomes the most recent owner of the house after many years since the house was built in 1720. As Zampanò suggests, it is not a coincidence that this person is Navidson

with a camera and a zest for the dangerous [who] would show up at this Mead Hall and confront the terror at the door. . . . Considering his own history, the talent and emotional background only Navidson could have gone as deep as he did and have successfully brought that vision back" (21-23).

Given this heroic task of going to the house and bringing a vision back like Odysseus descending into the underworld—a comparison echoed in the novel—Navidson ends up coming back without any vision but the nothingness he faces on and on in the house.

The spatial form that is discussed in the first section of the chapter as discontinuous and dispersed is epitomized on the fictional level with the Navidson house. Like the form of the novel which is spatially dispersed, the house on Ash Tree Lane rejects conventional definitions of architecture and space. The labyrinth within the Navidson house keeps growing day by day until one day it turns into a huge gap and swallows Will Navidson's brother Tom. The house is not only a labyrinth, but a shifting structure in which one cannot gain any sense of perspective and an endless darkness in which the laws of physics are not

valid. For example, it cannot be inhabited by animals because it throws them out or echoes cannot be heard in it although it is empty (50). The house is described as a “trope for the unlimited and the unknowable” (Zampanò 6), “a strange spatial violation” (24), as “destroy[ing] any sense of security of well-being” (28), as a “spatial disparity” and even “a goddamn spatial rape” (55).

As the texts in *House of Leaves* branch off with narrative voices and footnotes, the labyrinth branches off too, and the explorers find an endless series of doors and rooms with nothing inside them. Marie-Laure Ryan views the novel as a “rare example of a narrative that gives a central role to a spatially impossible object” (*Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature* 372). This impossible space is reminiscent of the ideas on deconstruction in general and deconstructive architecture in particular. Similarly, the house is viewed as “a figure of impossibility” by Will Slocombe as he states in his article “Nihilism and the House that Jacques Built.” He goes on by defining the house as “a nihilistic void that the text, through language, continually pretends is not there” (100). This impossible labyrinthine house is indeed an example of deconstructive architecture and can be quite fittingly understood through the theories of deconstructive architecture.

In his book *Beginning Postmodernism*, Tim Woods states that deconstructivist architecture “has openly challenged the humanist construction of space, or the way in which conceptions of space have relied upon unities and harmonies established in reason, representation and truth” (104). It is a kind of architecture that has been influenced by the post-structuralist views on language and it “adopts an aesthetic of fragmentation” (104) as a sub-branch of postmodern architecture. Forever shifting and expanding, the Navidson house breaks down unities that one expects to see in such a building and it resists representation as deconstructivist architecture aims. According to Danielewski, “[r]esistance to representation . . . is not the only difficulty posed by those replicating chambers and corridors. . . . [T]he whole house defies any normal means of determining direction” (90). Without offering a sense of direction, and instead offering a sense of an endless repetition, the house makes the explorers get lost although they enter the house fully equipped.

Deconstructive architecture has a “close theoretical engagement with poststructuralist theories of language” and the practice of applying them to architecture is called “archetexture” (Woods 104). The characteristics of the labyrinthine house can be called “archetexture” because the house in the novel is not only treated as a character but it is also a spatial metaphor for the workings of verbal, visual and hypertextual narrative elements. Within *The Navidson Record*, Will Navidson’s wife Karen also makes a film called “A Partial Transcript of What Some Have Thought” in which she interviews a number of critics, writers and even magicians including Philip K. Dick, William Gibson, Douglas R. Hofstadter, Harold Bloom, Jacques Derrida, Stephen King, Stanley Kubrick, Hunter S. Thompson and David Copperfield along with other faux names about the meaning of the Navidson house. Their comments on the house are significant in highlighting deconstructive elements of this space. While they define the house as “resist[ing] interpretation” (Danielewski 356), “a hopeless, structural impossibility” (Danielewski 361), the magician David Copperfield defines it as “a riddle” (Danielewski 364). The appearance of Derrida in Karen’s interview is also significant because, along with other names, his views on verbal as well as architectural texts and seeing “the question of architecture as a possibility of thought” (Derrida 319) prepare a rich ground and a nesting space for Danielewski to situate his novel.

The characters in *House of Leaves*, especially the ones in *The Navidson Record*, try to understand the meaning of such an uninhabitable house. Their explorations do not yield any information as they are lost within the labyrinthine house. Two of the explorers are killed in the labyrinth by another explorer Halloway. A topic that has been frequently referred to in Zampanò’s account is that the experience of the characters who have been in the house are different from each other. Each character who has been in the labyrinthine house subjectively defines its space. For example, while in the labyrinth, Halloway yields to his fears and his psychological demons, and kills another explorer. Navidson’s final exploration in the house is viewed by one of the critics in Zampanò’s text as an “attempt to territorialize and thus preside over that virtually unfathomable space” (Danielewski 386).

Drawing on critical sources, Zampanò thinks that the descriptions of the house change according to the “psychology of anyone who enters it:”

Dr. Haugeland asserts that the extraordinary absence of sensory information forces the individual to manufacture his or her own data. Ruby Dahl, in her stupendous study of space, calls the house on Ash Tree Lane “a solipsistic heightener,” arguing that “the house, the halls, and the rooms all become the self—collapsing, expanding, tilting, closing, but always in perfect relation to the mental state of the individual.” (165)

The subjective interpretation of the spatial characteristics of the house is similar to interpreting the labyrinthine text of *House of Leaves* by different readers. There are instances in the novel where the experience of reading the novel *House of Leaves* is mirrored by the characters who venture into the labyrinthine space. While the explorers are trying to make sense of the space of the house, the readers of the novel are trying to bring pieces of texts together and to navigate through the text. Being the reader within the story and “riddling through Zampanò’s bits” (Danielewski 35), Truant represents the readers who riddle through Danielewski’s hypertextual web. He is also like the explorers in the labyrinthine house. Each explorer/reader has to navigate through the text, whether it is a verbal/visual or an architectural one. Textuality inherent in architecture and spatiality inherent in language and text are juxtaposed in *House of Leaves* to show their influence on each other. In his article “Architecture Where the Desire May Live,” Derrida says

what connects deconstruction with writing [is] its spatiality, thinking in terms of a path, of the opening up of a way . . . This writing is truly like a labyrinth since it has neither beginning nor an end. One is always on the move. The opposition between time and space, between the time of speech and the space of the temple or the house has no longer any sense. One lives in writing. Writing is a way of living. (321)

Danielewski succeeds in building the deconstructive labyrinth Derrida mentions above with the spatial form in *House of Leaves*, its experimental and non-linear narration, its structure and characters who live in it and through the acts of writing and reading. The narrative space of the novel does not only remain as a setting but throws a spotlight on the concept of space by making an architectural structure a character occupying a crucial place

in the narrative. Like its structural space, the narrative space of *House of Leaves* is highly conscious of contemporary critical theory and the spatial turn it has introduced.

1.3. MATERIAL SPACE: THE LABYRINTH ON THE PAGE

Upon being asked about the effect of visual culture and representation on *House of Leaves*, Danielewski states that the novel is a genre that offers a wide variety of possibilities for visual representation besides the more accustomed and conventional way of verbal representation. He believes in the “power and flexibility of phrases unfolding on the page” and he uses his words with a consciousness of “their meanings, their sounds, and certainly their visual embodiment” (“Haunted House”). As a result, he does not want to sell the film rights of *House of Leaves*. He stresses that his fiction should be read and interpreted by taking its visual dimensions into account. Therefore, in the novel, he has embarked on using the “the shape and design of text not just to conjure up some static visual impression but use it to further enhance the movement of meaning, theme, and story” (Danielewski).

In this respect, *House of Leaves* can be placed among the works of concrete fiction which use visual writing. It exemplifies the fact that the space of the page is open to visual and material activities such as the use of graphic elements and changes in the topography of the page. *House of Leaves* employs spatial form with postmodern narrative elements and presents a narrative space with deconstructive elements thereby extending its postmodern characteristics further towards deconstruction. It takes the treatment of space to a third level by maintaining a special consciousness of the spatial extension of the text on the page. This third level of spatiality situates the novel in the digital era as a work that is conscious both of the technology of the print book as well as digital writing.

In her book *Electronic Literature*, Katherine Hayles notes that electronic writing has stimulated an “interest in the book as a medium” (20) as can be seen in the works of artists’ books and “experimental practices exploring the potential of the book as an artistic and literary venue” (20). Likewise, Jay David Bolter argues that the influence of digital media is “refashioning the printed book” (*Writing Space* 3). The practices through which the printed book is refashioning itself include “innovative typography” and a “new aesthetics

for book design” (Hayles *Electronic Literature* 159). In this context, she sees *House of Leaves* as an example which mimics the digital text and “intensif[ies] the specificities of print” (Hayles 175) at the same time. In the late age of print,¹⁶ by refashioning itself, *House of Leaves* insists on the book’s role as a powerful medium for conveying certain kinds of narrative which given in different media would not yield the same effects.

By using hypertextuality and materiality, *House of Leaves* builds a labyrinth on the pages of the book which require its readers to navigate through the material space with cuts, jumps, and returns while reading. In other words, Danielewski’s topographical writing entails a topographical reading process. Like the spatial form used in the novel and like the Navidson house, the pages of *House of Leaves* defies notions of linearity, unity and the readers’ sense of reality. This last section focuses on the material space of the novel (spatial extension of the text) with a number of examples from *House of Leaves* which highlight Danielewski’s project of signiconic writing and the remediation of electronic writing by using hypertext.

By now, it is clear that there is a certain correspondence between the spatial narrative elements and the space of the fictional world represented by the Navidson house. This correspondence between the two is further extended to the material space of the book and *House of Leaves* may first seem “unlimited” and “unknowable” (6), adjectives Danielewski uses to describe the Navidson house, to its readers. The visual elements of *House of Leaves* certainly surprise many of its readers on their first encounter with the book. This experience recalls the experience of the characters in the novel who get lost in the infinite space of the labyrinthine house.

¹⁶ Jay David Bolter defines the contemporary age as “the late age of print.” This coinage signals the changing trends in the use of media (*Writing Space 2*) seen in the transition from the printed book to the digital writing systems.

The topographical design becomes complex when different colors are introduced into the text (figure 9). Although the word “house” always appears in blue reminding the reader the color of links on the web (figure 8), as the narrative progresses, the color red appears to mark the text is omitted by Zampanò. In other words, words under erasure¹⁷ appear in red, once again recalling the features of the word processor used in computers (figure 9). Proliferation of visual codes informing topography reach a climax in Chapter Nine while the explorers are in the labyrinth and starting from page 119 (figure 8), a blue framed window appears in the top corner of the page. This window image also appears on the other side of the page this time in reverse mirror image creating an effect of windows opening to the house. From these windows, the readers cannot see anything but long lists of objects which are not in the house. Hayles thinks that the opening of the windows functions as reminders to the readers of their assumptions about the borders of printed pages:

The box calls into question an assumption so commonplace that we are not normally aware of it: book pages are opaque, a property that defines one page as separate from another. Here the back of the page seems to open transparently onto the front, a notion that overruns the boundary between them and constructs the page as a leaky container rather than an unambiguous unit of print. Treating the page as a window can be seen as a way to compensate for the House’s viewless interior. After denying us any transparency through which we can look into or out of the House, the text turns its own material substrate into a window that proposes to bring into view everything not in the house, an enterprise as paradoxical as it is quixotic. (792-793)

¹⁷ These strikethroughs, or words that are crossed out but stay in the text, are “words under erasure,” or “sausage rature,” a term defined by the German philosopher Martin Heidegger to refer to the inability of language to express ideas while it is still the only tool to depend on for communication. Following Heidegger, this writing strategy is later used by Jacques Derrida as a “practice of placing certain verbal signs sous rature, under erasure” (McHale *Postmodernist Fiction* 100). As McHale points out, “Derrida’s purpose in using this typographical sleight-of-hand is, of course, to remind us that certain key concepts in western metaphysics—such as . . . existence and objecthood—continue to be indispensable to philosophical discourse even though that same discourse demonstrates their illegitimacy” (McHale *Postmodernist Fiction* 100).

especially complicated and twisted.¹⁴³

Oddly enough, however, the farther Holloway goes the more infrequently he stops to take samples or mark their path. Obviously deaf to Seneca's words.

Jed is the first to voice some concern over how quickly their team leader is moving: "You know where you're going, Holloway?" But Holloway just scowls and keeps pushing forward, in what appears to be a determined effort to find something, something different, something defining, or at least some kind of indication of an outside-ness to that place. At one point Holloway even succeeds in scratching, stabbing, and ultimately kicking a hole in a wall, only to discover another windowless room with a doorway leading to another hallway spawning yet another endless

series of empty rooms and passageways, all with walls potentially hiding and thus hinting at a possible exterior, though invariably winding up as just another border to another interior. As Gerard Eysenck famously described it: "Insides and in-ness never inside out."¹⁴³

This desire for exteriority is no doubt further amplified by the utter blankness found within. Nothing there provides a reason to linger. In part because not one object, let alone fixture or other manner of finish work has ever 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 . . . the cloathing is neither Woollen, nor linen, nor silk, sattin or velvet: it is drapery: it is nothing more."¹⁴⁵ Such global appraisal seems perfectly suited for Navidson's house which despite its corridors and rooms of various sizes is nothing more than corridors and rooms, even if sometimes, as John Updike once observed in the course of translating the labyrinth: "The galleries seem straight but curve furtively."

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

¹⁴³Aside from the practical aspect of fishing line—a readily available and cheap way to map progress through that complicated maze—there are of course obvious mythological resonances. Minos' daughter, Ariadne, supplied Theseus with a thread which he used to escape the labyrinth. Thread has repeatedly served as a metaphor for an umbilical cord, for life, and for destiny. The Greek Fates (called Moerae) or the Roman Fates (called Fata or Parcae) spun the thread of life and also cut it off. Curiously in Orphic cults, thread symbolized semen.

¹⁴⁴Gerard Eysenck's "Break Through (not a) Breakthrough: Heuristic Hallways In The Holloway Venture." *Proceedings from The Navidson Record Semiotic Conference Tentatively Entitled Three Blind Mice and the Rest As Well*. American Federation of Architects, June 8, 1993. Reprinted in Fisker and Weinberg, 1996.

¹⁴⁵See Joshua Reynolds' *Discourses on Art* (1771) (New York: Collier, 1961).

Fig. 8. Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (Pantheon Books, 2000), p. 119.

In *House of Leaves*, hypertext is structured through footnotes that function as links. This changes the way the material space of the book is used. While the novel abounds with many examples showing the workings of hypertextual linking with footnotes and footnotes to footnotes, there are some footnotes, or links, which appear to be broken in digital terms.

The footnotes send the reader to different pages or different parts on the same page, however, in the case of the broken footnotes/links, the search for finding the footnote and the related information given in that footnote becomes a futile endeavor leading nowhere.

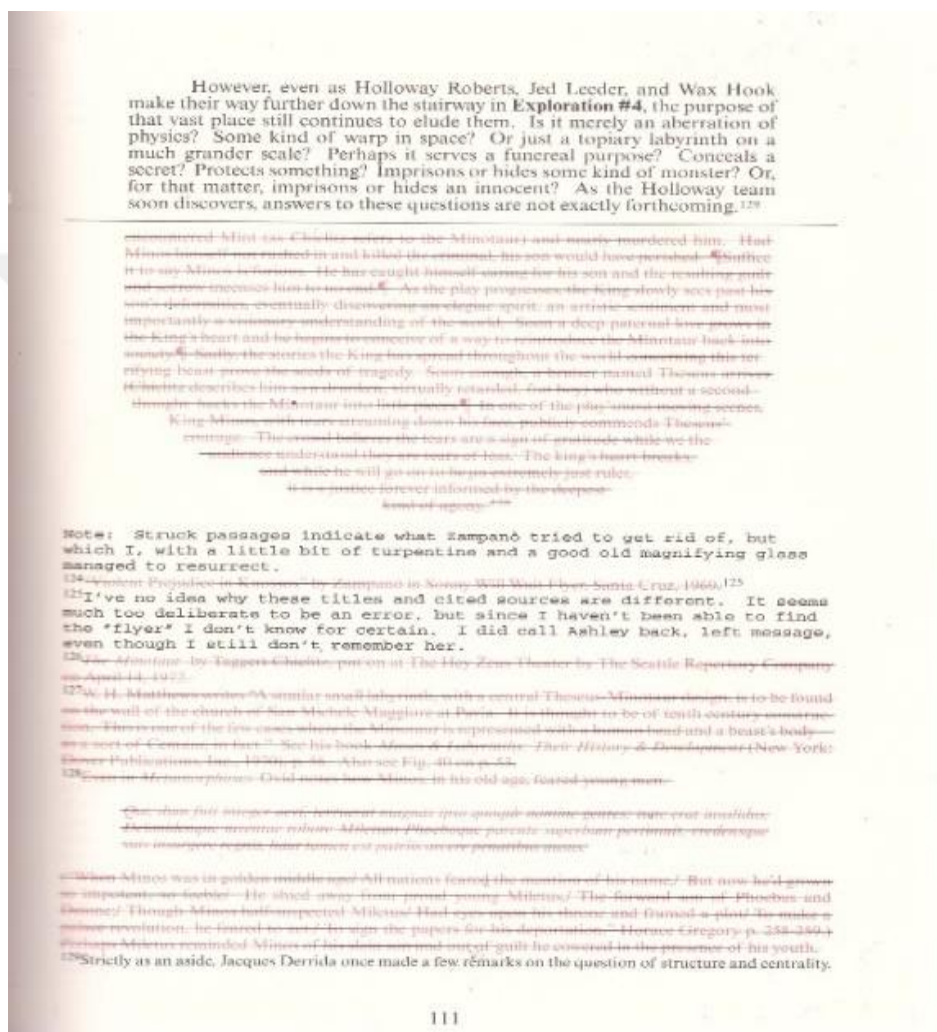


Fig. 9. Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (Pantheon Books, 2000), p. 111.

An important example occurs in footnote 85 which is supposed to present the Reston Interview, one of the important source documents of *The Navidson Record*. Zampanò frequently reminds the reader that many parts of *The Navidson Record* are told by Reston, a friend of Will Navidson who takes part in the explorations in the house. However, when it finally comes to read the Reston Interview in Exhibit Four where the reader is finally

sent, the interview is reported to be missing. While most of the information about *The Navidson Record* is supposed to come from that interview, the navigation through the material labyrinth leads to nothing. Such examples occur throughout the novel turning the reading/navigating process into a humorous play or frustration with the labyrinthine book. While these broken links recall digital hypertext, they also serve as self-reflexive tools to urge the readers to be conscious of the labyrinthine nature of the book and the process of reading it.

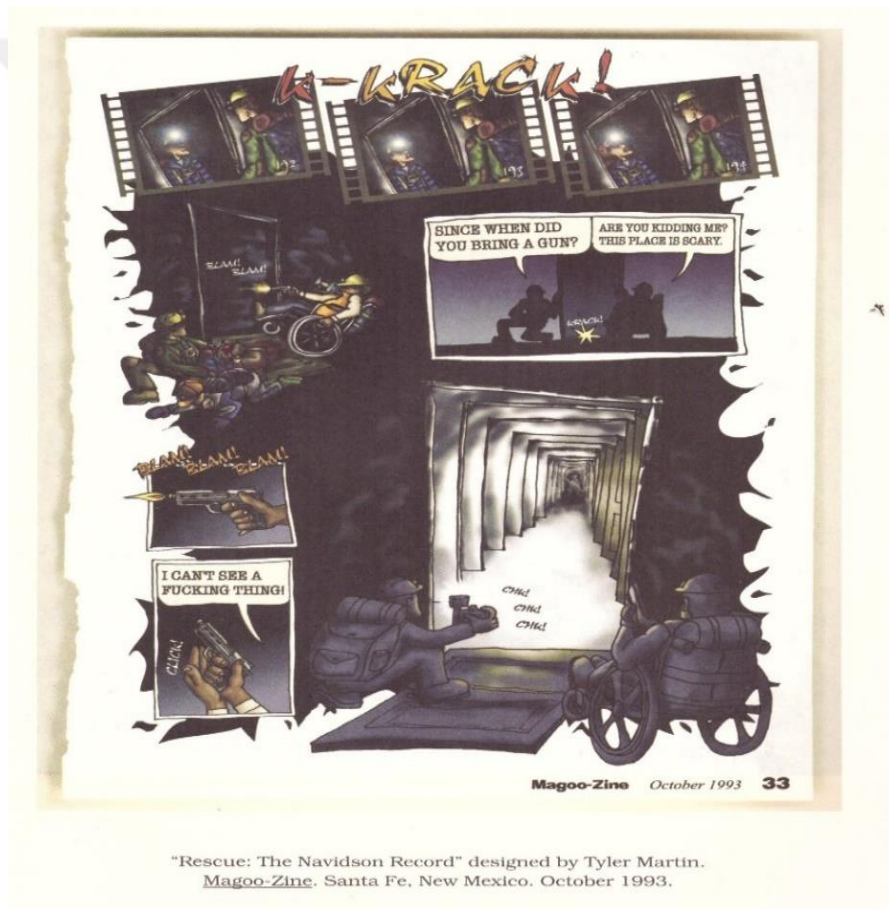


Fig. 10. Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (Pantheon Books, 2000), p. 659.

Digital hypertext becomes hypermedia with the inclusion of images and sound and video clips. In this respect *House of Leaves* can be regarded not only as hypertext but also as an example of hypermedia since it includes pictures and collage works given in the Appendix (figure 10 and 11). The photographs of Zampanò's notes, pictures of art works that have

In the moments when he is in the dark corridors and rooms, the pages of the book visually reflect the emptiness he encounters in the house. The verbal text on these pages are very little and they are designed in such a way that they mimic the movements and position of Navidson in the vast space (figures 12 and 13).

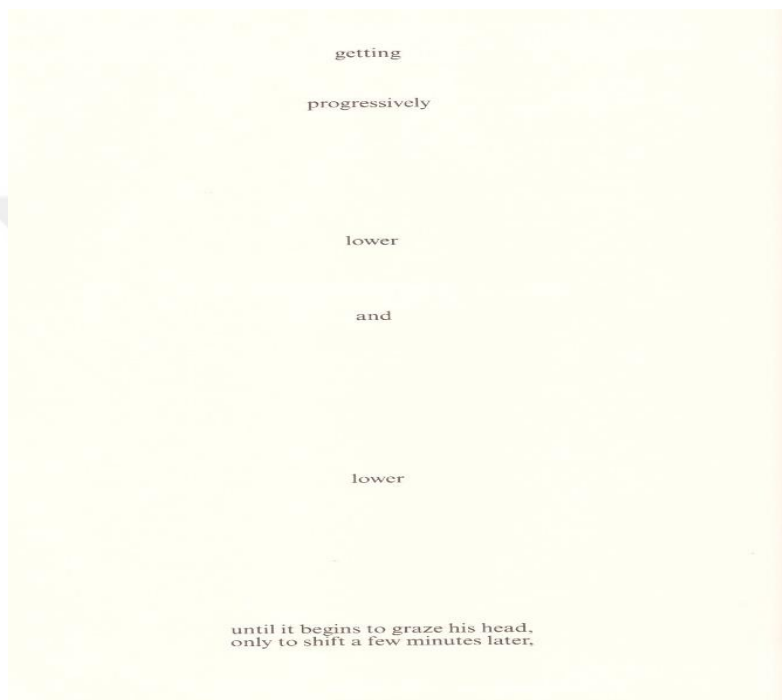


Fig. 12. Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (Pantheon Books, 2000), p. 428.

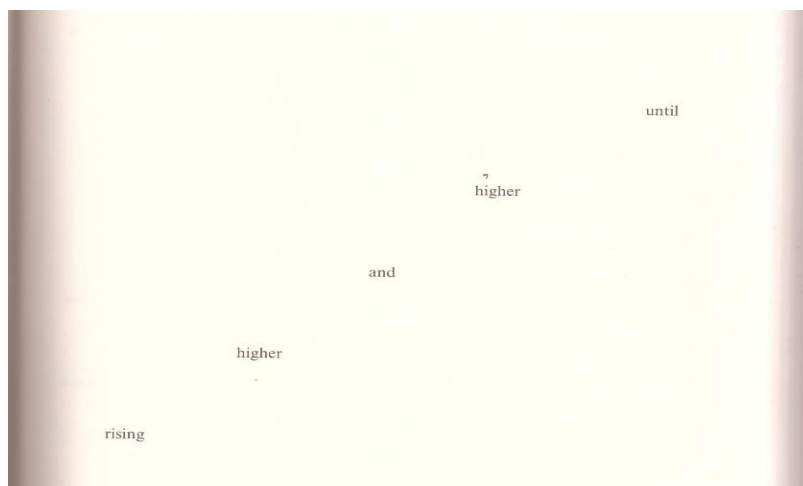


Fig. 13. Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (Pantheon Books, 2000), p. 429.

Danielewski states that his aim is to create a visual effect as one can come across in movies. In this respect, these action-oriented pages are designed with a camera eye as if the readers are watching the pages as a camera follows Navidson. Danielewski explains how his upbringing as the son of a filmmaker as well as his interest in the visual impact of words on the page have found an outlet in *House of Leaves*, a novel that is highly influenced by theories on cinema and literature:

[T]he visual experiments in *House of Leaves* are mostly based on the grammar of film and the enormous foundation of theory established over the last century. There's a complicated craftsmanship involved in controlling the viewer's perception. It's a craft where details count. ("Haunted House")

The influences and grammars of different media on *House of Leaves* exist side by side creating not only a visual but also a dynamic web of interactions. Danielewski's final touches such as the inclusion of an index at the end of *House of Leaves* presents a verbal map of the web of the novel. However, the index is unusual because it does not only present important entries but commonplace words such as "and" (665), "for" (676) and "with" (703). Danielewski plays with and deconstructs all naturalized assumptions of fiction, writing, and reading as well as common assumptions concerning how a novel or an index should be. As Bolter puts forward,

[b]y offering multiplicity in place of a single order of paragraphs and pages, an index transforms a book from a tree into a network. There need not be any privileged element in a network, as there always is in a tree, no single topic that dominates all others. Instead of strict subordination, we have paths that weave their way through a textual space. (34)

By finally adding the image of "Yggdrasil," the tree of life in Norse Mythology, Danielewski completes his multilayered web (figure 14). Yggdrasil is "an eternal green Ash tree" with branches stretching out into the worlds in Norse Mythology connecting them to each other (*Norse Mythology*). This metaphor of the tree is very significant in that it provides the "bauplan" or the "building plan" of *House of Leaves* that Zampanò wished to have previously in the novel. The image of Yggdrasil serves to link the structural, narrative and finally material spaces of the novel discussed in this chapter.

In *House of Leaves*, Danielewski approaches space from different vantage points. A spatial construction, the house is treated as a character in the novel. Moreover, as discussed in these three sections, a consciousness of space dominates the structural, narrative and material planes of the text. Spatial form developed by postmodern narrative elements and hypertext dominates the form of the novel. The narrative space of the novel focuses on the house which shows characteristics of deconstructive architecture. Finally, by extending the spatiality onto the page through visual elements, hypertextual design, and page layouts, Danielewski completes his novel rendering it a concrete spatial object.

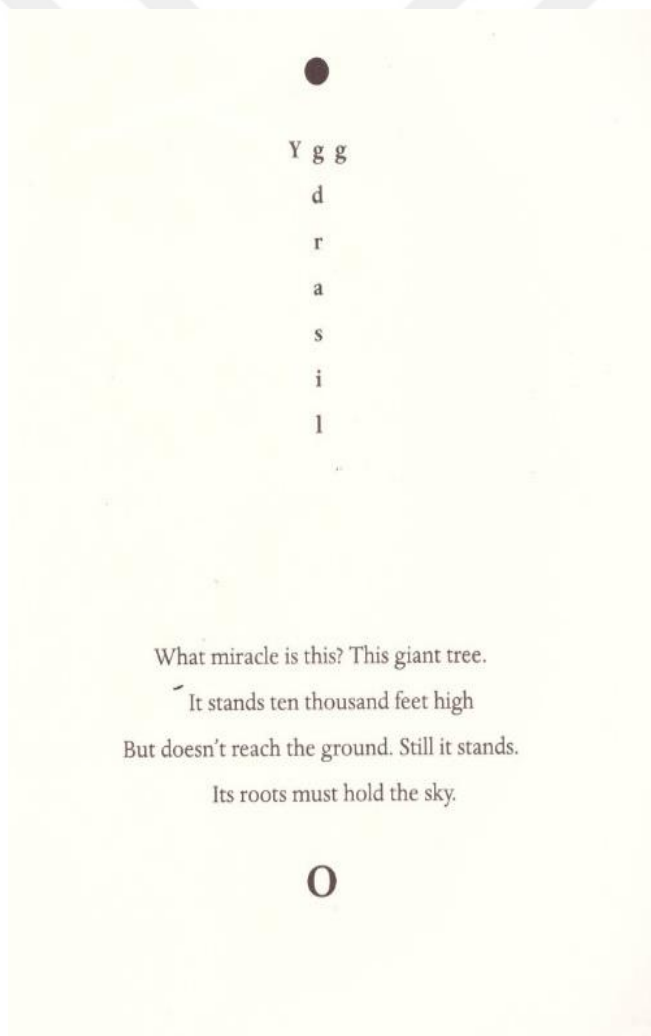


Fig. 14. Mark Z. Danielewski, *House of Leaves* (Pantheon Books, 2000), p. 709.

CHAPTER II

THE BODY AS TERRITORY: STEVE TOMASULA'S *VAS: AN OPERA IN FLATLAND*

*I call our world Flatland, not because we call it so, but to make its nature clearer to you,
my happy readers, who are privileged to live in Space.*

Imagine a vast sheet of paper on which straight Lines, Triangles, Squares, Pentagons, Hexagons, and other figures, instead of remaining fixed in their places, move freely about, on or in the surface, but without the power of rising above or sinking below it, very much like shadows—only hard and with luminous edges—and you will then have a pretty correct Notion of my country and countrymen. Alas, a few years ago, I should have said “my universe”: but now my mind has been opened to higher views of things.

Edwin A. Abbott *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*

Steve Tomasula's debut novel *VAS: An Opera in Flatland*, an imagetext novel with art and design by Stephen Farrell as stated on the book cover, was published in 2002.¹⁸ *VAS* is classified as a novel on biotechnology and genetic engineering that speculates on the times it is written and deals with issues of lineage and genealogy, histories of body and language, identity and body politics in a cultural milieu of high technology and in the flatland of consumerism, commodification and fashion. Moreover, like *House of Leaves*, *VAS* portrays a multilayered treatment of space realized in structural, narrative and material levels. Spatial form in *VAS* expands the narrative to such an extent that the novel turns into a scientific treatise on a wide range of topics extending from the history of eugenics to languages alongside different topics. The narrative space in *VAS* is the flatland in an unidentified future time and the body becomes a specific site and commodity in this flatland on which cultural, political and medical discourses interact. The treatment of the body as a spatial construct is completed by the material features of the book such as the inclusion of pictures and drawings of the human and animal bodies, pedigree charts,

¹⁸ There are different definitions for the novels that use verbal and visual texts such as word-image novels, multimodal novels, imagetext novels which have been discussed in the Introduction. Imagetext is one of these various definitions which Tomasula chooses to use to describe his novel. Imagetext refers to the simultaneous use of images and verbal text within fiction.

diagrams, and a twenty-five-pages-long gene codes. Tomasula turns the book into a body on which different levels of spaces interact with each other.

Presently a Professor of English at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, Steve Tomasula is the author of many novels and short stories as well as numerous critical works on postmodern literature with a specific interest on the role of science as an important factor in contemporary culture and the influence of digital technologies on creative writing. As will be discussed, these two topics inform his critical and fictional works. It can be said that Tomasula's critical ideas in his articles find an outlet in his creative writing and thus turn his novels and short stories into critical treatises. Highly conscious of the age it is written in, Tomasula's criti-fiction has been widely acclaimed because of its experimental and material qualities.

Following VAS, Tomasula's second novel *IN & OZ* was published in 2003. Taking place in two different worlds, IN and OZ presents five different characters in search of the "thing lacking in their lives" (stevetomasula.com). The struggles of the characters in the novel are defined as having "broad implications for anyone who has ever found themselves trying to be free within the constraints of their job, their class, but especially within a cultural moment much like our own" (stevetomasula.com). In trying to create the "authentic" experience in their occupations, the characters Mechanic, Designer, Photographer, Poet and Composer turn the novel into "a meditation on art, design, and life under the sign of commodity" (Banash and Spain 2).

Tomasula's next novel *The Book of Portraiture* which deals with the issue of representation in art throughout history was published in 2006. Similar to VAS, *The Book of Portraiture* contains different colorings of the pages, drawings, and different font types accompanying and re-shaping the verbal text. As the narrator of the book travels in time to visit different artists and learn about the artistic forms they employ in different ages, from cave paintings to digital art, the pages of the book "appear as strata in an archeological dig" (Tarnawsky). While Tomasula presents six different stories about art and thus tells

how representation changes in time, he also questions the representation of art and fiction in the present age through his own experiment within the physical space of the novel.

Tomasula's experiments in novel writing/designing develops into a more complex project with his novel *TOC: A New Media Novel* published in 2009. The novel was produced as a DVD and, as Tomasula states in an interview, almost twenty different software programs were used to complete his project (Benzon). He also collaborated with a number of artists and designers in the process of producing the novel. Similar to *IN & OZ* and *The Book of Portraiture*, *TOC* presents multiple characters. Their stories are connected to each other through time which is one of the major occupations of the novel (tocthenovel.com). As a new media or a multimedia novel, *TOC* is defined as a "visual novel, an assemblage of text, film, music, photography, the spoken word, animation, and painting" (tocthenovel.com) and "a gigantic mosaic, with the individual pieces made by lots of hands" (Tomasula "Not Just Text"). Tomasula has also authored many short stories and some of them are collected in the book entitled *Once Human: Stories* which is published in 2014. As David Banash and Andrea Spain point out in their introduction to the book entitled *Steve Tomasula: The Art and Science of New Media Fiction* (2015), "the influences of new media are everywhere to be found" in his writings (2).

According to critics, with his fiction Tomasula answers to the shifts in contemporary culture that have been brought along with developments in science and technology and most importantly, the digital world. Banash and Spain ask a crucial question in their aforementioned introduction: despite the increasing number of critics and their analysis of contemporary science and techno-culture, why is there a need "for the kind of novels that Tomasula writes?" (9). Drawing on the French critics Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's work *What Is Philosophy?*, their answer points to the capability of art to create "affect" and "sensation" (9). Unlike the fields of science and philosophy which create precepts and concepts, respectively, art is able to create "the force of sensation" (qtd. by Banash and Spain 9). In this respect, they view Tomasula's novels as creating that sensation with which to understand the world and culture, both being increasingly shaped by technology:

Tomasula facilitates a transduction between technological milieu (genetics, digital networks, etc.) and those of discourses of science, literature (including genre), and artistic practice. . . . Tomasula's novels incarnate not only concepts for the new world in which we live, but capture the sensations of these worlds in profound and powerful ways. While we may at some intellectual level understand that genetic engineering is happening or that we are the outcome of an inscrutable process of evolution, Tomasula creates work through which we sense the force of the reality in which we now live. Even more importantly, this aesthetic sense might diversify our perceptual and affective capacities which then become the motor for further bodily diversification. (9-10)

Similarly, the critic Mary K. Holland points out that Tomasula's major works of fiction "investigate our methods of representing and knowing reality . . . in an age defined by information systems, reproducibility, and technological manipulation of the material world and the body" (29). In his critical essays and articles, one of Tomasula's major concerns is the status of the novel in the present age. He often asserts that the novel should free itself from the realistic and mimetic tendencies of the previous decades, instead it should answer the needs of "information design and emergent culture" of what he calls the late postmodern era ("Information Design" 436). The novel should do this not just by its content but also with its form ("An Apology" 118). This concern for the formal qualities of the novel is always present in Tomasula's fiction. And according to Holland, his fiction achieves to "formally explore how literature in a digital age must grow increasingly and insistently material . . . [and] revise the status of literature, the genre of the novel, and material theories of art" (29). Today, Steve Tomasula stands out as a writer of "formally adventuresome literature" that is shaped and represented by such names as Raymond Federman, Walter Abish, George Perec, Gilbert Sorrentino, William Gass, and Lee Siegel as well as the writers of first generation hypertext novels all of whom Tomasula regards as trail blazers in his literary backdrop ("Not Just Text").

VAS has been analyzed by critics from different perspectives. It has been compared to Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* in that both novels employ verbal as well as visual texts and in so doing they also mix literary genres. In his review of the novel, Eugene Thacker notes that VAS is "a hybrid of fiction" and "a mix genre" like *House of Leaves* in that it blends various narrative forms within the scope of the novel (166). Similarly, in his

article, Pawel Frelík sees *VAS* as one of “the most challenging-looking American novels of the last fifty years” along with *House of Leaves* (233) and he analyzes the novel within the category of science fiction. Writer and critic Lance Olsen views the novel as a materially conscious work which challenges the conventional use of the page. Lance Olsen situates Tomasula among a number of experimental writers:

::::Once upon a time we talked about politics at the level of thematics, but Tomasula, along with many other author functions over the course of the last few decades, if not the last few centuries—Laurence Sterne, Max Ernst, Kathy Acker, Anne Carson, Mark Danielewski, Marc Saporta, Chris Ware, et al.—is invested in the politics of structuration as well: in how, that is, every narrative procedure, every material choice in composition, be it in the replacement of commas with em dashes or insertion of a black page in *Tristram Shandy*, the creation of a book that shows up as a sheaf of loose pages in a box that invites the reader to choose the order and amount s/he reads in *Composition No. 1*, or the archeological layering of different colors of paper comprising *The Book of Portraiture*, implies a cluster of political and metaphysical resonances. (213)

In her book *Multimodality, Cognition and Experimental Literature* (2012), Alison Gibbons analyzes *House of Leaves* and *VAS* in consecutive chapters in terms of their multimodal features and their effect on the reader’s cognition and she analyzes *VAS* through the concept of embodiment. Another critic Alex Link focuses on the body as portrayed in *VAS* as “the discursively contested and complex space of a perpetual dialogue between artistic humanist expression and rational functional design.” Françoise Sammercelli approaches the hybrid, intertextual, and intermedial features of the novel (77). As can be seen from numerous articles and approaches to *VAS*, it is very clear that the novel presents a rich ground for analysis with its thematic as well as formal qualities. Besides being categorized as science fiction (Frelík 227) with a dystopian turn and within that world touching upon the issues of family and “the small, recognizable and often domestic conflicts and desires of his characters” (Banash and Spain 3), *VAS* has also been categorized under the title of postmodernist fiction.

In his three articles published in 1998, 2002 (the same year with *VAS*), and 2012, respectively, Tomasula outlines his approach to contemporary society and the role and form of fiction among the bytes, bits, and networks of the digital labyrinth. In his 1998

article “Bytes and Zeitgeist: Digitizing the Cultural Landscape,” Tomasula defines the contemporary cultural landscape as being dominated by the intervening of digital technologies into our lives and digital tools such as the Internet as the dominant means with which people communicate. As Tomasula puts forward, “[t]he acceptance of manipulatable bits as the dominant means by which to create and transmit culture accompanies an acceptance that everything is written and is therefore infinitely open to rewriting” (343). This acceptance brings along new questions regarding writing, authorship and the printed book. According to Tomasula, the features of the digital wor(l)d such as “malleability, ease of recombination, dependence on the image, interactivity, infinite linkage and therefore indeterminacy, dispersal of origins, of author and authority” also shape the present epoch (343). How Tomasula defines the transformations introduced by the advent of the digital landscape can indeed be read as a postmodernist manifesto on the concepts of history, indeterminacy, free play, and hybridity to name a few:

[C]reating and transmitting ideas in a form that is visual, linked, interactive, and accessible to a worldwide audience increasingly becomes a kind of second nature—the natural way to mirror a world that is marked by the morphing of History as a unified narrative into history as the multiplicity of voices, the morphing of Freudian paranoia into Lacanian schizophrenia, the morphing of ambiguity into indeterminacy, transcendence into immanence, hierarchy to free play, master code to mass carnival, paradigm to hegemony, proletariat to cognitariat, words in print to image on screen, modernist alienation to postmodern integration, genres to hybrids, Logos to lacuna, transparent window to self-conscious page. (343)

Tomasula continues to present his ideas of postmodern culture and postmodern prose in his 2002 article entitled “An Apology for Postmodern Prose.” Here, he specifically deals with postmodern fiction and asserts that postmodern fiction reminds us that literature is about form as well as content. In defense of postmodern prose, Tomasula sees it as “the most discursive of art forms, and therefore highly suited to an examination of the contemporary conscience of competing discourse systems, of language practice . . . of right knowledge, or how things work” (120-121). With its questioning of the ways of knowing and creating art, using language, and understanding the history and cultural systems in which art works

are produced, postmodern fiction(s) can be the quintessential form of writing in the present age (122).

The last article that presents both Tomasula's views on contemporary culture and fiction writing and the progression of his critical views from the postmodern to late postmodern is "Information Design, Emergent Culture and Experimental Form in the Novel" that was published in *The Routledge Companion to Experimental Literature*¹⁹ which came out in 2012. The form of the novel has always included certain forms of information design—visible in chapter headings and line breaks (436)—however, in contemporary times, the question "[w]hich architecture best tells our story?" (439) should be rethought according to Tomasula. Contemporary times are marked by late postmodernism:

Our world is marked by a degree of interconnectedness, virtual reality, decentralization, heterogeneity, genre (and genetic) blurring, surveillance and meta-awareness not seen in early postmodernism. The global is literally local not just metaphoric, and the evidence can be seen in phenomenon as diverse as global warming, or warfare in which soldiers in Virginia operate robots flying half a world away in Afghanistan, using video-game technology to kill actual people until their shift ends and they return from their offices to suburban homes for dinner with their families. Rather than living at a time when biology was unalterable destiny, ours is a time when people no longer need go through life with the nose, teeth, or chemistry they were born with but assume that their bodies, even their DNA, can be edited, patented, and rearranged like text; ours is a decentralized world in which much of the population interacts Facebook-to-Facebook as often as it does face-to-face. (442-443)

In the era of changes and of network culture, posthumanism, and decentralization, the novel as a genre should also change in form and thus in content (440). In Tomasula's view, network novels answer this need of designing information in the novel. He suggests that "reading novels as though they were written to reflect the networks through which contemporary life has organized itself" will illuminate not only the stories that are told but also the world the stories are emerging from (446). What he means by network novels are

¹⁹ The book is an important collection of essays and articles and incorporates the ideas of a variety of important critics such as John White, Brian McHale, N. Katherine Hayles, Nick Montfort and Lance Olsen along with many others in setting and unsettling the boundaries of contemporary literature.

best given through hypertext which enable telling stories with multiple connections and causes:

The form of many hypertexts . . . and online or new media novels . . . seem to inherently embody narrative (and life) as network. Even character-driven novels that explore the rhizomatic nature of life contain within their form a social networking model of living in sync with the multiple connections and multiple causes that are beyond linear plot. (448)

Turning attention to Tomasula's critical work provides the necessary tools to situate *VAS* in the postmodern and late postmodern context. Tomasula's late postmodern fiction addresses the needs in fiction writing by building a network in its narrative and form. By using hypertextual design in the telling of a story with many connections from history, language and genetic engineering, *VAS* becomes the network novel that Tomasula sees as the most fitting genre to reflect the present zeitgeist. Under the light of Tomasula's critical ideas, this chapter will focus on the three categories of space, spatial form that is built up by postmodern narrative elements and extended by hypertext, the narrative space that focuses on the human body, and the material space of the book that mimics the human body. As will be discussed, these three levels of spaces are intertwined with each other and it is crucial to have an overall understanding of them.

2.1. STRUCTURAL SPACE: SPATIAL FORM AND POSTMODERN NARRATIVE ELEMENTS

The title of *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* comes from the science fictional work of the English writer Edwin A. Abbott's *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* that was published in 1884. In fact, Tomasula does not only use the Victorian satire as an inspirational source for the title of his novel but he also incorporates many of the elements from the work such as its main character Square and the flatland he lives in. Direct quotations from Abbott's work also populate *VAS*.²⁰ Tomasula appropriates Abbott's 1884

²⁰ In this respect, *VAS* can be said to be a "hypertext" in a sense that the French writer and critic Gérard Genette defines in his book *Palimpsests* (1982). Genette's definition of hypertext has been given in the Introduction, in footnote 8. *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* is a "hypertext" as it is understood by Genette, since it appropriates Edwin Abbott's novel *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* which acts as a "hypotext."

work to depict the shallow cultural landscape of his fictional work. Along with other intertextual elements that are going to be discussed in this section, using Abbott's satire to criticize contemporary culture adds richness to the content and form of the novel through textual layering.

In Abbott's *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions*, the main character and narrator is Square who lives in the land of two dimensional figures that he calls the flatland. Square tells that his universe can be understood much better if one thinks about the geometrical shapes drawn on a page. These geometrical shapes are the inhabitants of his country and they cannot view each other from a three-dimensional perspective but only as lines. While he has the shape of a square, there are other shapes in his flatland such as a circle, or a hexagonal. The concept of three-dimensionality is now known in Abbott's flatland and the society is hierarchically organized in accordance with their geometrical shapes. However, in visionary dreams Square comes to realize that other worlds exist such as the Lineland where things are on a single line and Spaceland, the land of three dimensions. In his trip to the Spaceland, Square understands how their view of the world in Flatland was very limited. In addition, when he tries to spread the word about the existence of higher dimensions in Flatland, the totalitarian regime prosecutes him because of heresy and Square ends up in jail where he starts to write about his memories in different dimensions.

It is meaningful that Tomasula transfers Square, a character who travels among different spaces and dimensions and who finally becomes a misfit in his own dystopic science fictional world. As Anthony Enns points out, Abbott's novel "already emphasizes the interrelationship between textuality and materiality by imagining a world that has the same dimensions as the printed page" (57). Steve Tomasula's appropriation of this science fictional work that deals with different dimensions of space both comments on the spatiality and the cultural climate in VAS. Abbott's flatland is turned into another flatland

VAS is also a hypertext novel because it employs the hypertextual linking mechanism which complies with Nelson's definition of hypertext.

in an unidentified future in the United States in which the main character Square tries to decide whether or not to have a vasectomy. The story revolves around him, his wife Circle, their daughter Oval and their Mother. The plot does not contain much action or progression; the main story line starts with Square's signing the consent form for the procedure he will undergo, moves on with his hesitancy about this procedure that would leave him sterile and finally ends with vasectomy. In the meantime, Mother insists that Square and Circle should go to the opera for it may ignite romance between the couple for a second child.

This simple plot line is immensely expanded by Tomasula first of all with the inclusion of quotations from many different sources, which turns the novel into an intertextual hypertext. Second, the inclusion of visual elements, charts, drawings, pictures, screen shots of websites and the overall design of the book by Stephen Farrell, "an award-winning graphic artist and typographer" (VAS back cover) expand the story spatially. Through these two characteristics, the idea of space is treated from a structural point of view with the use of spatial form, from a narratological perspective with the narrative space focusing on the body in flatland, and finally from a material perspective by foregrounding the book's material features.

As a spatially constructed narrative, VAS bears many of the elements of the postmodernist novel. Rather than using a single linear plot; VAS presents ideas, opinions, historical facts on issues such as history, language, genetic engineering, political manipulation and social and cultural values synchronically through Square's story. In other words, the synchronicity of "multitudes" (VAS 298) rather than the chronology of a single event functions as the organizational element in the book. This synchronic organizational device renders the narrative "a spatial affair" by creating a spatial platform in which elements of composition have significance rather than "the artful depiction of a familiar world" (Klinkowitz 39).

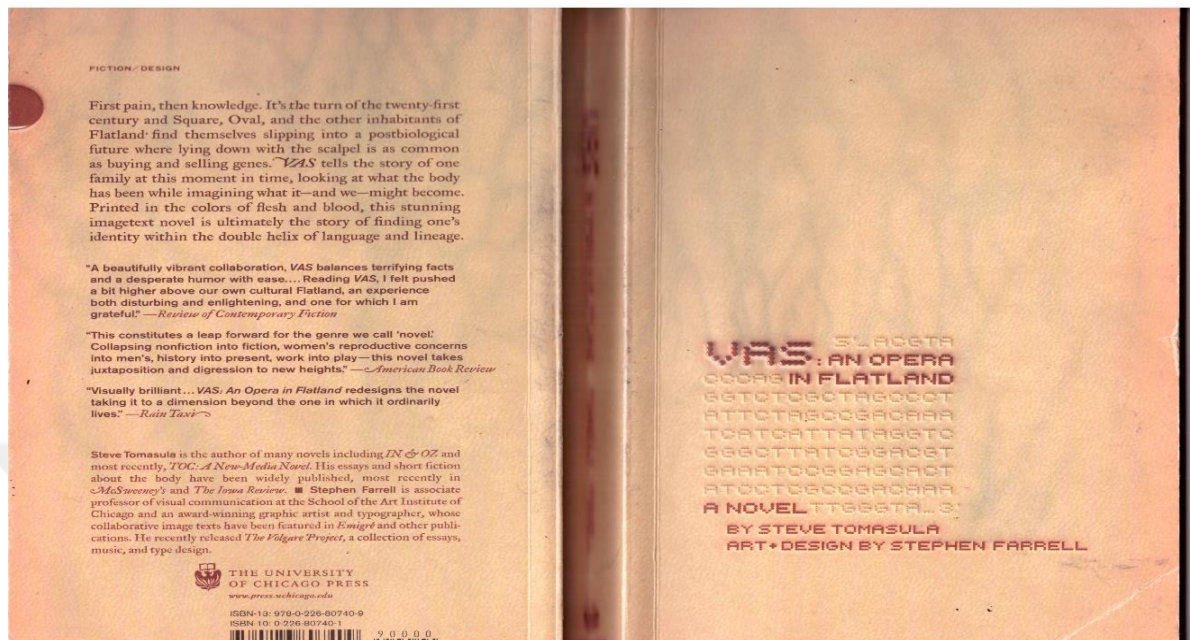


Fig. 15. Steve Tomasula, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (U of Chicago P, 2002), the cover design of the book.

While the novel does not follow a linear order, in self-reflexive moments, Square or an unidentified narrative voice questions the validity of “the linear plot.” (VAS 28,75,86). Apparently, the linear plot is not an appropriate device for telling a story whether it is fictional, historical or scientific as “[l]inear plots not being the only model for change” (VAS 75). Linear historical and scientific narratives turn out to be fictions or constructs that are created under the dominant ideological discourses. The workings of these two fields of study, history and science, are constantly criticized in the novel. They propose progress and achievement under the mask of linearity, however facts are mostly different from what has been presented: “Progress in science, that is, achieved by eliminating from study those problems that do not have scientific solutions.” (VAS 87). Progress in science is a narrative construct depending on selection and elimination of some of the outcomes. A few lines after this statement, a topic that is prevalent throughout the novel is presented: “History being written by the victor, of course” (87). As scientific discourse manipulates facts and eliminates and reorders them, history is again open to manipulations and modification by the victorious or dominant classes. In the same pages where the discourses of science and history are criticized, a chart showing the evolution of the word “ape” to “man” is given

(figure 16). The history of science and history itself are never free of the workings of language according to Tomasula. “And wasn’t history, revisionist or otherwise,” thinks Square, “as much an act of selective forgetting as it was remembering?” (VAS 56). Therefore, the linear plot both in science and history turns out to be a tool to manipulate knowledge and power by the people in power. Tomasula’s critique of science and history echoes Lyotard’s critique of metanarratives in *The Postmodern Condition*. Both Lyotard and Tomasula view science and the ways it legitimizes itself as metanarratives, or narratives that are used to shape societies and regulate power mechanisms. As both discuss, metanarratives are losing their function and dissolving with the cultural and political changes in contemporary times.

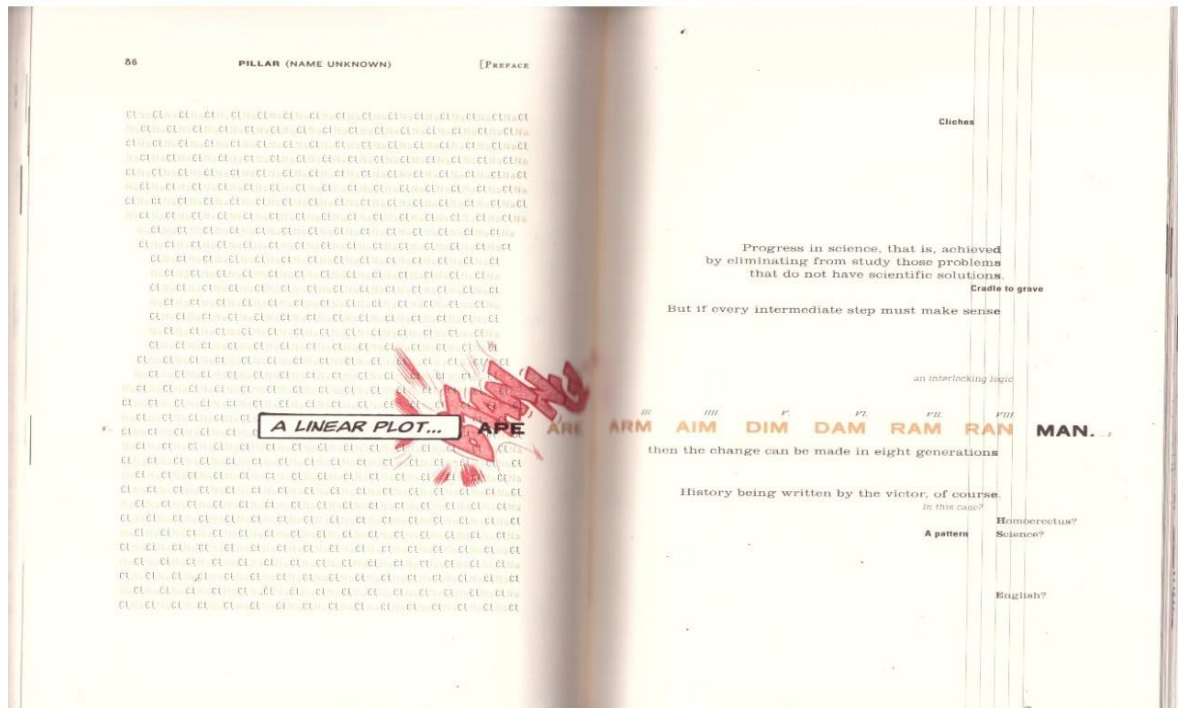


Fig. 16. Steve Tomasula, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (U of Chicago P, 2002), pp. 86-87.

Like *House of Leaves*, *VAS* also encompasses an expanded array of critical, literary and historical texts. Unlike *House of Leaves* which uses a number of faux critics along with real ones, the sources *VAS* uses are real. Tomasula situates the story of Square within the history of evolution, science and language. The operation he is to undergo is told within

the framework of forced sterilizations practiced in totalitarian regimes. The social enforcements are put into practice by the supporters of eugenics, which was considered to be a “science” for a certain period in history in Nazi Germany as well as the United States. The idea that history repeats itself in different and same geographies is prevalent throughout the novel. In this respect, the novel becomes a self-conscious critical treatise on history, science and their teachings on the body and language.

As stated on the website of the novel, by incorporating various representations of the body, the novel “recounts how differing ways of imagining the body generate differing stories of knowledge, power, history, gender, politics, art, and, of course, the literature of who we are.” Through its critique of science, history, and the culture of flatland, it is emphasized in the novel that master narratives of modernism such as controlling the body or patriarchy are not valid anymore in postmodern times (186). They are put under erasure in the novel in a Derridean sense. Tomasula physically puts modernist approaches under erasure by crossing them out (figure 17).

The numerous quotations turn the novel into a rich intertextual construct. Through hypertextual design, the intertextual narration enables the novel to problematize the issues it deals with. In her reading of Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism, Julia Kristeva points out “any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another” (“Word, Dialogue, and Novel” 37). From the understanding of the literary text as “a mosaic of quotations,” she comes up with her own understanding of “intertextuality.” Being a mosaic of quotations and thus an intertextual novel, VAS complies with Kristeva’s understanding of intertextuality that “participate[s] in history” by going beyond “linear history:”

By-introducing the *status of the word* as a minimal structural unit, Bakhtin situates the text within history and society, which are then seen as texts read by the writer, and into which he inserts himself by rewriting them. Diachrony is transformed into synchrony, and in light of this transformation, *linear* history appears as abstraction. The only way a writer can participate in history is by transgressing this abstraction through a process of reading-writing; that is, through the practice of a signifying structure in relation or opposition to

another structure. History and morality are written and read within the infrastructure of texts. The poetic word, polyvalent and multi-determined, adheres to a logic exceeding that of codified discourse and fully comes into being only in the margins of recognized culture. Bakhtin was the first to study this logic, and he looked for its roots in *carnival*. Carnavalesque discourse breaks through the laws of a language censored by grammar and semantics and, at the same time, is a social and political protest. There is no equivalence, but rather, identity between challenging official linguistic codes and challenging official law. (Kristeva 36)

By consciously reading and writing a text within the social and historical context, a writer is aware that s/he is incorporating formerly written texts synchronically. In this way, the text is freed from the idea of linear progression. According to Kristeva, Bakhtin's carnivalesque discourse is a way of "challenging official law" because it enables the defiance of "official linguistic codes." Using synchronicity and intertextual elements, VAS can be said to be participating in the Bakhtinian carnivalesque discourse while criticizing historical as well as scientific discourses. Starting from this premise, with the intertextual mosaic of different voices, VAS shows that in postmodern times we witness "the morphing of History as a unified narrative into history as the multiplicity of voices" ("Bytes and Zeitgesit" 343).

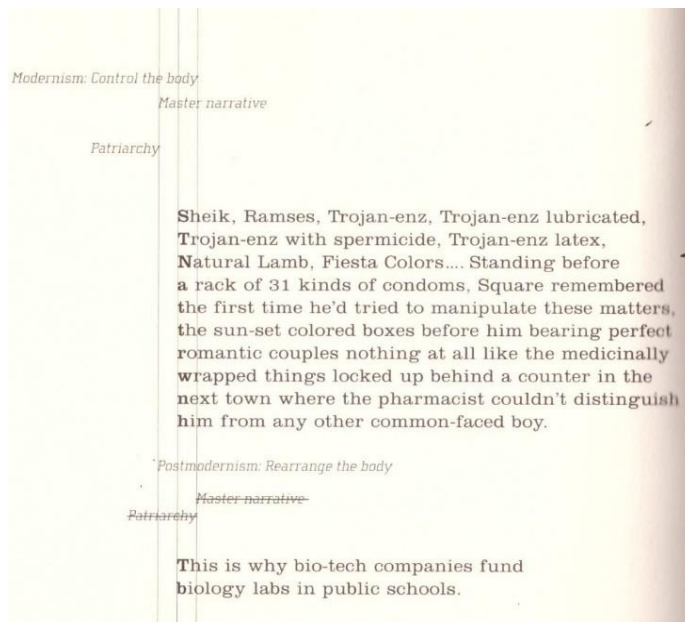


Fig. 17. Steve Tomasula, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (U of Chicago P, 2002), p. 186.

VAS achieves this by laying bare the linguistic and genetic codes that make up language and the human body, respectively. In the novel, linguistic evolution is compared to the evolution of the human bodies and the textuality of the human body is frequently emphasized. The use of pedigree charts informs the reader about the history of families as well as the history of language. Language has been evolving under different discourses and in cultural contexts just like the human body that is being reshaped through the workings of culture. While writing texts, the bits and pieces that are brought together are like the DNA codes that make up the human body: “The problem in writing a story, like making a diorama, was in trying to make sense of a pool of ideas” (VAS 56). On the next page in the novel, Square’s speculations on the nature of writing are mixed with DNA codes that are scattered on the page (figure 18):

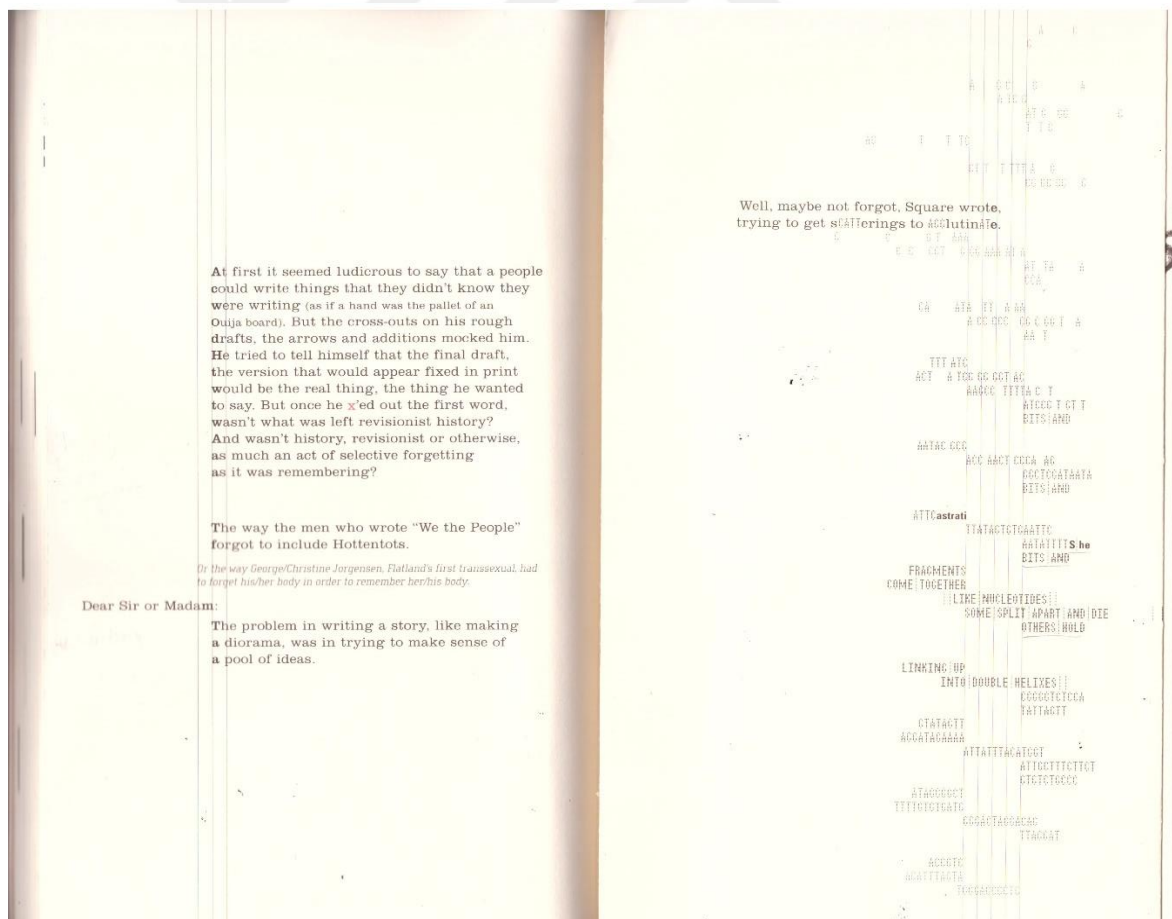


Fig. 18. Steve Tomasula, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (U of Chicago P, 2002), pp. 56-57.

There are self-reflexive elements in VAS that contribute to the spatial form in the novel by foregrounding the workings of fiction writing. The questions regarding how to write stories and make them cohere in the flatland of the novel is an issue that is examined quite often. In the sections where Square's story is given, there are comments given in parentheses that work like the use of asides in theater and they attract attention to the novel's presence as a construct: "As he entered the room, her eyes widened on him, her smile evaporating (as they put it in novels), nasalises contracting for heavy breathing while his own heart began to pound (novel, again), mean arterial pressure rising" (VAS 183). The fact that the novel has been treated as one of the genres among several others reveals the multimedia properties of the novel. The blurring of literary genres like the novel and opera, historical and scientific discourses given through textbooks, reports, and the coexistence of different media forms like pictures, pedigree charts and web sites all create a vast self-conscious work of art.

According to Lance Olsen, the hybrid nature of VAS necessitates a conscious reading approach from its readers. First of all, Olsen defines two main textual threads in the novel that are the primary text (Square's story) and the paratext²¹ (intertextual mosaic). The fact that these two texts are given side by side blurs the boundaries between the two. Olsen argues that in VAS "paratext . . . adulterates an already visually impure text constituted precisely from other paratexts . . . that are integral to the primary text [*sic*]" (217) and this creates a constant tension in which "[p]aradext collapses into text even as text collapses into paratext" (217). In this way, Tomasula reminds his readers to be conscious of the workings of the text during the processes of reading and writing:

²¹ The components in a literary work other than its primary narrative are called a paratext. These components can be the author's name, illustrations, the content page and etc. In his article "Introduction to the Paratext" (1991), Gérard Genette states that "the literary work consists, exhaustively or essentially, of a text, that is to say (a very minimal definition) in a more or less lengthy sequence of verbal utterances more or less containing meaning." This text exists alongside a number of paratexts which can be "author's name, a title, a preface, illustrations." As Genette maintains "[o]ne does not always know if one should consider that they belong to the text or not." Therefore, Genette calls them the "paratext of the work." The paratext becomes "the means by which a text makes a book of itself and proposes itself as such to its readers, and more generally to the public." Gerard Genette and Marie Maclean. "Introduction to the Paratext." *New Literary History*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1991, pp. 261-272. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/469037.

Tomasula appropriates and perverts the grammar of the distractive habitual, disturbing it endlessly while making the participant re-conscious both of the procedures of the spectacular—which is to say the dynamics of power, which is to say the dynamics of [[reading]] and [[writing]],—and the opportunity for non-normative modes of narrativity in the world, which is to say non-normative modes of individual and social existence itself. (Olsen 223)

The intertextuality in *VAS* is given through hypertext. As hypertextuality provides the novel with an ingenious visual design, it internally structures the narrative. *VAS* sustains the progression of Square's story together with the paratextual elements through hypertextual design which functions as a formal device and through necessary narrative acts of digression. Digression becomes one of the major narrative elements in *VAS* that extends the spatial form. In the initial sections of the novel, the primary text and paratextual elements are given synchronically. However, starting from page 57 with a pedigree chart that physically extends to three foldout pages (figure 19), the narrative veers off and the paratext continues for about fifty pages. This pattern is repeated throughout the novel dividing the narrative into smaller units and loosely connecting them. Therefore, digression generates a spatially constructed ground for narration by breaking down chronology and temporal sequencing.

2.2. NARRATIVE SPACE: THE POSTHUMAN BODY IN FLATLAND

Since narrative space is a wide and encompassing term that can refer to the setting, specific places, cities, or mental and real geographies, a specific focus is needed in the analysis of the narrated space in fictional works. In the first chapter of this study, the house as an architectural structure was taken as the major entity in discussing the narrative space of *House of Leaves*. In *VAS*, the focus will be the human body in flatland and how it becomes a territory for the workings of medicine, genetic engineering, history and politics. Tomasula situates the human body among the interplay of various discourses. By doing this, he shows that the body has transformed into an open field of transformations. It is changed, deleted, and parts of it have been replaced by machines and medical instruments and finally turned into cyborgs (*VAS* 160) in an age when “rewriting your body seemed natural” (*VAS* 98).

Throughout the novel, Square's indecision to undergo a vasectomy is emphasized as an unwillingness to change his body. He cannot let go of his former body unlike some people who willingly accept change in their bodies through a myriad of operations. His wife Circle has also had an operation that left her sterile and now "for the good of their society" (nd.edu/~stomasul/VAS_homepage), Square has to have a similar operation. Square speculates on his unwillingness to have the procedure:

He himself couldn't explain this irrational attachment to his old body. It made no more sense than confusing himself with an old favorite hat, or refusing to let go a comfortable sweater that had a hole in one elbow—even though wearing it meant getting cold. And of course he wanted what was best for his family. Children engineered to repel mosquitoes, engineered not to develop an appendix, or wisdom teeth, or any anachronistic appendages—who could not want that for their descendants?—and all for the having by simply creating a litter of embryos from which they could select the one with the best genetic profile. (178)

The flatland of America where they are living seems to offer many choices to its citizens from rewriting their bodies to selecting healthy genes for their unborn children from gene pools—such as picking genes from “the designer genes: genes from cod fish for increased tolerance to cold, genes from Gila monsters for increased tolerance to heat” (VAS 178)—from consuming as much as they can afford and to choosing between “hundreds of salad dressings” (VAS 53). What seem to be free choices, however, turn out to be programmatic enforcements by the people in power who manipulate science and facts to keep society under control. These enforcements are popularized and marketed through fashion styles, beauty pageants and commodity products and it becomes fashionable to change and rewrite bodies. The operations the couple undergo are shown as a choice to better their lives, however, as seen in Tomasula's incorporations of many quotations, forced sterilization has been effective throughout history and has been implemented like “vaccination” (122) by totalitarian regimes.

And that mental-health facilities should continue vaccinating those who failed an IQ test... as well as epileptics...and the antisocial: alcoholics, the sexually promiscuous, petty criminals, children with disciplinary problems, and other

hereditary diseases. For the good of the patients. [For the good of the] society.
(VAS 122)

Tomasula's flatland is a "landscape of Technoflesh" where bodies are arranged through codes by genetic engineering (161). Although the recent developments in genetic engineering are phenomena of the twenty first century, genetic engineering serves for purposes of social engineering like the eugenics of the twentieth century or medical programs of previous eras. Eugenics in the first half of the twentieth century was considered a branch of science just like genetic engineering today. Tomasula quotes from Winston Churchill and Adolf Hitler in two consecutive pages facing each other and when the book is closed these quotations overlap:

The rapid growth of the feeble-minded classes coupled as it is with steady reduction among all superior stocks constitutes a race danger which should be cut off before another year has passed. Winston Churchill (VAS 96)

Whoever is not bodily and spiritually healthy and worthy shall not have the right to pass on his suffering in the body of his children. Adolf Hitler (VAS 97)

The juxtaposition of the ideas of these two people from very different ideological backgrounds shows that there was not much difference in their thinking patterns when it came to shaping the society according to their political programs. This form of presentation extends Tomasula's critique of science since he defines science as "a history of failed theories" (73) because it has been used as a tool to govern, manipulate people and justify racism. Similar to Lyotard's critique of science that legitimizes itself through language games (*The Postmodern Condition*), Tomasula states that science uses Latin words and the lens of objectivity for legitimizing itself (104).

Tomasula's characters in *VAS* are constructs rather than real personages and they can be seen as the ultimate examples of the posthuman²² body for they are being intervened by genetics and by computer technologies. In other words, the bodies of the characters are being shaped by scientific as well as media ecologies.²³ Mother's process of becoming a cyborg is given in detail:

Before she'd become cyborg, Mother's continual testing and blood treatments had been torture. Her arms were mottled with bruises inflicted by nurses puncturing them over and over to find her hair-line veins . . . Then one sunny morning, the doctor stopped in . . . with a new offer: a synthetic sponginess that could be surgically implanted in her shoulder to serve as an interface between her body and the equipment they used to draw blood from and put chemicals into her veins. Then, Oh happy day! After the operation, getting her blood up, having it drawn and replaced via an IV or any machine was as easy as plugging an extension cord into an outlet. And even though she was now part machine, it had been so natural. So welcome.

The IV pump purred, its digital readout metering a drip that ran down tubing and into her shoulder, the flesh color of the implant making it difficult to tell where it began and she ended. (*VAS* 146)

Square finds it strange "to realize that [his] . . . mother-in-law is a cyborg" (144). He defines the Blood Ward of a hospital as "the hostile environment of deep space" (145) and in order to survive there, people need enhancements to their bodies, therefore to be turned into cyborgs.²⁴ Square comes to realize that the hostile environment is not only the Blood

²² Although posthumanism can be defined and interpreted differently, here it refers to the view that the human body is open to modifications that can be done through advanced technology. Through such modifications, posthumanism advocates, people can go beyond their biological constraints.

²³ Media ecology refers to the environment shaped by different media such as radio, television or the Internet that are introduced by communication technologies and their influence on human life and culture. Important names in the study of media ecology are Marshall McLuhan, Walter Ong and Neil Postman. McLuhan's books offer a cultural critique of societies under the advent of high technology. A student of McLuhan, Ong continues to focus on the role digital media in shaping the language and literacy. Being a contemporary of McLuhan and Ong, Postman provides further "provides suggestions for new narratives, one being the history of communication, media, and technology" (Strata 19). Lance Strata's detailed overview on the history of studies in media ecology can be read in his article "A Media Ecology Review" in *Communication Research Trends*, vol.23, no. 2, 2004, pp. 3-48, cscs.scu.edu/trends/v23/v23_2.pdf.

²⁴ As can be seen in *VAS*, the depiction of cyborgs is not positive which is quite unlike Donna Haraway's favoring of the term in her famous treatise, *A Cyborg Manifesto* (1984). Cyborg is a metaphor that Haraway uses for her agenda, "an ironic political myth" (Haraway 149), for breaking binary oppositions that define and control women. While Haraway prefers to be a cyborg rather than a goddess, she sees the cyborg as a

Ward of the hospital but the flatland they are living in. As the critic Anne-Laure Tissut maintains in her article, the element of fear is always present in the novel and is revealed through the main character Square's indecision about the procedure. According to Tissut, Square's fear does not stem from the operation but from the social and cultural climate of the flatland. Advertisements and mainstream media is popularizing "the mirage of eternal youth" enabled by genetic engineering "at the cost of a terrifying ignorance, created by media strategies of fragmentation and deviation which are largely responsible for the loss of memory and history" (Tissut). This climate is depicted in the novel as barren and shallow and dictated by fashion trends that are popularized by media.

Flatlanders are stuck in this antagonistic environment although they do not realize their condition except for Square: "It occurred to Square that he hadn't always known he'd lived in Flatland. At first, he'd thought it was simply a flat land. And he began to wonder what he'd been before he realized he was a Square" (VAS 315). Square's realization of his condition in his flatland does not occur as an epiphany. He tries to understand the situation that they have turned bodies to be designed in the land of techno-flesh but he neither can cope with the idea, nor figure it out in an influx of information. And he later turns to his old thinking patterns:

[H]e wondered how the marvelous had become so mundane without his even noticing, the landscape exerting itself on him as invisibly as subliminal advertising (a '70s phenomenon). And like someone sitting in a theater, coke in one hand, popcorn in the other, who suddenly realized that they bought into both coke and popcorn only because ads had been slipped in between the frames of a musical comedy, he began to grow angry, the pressure, suggestions, changes, even in who was, and all for the health of?— *[sic]* (VAS 182)

political and feminist mechanism to resist the role models that have been established by patriarchy. In this respect, cyborg is an emancipating political program that she views as an alternative to former schools of feminism. The difference between Tomasula's and Haraway's understanding of cyborgs may lie in the historical circumstances that shape their viewpoints. There have been great changes and shifts within the technological and cultural landscape from 1984 to 2002, the year VAS was published in. Donna J. Haraway, *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology and Socialist-Feminism in Late Twentieth Century.* *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women.* Routledge, 1991, pp. 149-179.

Despite his anger for being manipulated by the media, by medicine, and by social engineering programs, Square gradually returns to his old ways of thinking and accepts his situation as a flatlander. Furthermore, he later feels sympathy for the flatlanders. This can be seen as Square's inability to struggle to keep his body "natural" when everyone is having operations and turning into cyborgs.²⁵ In the scene when he tries to make himself believe that the only way to live in this flatland is by consenting to change his body, Square copes with his situation by choosing to conform to his society:

He looked on Circle with awe now, now that he understood the routine élan with which women lived within their edited, critiqued and rewritten bodies. And what a luxury he had had in being able to take his 'natural' body for granted.

A great wash of sympathy welled up in him for Circle. For everyone in Flatland. Including himself.

That night, he got into bed beside Circle, held her tight and said, "I know you're not a monster . . . Your mother's not a monster, either, you know." (VAS 323-324)

The textual elements in VAS are self-consciously portrayed as literary and linguistic constructs. Similarly, the characters in the novel are constructed by language, genetic coding and information technologies. The various representations of the body Tomasula uses in VAS show that like languages, the human body is open to be reshaped and designed by societal and cultural forces. Biology is defined as a territory or rather as a "mainly occupied territory" (VAS 294) and bodies are now products of a larger society made up of fragments introduced by organ transplantations or changes in genes unlike the bodies that were "once closely identified with individual people" (301).

²⁵ See Shelley Jackson's *The Patchwork Girl* (1995), a hypertext novel on the issues of textuality, gender, body and embodiment where she used "a strategy of intense cross-linking (possibly with links on nearly every word) to build a fabric of connections across passages of original and quoted material" ("History of Shelley Jackson's *Patchwork Girl*"). Although written in different media—Jackson wrote *The Patchwork Girl* in the hypertext program called *StorySpace*, VAS is similar to Jackson's hypertext novel both in terms of its form with its use of hypertext and intertextual elements, and content with its focus on the human body and the changes it is undergoing. Jackson's novel can be reached at www.eastgate.com/catalog/PatchworkGirl.html.

How human beings and their bodies are changing are addressed by Tomasula in his article “Information Design,” where he discusses humanism and reintroduces the concept with various interpretations in postmodern times. Drawing on Katherine N. Hayles’s definition of posthuman in her book *How We Became Posthuman* (1999) as “an amalgam, a collection of heterogeneous components, a *material-informational* entity whose boundaries undergo continuous construction and reconstruction,” (3) Tomasula remarks that the human bodies are like texts to be arranged, written, rewritten and they become “as rearrangeable as they are” (VAS 300) although it will not always be easy to read and understand them with the available information. An example of this is the inclusion of a twenty-five-page long gene codes for chromosome twelve. The codes occupy the novel, making this section one of the most perplexing as they prove to be very hard to read (figure 18). When asked by Kiki Benzon about the role of this section “where information ceases to clarify” (Benzon) in Square’s decision making process, Tomasula states

[I]t’s informed by Foucault’s idea that discursive objects come into being and you don’t even know where they come from. . . . Even if you had the information, it’s not knowledge. There’s that one passage people always ask about—chromosome 12, which goes on for a page. It’s just a small part of that chromosome. I wanted to include this partly as a way to show how complex these things are. I also wanted to use a chromosome that shows the difference between humans and chimps—an in-joke that I think I ended up cutting from the book. Well, I downloaded the chromosome and it filled up my hard drive. I had no idea.

As quoted above, there is too much information Square has access to but due to lack of knowledge, in other words, an overall comprehension of his situation, he yields to the operation to end the melodrama that his family is living in because of his indecision to have the vasectomy. This operation “represent[s] his ultimate transformation from a natural body into a rewritable text” (Enns 73) and therefore the body’s transformation into a territory. It is frequently emphasized in the novel that he must consent to the operation for the good of his family and society because it will end the transfer of genes to the next generation and help purify gene sequences. Square finally yields to his fate in the flatland and decides to have the operation:

Then the doctor rushed in as doctors always did anymore, bounding from cubicle to cubicle like production-line workers who assemble jets or other bodies too ponderous to move. “How are we today?” he said, snapping on an intercom in the wall. Before Square could answer, a spunky pop tune played: “I think I love you so what am I so afraid of?....” (367)

From Edwin Abbott’s flatland to Steve Tomasula’s, science and technology have developed immensely. While Abbott’s character Square ends up in jail since he tries to teach people about the existence of higher dimensions like the three dimensional Spaceland, Square in *VAS* ends up in an operating room finally having decided to undergo a vasectomy. Tomasula situates his characters and specifically their bodies in a cultural climate of amnesia, oblivion, consumerism and conformism. *VAS* presents a wide network of texts and paratexts in which to think about contemporary times. The novel becomes a warning about the prospects of advanced technology. In one of the scenes in which Square and Circle talk about the meaning of art, Square states that art works are not capable of portraying America which has turned into a dystopic fiction itself rendering art useless: “A funeral home in L.A. will put your loved one’s corpse in a drive-up window so mourners can pay their respects without getting out of the car. What novel can say more about America than that?” (284). America, as it is depicted in *VAS*, is a land where technology is intruding into the human body, not only by changing it physically—as seen in cyborgs—but also by changing the cultural landscape and its accompanying ethical values and assumptions.

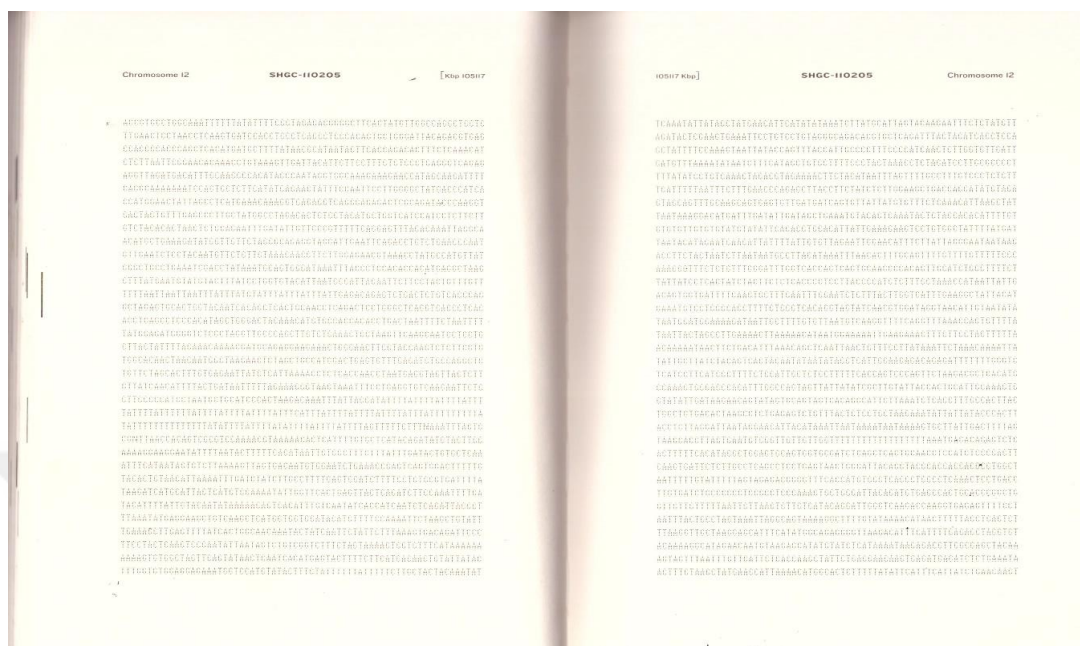


Fig. 20. Steve Tomasula, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (U of Chicago P, 2002), pp. 202-203.

2.3. MATERIAL SPACE: THE BODY AND THE BOOK

As has been stated previously, *VAS* is a novel written by Tomasula and designed by Stephen Farrell, whose name is included on the cover page of the book. Tomasula states that when the elements of design in the book are to be commented on or cited, Farrell's name should be referred to. As in *House of Leaves* which is designed by Danielewski, the visual multimedia elements of *VAS* show that designing novels physically and materially has become an issue to be dealt with during the production process of literature. With the advent of computers, digital writing technologies and media culture becoming increasingly visual, it has been a concern for these writers to update the novel through the use of hypertext with an eye on the tradition of artists' books/book arts and fiction that has used words and images.

In an interview, Tomasula states that he consciously made an effort "to use the body of the book as a metaphor for the human body and vice versa" ("Not Just Text"). This required him and Farrell to design the novel in a close relationship with its content. As discussed above, the narrative space of *VAS* concentrates on the human body within the helix of

language, history and genetics. Similarly, the book with its use of different colored pages, type fonts, and visual images becomes a metaphorical body mimicking the human body. The cover pages of the book are in the color of human skin showing veins underneath (figure 15). Various visual representations of the human body—pictures of skulls, eyes, hair, DNA codes, family pedigrees—populate the pages of the book, which all work to shape the material space of the book and make it a body in itself. As Sammercelli also points out in her article, *VAS* “obsessively reshuffles representations of the body while treating it both as subject matter and as a textual construct” (78).

Like *House of Leaves*, *VAS* uses hypertextuality as a tool to connect the intertextual elements that it incorporates and keep them together so that they interact with each other. However, unlike *House of Leaves*, hypertextuality in *VAS* does not function through footnotes (although there are footnotes in certain sections) but through vertical lines given on the sides of the pages (figure 21). These vertical lines work to divide the blocks of verbal text that are given in different type fonts. Each textual unit or block is justified to a different line so that they are separated from each other.

While the textual blocks are separated from each other both through type fonts and the lines they are justified, they also work in collaboration by commenting on and referring to each other. This kind of hypertextual structure is reminiscent of the act of scrolling down the pages on the computer screen. As the reader scrolls down the pages of *VAS*, s/he is faced with new blocks of text that ironically reveal conflicting information to the former blocks. Alex Link sees the vertical lines “as the most consistent design element” in the book stating that they work to break linearity throughout the novel. According to Link, the lines present a “visual impression . . . of its protagonist’s meditation on the linear continuity of ancestors and descendants” and thus they create “a visual pun on both lineages and linear plots.” Through breaks and ruptures (figures 21 and 22), the lines exemplify the impossibility of sustaining linear plots:

This line is prominent enough so as to appear akin to a continuous narrative thread, but it is actually often interrupted, scrambled (314), sutured (158, 253), or snipped (131). Its continuity, like that of a family line or a replicated gene

sequence, is not without interruption, variation, or mutation, and its linearity might simply be a convenient fiction, in contrast to its actual entanglements.

As discussed in the first part of this chapter, by breaking linearity on a textual level, digressions and nonlinearity extend the narrative spatially. Correspondingly, the hypertextual design of the novel leads to spatial extension on a visual level. The pages of the book become an open field on which codes, visuals, and verbal texts constantly pop up making it look like an active and animated web page. The dense intertextual elements of the novel are thus designed and presented on the material space of the book through an innovative hypertextual design that functions not through links (as in footnotes) but through vertical lines (figure 21). Like *House of Leaves*, by using hypertext, VAS remediates a writing style that has specifically been designed for computers. While doing this, it both mimics the web page and diverts from it by foregrounding the material specificities of the printed page and the book. In sections where screenshots of the webpages are given, hypertexts converge into each other (figures 22 and 23).

As noted by Tomasula and different critics of VAS, the book also functions as a metaphorical component to the human body. The hypertextual design of the book of and on the body exemplifies visually that the human body is not only a product of genetics but also under the influence of advanced technologies. The posthuman body as “a *material-informational* entity” (*How We Became Posthuman* 3) is observed in the characters of the flatland who consciously and unconsciously open their bodies to constructions and reconstructions. With its intertextually rich verbal text, and visual and material features informed by text books, comic strips, web design, and hypertext, the book is also a “material-informational entity.” In this respect, the book can be said to be the posthuman text per se on which different representations of the body interact.

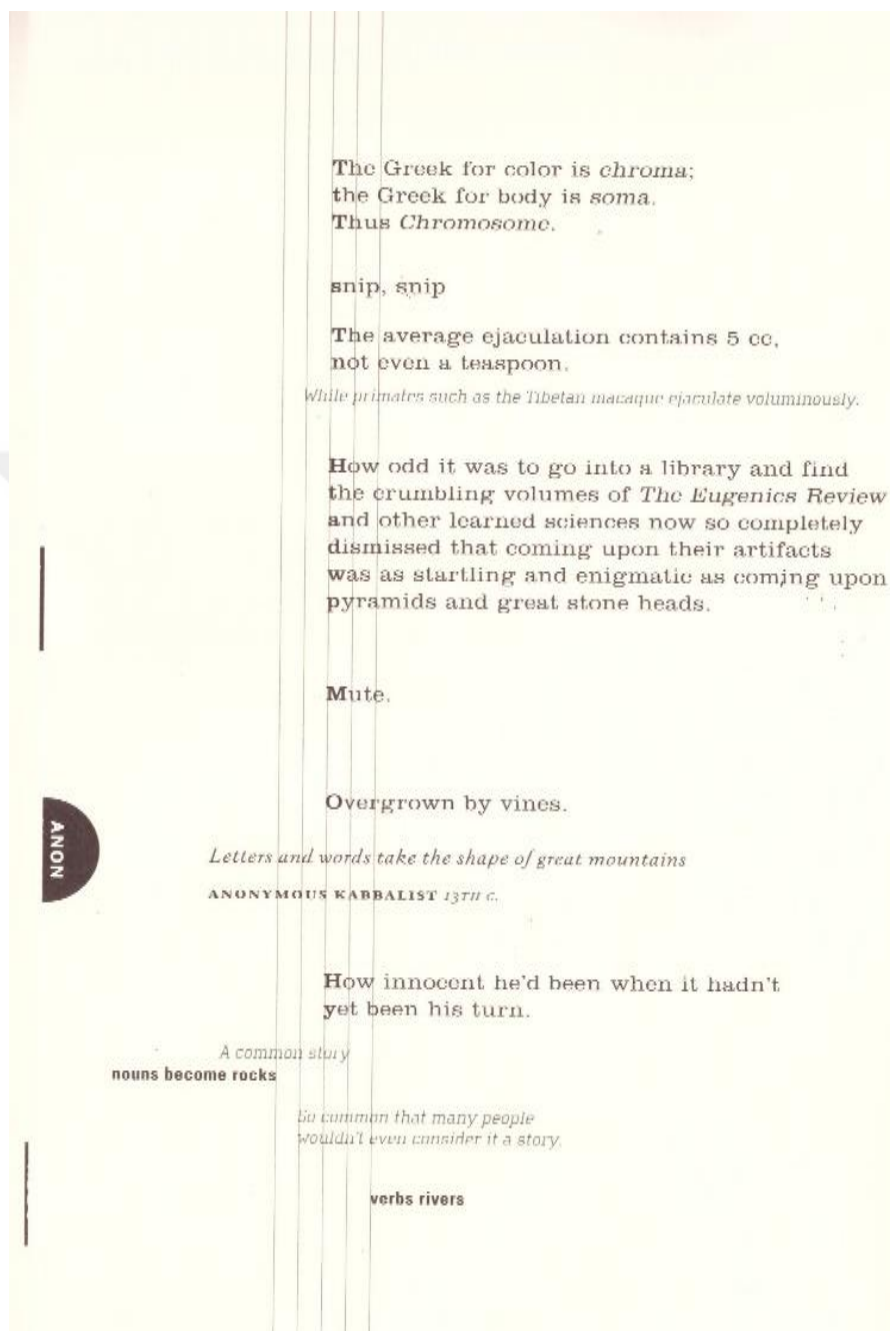


Fig. 21. Steve Tomasula, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (U of Chicago P, 2002), p. 18.

The posthuman text becomes further stratified when the pages of the book mutate into an opera stage as Sqaure and Circle finally decide to go to the opera upon the insistence of Mother. For thirty-six pages, *VAS* assumes the format of comic strip completely which it previously employed in certain sections. This section depicts the opera stage and the

performance of the opera called *The Strange Voyage of Imagining Chatter*. In this section, the left and right pages of the book are treated as a single page on which the opera stage is depicted. At the bottom of the page, Square and Circle are depicted as geometrical shapes of square and circle, and they watch the opera from their boxed seats (figures 25 and 26).



Fig. 22. Steve Tomasula, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (U of Chicago P, 2002), p. 131.

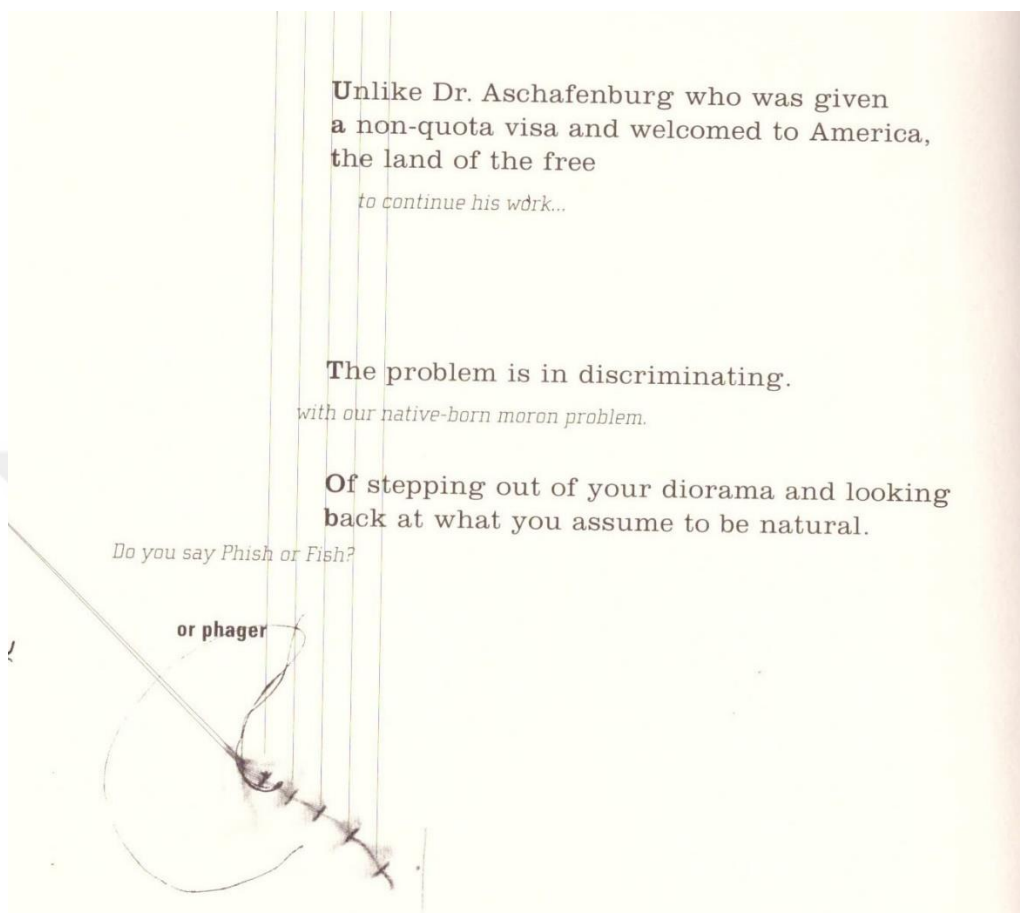


Fig. 23. Steve Tomasula, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (U of Chicago P, 2002), p. 158.

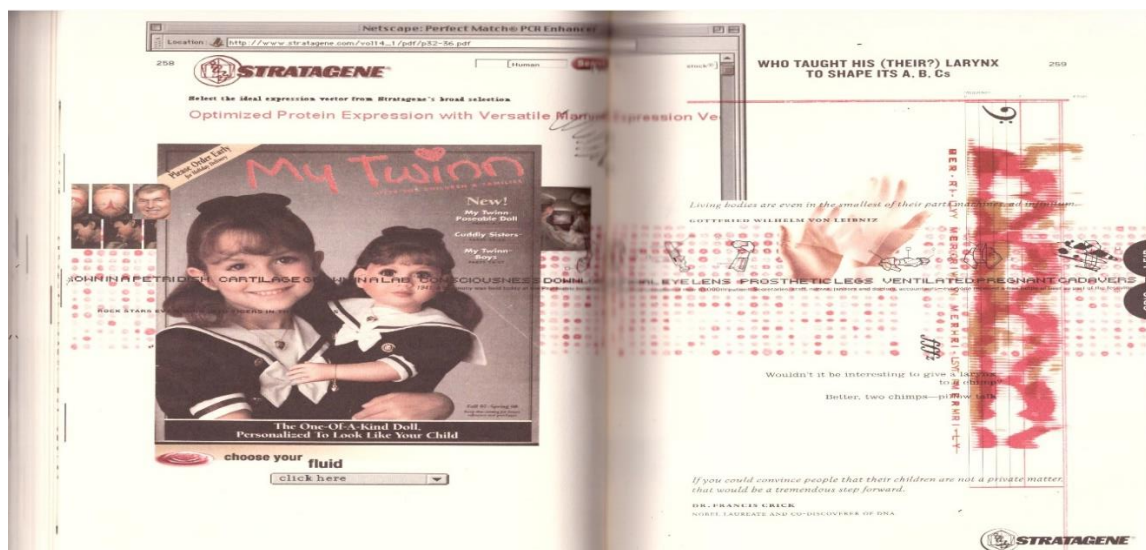


Fig. 24. Steve Tomasula, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (U of Chicago P, 2002), pp. 258, 259.

As the readers observe in the book, the opera has also changed and been adapted to Flatland. It tells the history of evolution among the chatter from people and animals. There are also animals on stage participating in the performance and the stage finally turns into a surgery room where head transplantations are done between monkeys. During the opera piece, two main narrative threads continue, one being the story in the opera, second being the interaction between Square and Circle. Here the couple is once again positioned among various sounds, images and texts and their mirrors what is happening on a larger scale in the opera. In this respect, *The Strange Voyage of Imagining Chatter* also enacts a metafictional purpose for VAS. It is a work about the “hyperinflation” of information, voices, discourses just like the rich intertextual novel. The opera is a multimedia art form containing music, performance and stage design. Its usage within VAS in the comic strip form foregrounds two features of the novel: firstly, the novel employs several techniques from multiple genres constantly blurring the borders between them in a postmodern/late postmodern sense, and secondly, the book grows into a textually and spatially rich platform for competing positions and meanings in which the opera presents only a slice of it as a cultural product.

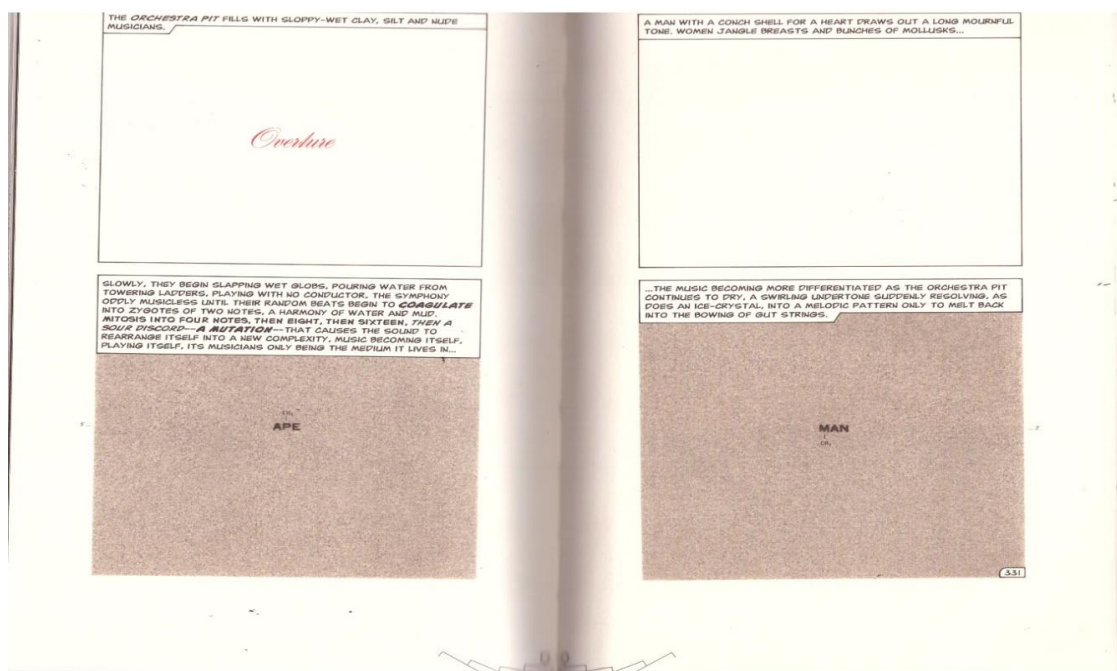


Fig. 25. Steve Tomasula, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (U of Chicago P, 2002), pp. 330, 331.

With its intertextual hypertext design and cross-genre features, VAS becomes “an information design solution” (Tomasula “Information Design” 436) to the vast complex changes in science and digital technologies. Tomasula and Farrell cannot help but redefine the novel connecting verbal and visual elements to each other in the writing/designing process in an age of information and media flux. This collaboration between Tomasula and Farrell and the interaction between the verbal and visual text render the different levels of spaces of the novel inseparable from each other. The spatial design of the novel cannot be thought of as independent from the workings of its narrative and material space. From this point of view, the form in the narrative and materiality of the book become part of the message conveyed in the novel. As a late postmodern novel, VAS addresses the questions regarding the form of the novel Tomasula discusses in his article. VAS is a product of late postmodernism in its “search of a form in sync with the seismic cultural shifts that have come to mark contemporary life as so different in degree as to be different in kind from that of early postmodern culture” (Tomasula 439-440). VAS responds to the cultural shifts it has been produced in and answers questions regarding whether postmodernism has died out or is still an influential body of criticism informing the present epoch.

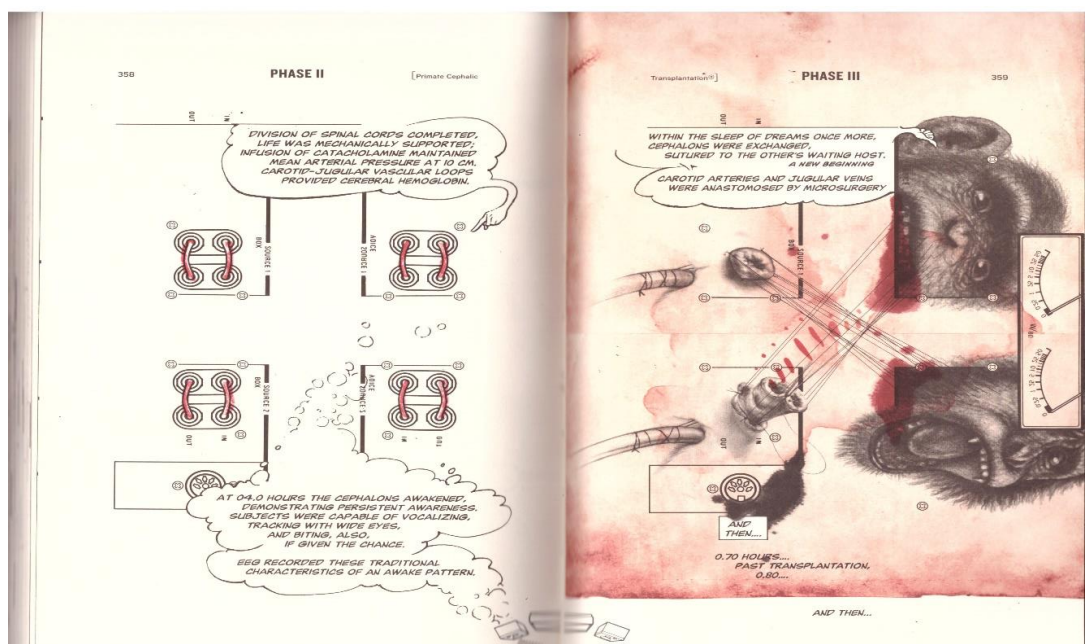


Fig. 26. Steve Tomasula, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (U of Chicago P, 2002), pp. 358, 359.

CHAPTER III

THE SPIRAL NETWORK: LANCE OLSEN'S *THEORIES OF FORGETTING*

“What does it remember? Itself, death as memory. An immense memory in which one dies.

First to forget. To remember only where one remembers nothing.

To forget: to remember everything as though by way of forgetting. There is a profoundly forgotten point from which every memory radiates. Everything is exalted in memory from something which is forgotten, an infinitesimal detail, a minuscule fissure into which it passes in its entirety.”

Maurice Blanchot, The Last Man

Published in 2014, *Theories of Forgetting* is Lance Olsen's twelfth novel. The novel is about the forgetting of the past, the present and eventually the future by two characters, Alana and Hugh; while a third character, their daughter Aila, tries to remember her past in letters to her brother Lance. In three parallel narratives, the characters gradually disappear into non-existence by forgetting. Like *House of Leaves* and *VAS: An Opera in Flatland*, *Theories of Forgetting* presents a narrative offering three major points of view for an understanding of the treatment of space. As a novel employing postmodernist narrative elements, *Theories of Forgetting* employs spatial form created by collage, metafiction and multiplicity. Its narrative space centers on Robert Smithson's earthwork *Spiral Jetty* (1970) on the Great Salt Lake in Utah. *Spiral Jetty* becomes a significant inspirational source for the novel that informs its spatial form, narrative space and finally spatial design. Along with *Spiral Jetty*, the narrative space of *Theories of Forgetting* is populated by cities in the United States and the Middle East and specific geographies like the Great Salt Lake, the Great Basin, countries like Jordan and archeological sites like Petra. This wide range of geographical locations not only shape the narrative space of *Theories of Forgetting* but they also become reflections of the characters' mental spaces. The stories of the three characters in the novel, Alana, Hugh and Aila are intertwined like a spiral, which is also

visually built on the pages of the book. With its spiral network, *Theories of Forgetting* problematizes the concept of forgetting not only as a temporal act of undoing but as a spatial deconstruction taking place in the spirals of mental space and memory.

Born in New Jersey in 1956, Lance Olsen is a writer and an academic who has published many works of and about fiction. He is currently the chair of the American Studies Department at the University of Rennes in France where he recently moved from Salt Lake City, Utah. Olsen teaches courses on modernism, postmodernism and experimental fiction.²⁶ He also serves as the Chair of the Board of Directors at Fiction Collective Two (FC2)²⁷, a publishing house founded in 1974 which describes itself as “an author-run, not-for-profit publisher of artistically adventurous, non-traditional fiction” (www.fc2.org). FC2 has published works by such authors as Raymond Federman, Ronald Sukenick, Michael Joyce, Steve Katz and Curtis White alongside a long list of innovative fiction writers.

²⁶ In the Spring semester of 2015, I was a visiting scholar at the University of Utah. Besides researching, I audited courses on Modernism and Experimental Fiction offered by Lance Olsen. Olsen introduced me to the genre of book arts/artists' books. I examined many examples of book arts at the J. Willard Marriott Library's Special Collection. See the library website for the catalog of artists' books and the book arts program offered by the University of Utah (www.lib.utah.edu/collections/special-collections/index.php) and Appendix 1 for the visuals of artists' books.

²⁷ Founded in 1974, Fiction Collective was an independent publishing house that supported the publication of innovative fiction which remained outside commercial and traditional fiction. The founders of the Collective, including Ronald Sukenick, Steve Katz, Peter Spielberg, Jonathan Baumbach, B. H. Friedman, used Brooklyn College as their center of operations (McCaffery 99). In his review (1978) of the Fiction Collective, Larry McCaffery presents an illuminating overview on the history and aims of the collective. According to McCaffery, one the most important policies of the collective is to give “the writer . . . complete control in all matters relating to his book, from stylistic and typographical decisions right down to the choice of jacket design, blurbs, and photograph” (99). McCaffery adds that the control of the writer on his/her work in the publishing process “ensures that the writer doesn't have to worry about fighting with publishers over each stylistic or typographic oddity and also means that his book will not be misrepresented after publication; in short, the artistic integrity of the work is guaranteed from the start” (99). The books that have been published by the collective have shown “an impressively wide range of innovative approaches” such as Raymond Federman's *Take It or Leave It*, Marianne Hauser's *The Talking Room*, and Thomas Glynn's *Temporary Sanity* (McCaffery 99-100). (McCaffery's review can be reached via www.jstor.org/stable/1207893.) As the members of the collective increased in the 1980s and due to organizational difficulties, The Fiction Collective became Fiction Collective Two in 1989 with “a board of directors who oversaw the division of labor among Collective members” (Shari Beck, www.subitopress.org/archives/414). Since then the Collective has continued to support and publish innovative fiction. The website of the Collective can be reached at www.fc2.org.

Lance Olsen is a prolific author having written fourteen novels,²⁸ and four short story collections.²⁹ His novels have been translated into Finnish, Portuguese, Italian, Polish, and Turkish.³⁰ Olsen has also written extensively on postmodern literature and his articles and essays have appeared in various critical journals and anthologies (faculty.utah.edu/u0580299-Lance_Olsen). Olsen's critical works focus on the literature of such writers as Vladimir Nabokov, Thomas Pynchon, William Gibson, Donald Barthelme, and Ronald Sukenick. In line with these names, Olsen's fictional work has been inspired by the aesthetics of postmodernism and innovative techniques and his works show the influences of digital writing technologies on the printed page and the book.

In this respect, almost all of Olsen's novels can be categorized under the larger title of metafiction for they are very conscious of their narrative structures and present various ways of thinking on the nature and materiality of fiction, writing, and reading. Although they vary in subject matter, his works show common formal features such as genre-blending as in *Girl Imagined by Chance* (2002) and *Head in Flames* (2009) and the use of multimedia as in *10:01* (2005) and its hypertext version (2014) on which Olsen collaborated with Tim Guthrie³¹ and *There's No Place Like Time* (2016) on which Olsen collaborated with his wife Andi Olsen, a collage artist and videographer. The juxtapositions of verbal and visual text as in *Theories of Forgetting* (2014) and postmodern adaptations of modernist texts such as *The Metamorphoses* by Franz Kafka in his novel *Anxious Pleasures* (2007) place Olsen among the experimental fiction writers.

²⁸ Olsen's novels in chronological order: *Live from Earth* (1991), *Tonguing the Zeitgeist* (1994), *Burnt* (1996), *Time Famine* (1996), *Freaknest* (2000), *Girl Imagined by Chance* (2002), *10:01* (2005), *Nietzsche's Kisses* (2006), *Anxious Pleasures* (2007), *Head in Flames* (2009), *Calendar of Regrets* (2010), *Theories of Forgetting* (2014), *There's No Place Like Time* (2016), and *Dream Lives of Debris* (2017) (<http://www.lanceolsen.com/novels.html>).

²⁹ His short story collections include *Scherzi, I Believe* (1994), *Sewing Shut My Eyes* (2000), *Hideous Beauties* (2003) and *How to Unfeel the Dead* (2014) (www.lanceolsen.com/collections.html).

³⁰ Two of Olsen's novels, *Nietzsche's Kisses* (2006) and *Anxious Pleasures* (2007), have been translated into Turkish by Işıl Özbek and published by Versus Kitap publishing house in 2007 as *Nietzsche'nin Öpücükleri* (2007) and *Tedirgin Hazlar* (2007).

³¹ The hypermedia novel can be reached at www.lanceolsen.com/1001.html.

Olsen's fictional works have a certain critical sensibility and theory is always part of his fiction. On the other hand, his theoretical works also present physical/material properties. He redesigns the page by altering its topography and changing the way an academic article looks like on the print page. Therefore both his fiction and theoretical texts can be seen as critical fiction or critifiction.³² He writes with a certain awareness of contemporary political, social, and literary criticism and discussions. As he discusses in one of his articles, the border between fiction and theory has ceased to exist in contemporary times and this creates an "amphibious aesthetics" in writing ("Notes Toward the Musicality of Creative Disjunction, Or: Fiction by Collage" 130). In other words, this double sided aesthetics is constructed by the coexistence of theory and fiction brought together on the same surface of writing. He maintains that just as the categorizations of genres such as postmodern or science fiction are questionable because they are intertwined, so is the difference between theory and fiction:

[W]e are also witnessing the proliferation of a postcritical writing that questions the need for discriminating between such apparently singular species as *theory* and *fiction*. . . . We are witnessing, that is, the advent of performative critifictions dedicated to effacing, or at least deeply and richly complicating, the accepted difference between privileged and subordinate discourses.

Such an embracing of critifiction prepares a suitable ground for analyzing dominant and subordinate discourses and understanding what creates or privileges them over others in the first place. According to Olsen, collage technique, or in his words "collage imagination," is at the heart of critifiction as it enables the bringing of the two, theory and fiction, together. This kind of writing seeks to free "juxtaposition, mosaic, conflation, fusion and confusion, Frankenstein fictions, cyborg scripts, centaur texts, the narratologically amphibious writings that embrace a poetics of beautiful monstrosity" (130) within the space of fiction writing.

³² Federman's ideas on critifiction and/or surfiction were mentioned in the Introduction.

As discussed in the first two chapters, the critifictional practices in *House of Leaves* and *VAS* are evident throughout the novels. *House of Leaves* includes footnotes and references to many real and faux sources which function through hypertextual links and thus it makes use of and plays with the academic writing style that incorporates a number of sources to legitimize itself. *VAS* builds up an intertextual hypertext by integrating quotations from different people on issues concerning the human body. A similar approach is followed in Olsen's fiction, especially in *Theories of Forgetting*, which is the main focus of this chapter. Although *Theories of Forgetting* does not include references to critical sources as much as *House of Leaves* and *VAS*, it still employs what Olsen calls "collage imagination" and an "amphibious aesthetics" with its combinations of quotations, photographs, news clippings and pictures. Following the footsteps of early and late postmodernist novels, these three works exercise collage practices, yet how they exercise it render these works still inventive and experimental. Like *House of Leaves* and *VAS*, *Theories of Forgetting* depends upon the workings of hypertext as the fictional narratives and theoretical quotations are connected to each other. The hypertextual design of the text enables collage practices to be done more conveniently and makes the pages of the book visually rich. In the same article, Olsen quotes from Shelley Jackson, the writer of *The Patchwork Girl* (1995)³³ which is one of the important representatives of hypertext fiction and published by Eastgate Systems. Jackson connects collage aesthetics to hypertextual writing:

In collage, writing is stripped of the pretense of originality, and appears as a practice of mediation, of selection and contextualization, a practice, almost, of reading. In which one can be surprised by what one has to say, in the forced intercourse between texts or the recombinant potential in one text. . . . Writers court the sideways glances of sentences mostly bent on other things. They solicit bad behavior, collusion, conspiracies. *Hypertext just makes explicit what everyone does already*. After all, we are all collage artists. (Qtd. in Olsen 133, my italics)

The collage practices energized through hypertextual writing not through codes on an electronic device but on the printed page bring the third category to focus in this study

³³ Jackson's hypertext novel has been mentioned in footnote 25 in the second chapter.

which has been named and discussed until now as the spatial extension or the material space of fiction. Olsen puts forward that “[c]ollage fiction draws attention to the sensuality of the page, the physicality of the book” (“Notes Toward the Musicality” 132-133). Unlike web based hypertext, hypertext practices on the printed page open the space of the page to different dynamics such as the use of pictures, innovations in typography as well as the topography of the page, all of which necessitate the readers to pay attention to the “technological reality” of the medium (Olsen “Graphiction” 155). In his analysis of Ronald Sukenick’s fiction, Olsen focuses on the technological features of Sukenick’s novels *98.6*, *Doggy Bag*, and *Mosaic Man* and he sees them as works of “heteromedial intertextuality” (155). Heteromedial intertextuality is sustained by

[an] attempt to focus our attention on the pageness of the page, and/or (intentionally or unintentionally) work against the conventional structure of Western writing (and hence reading strategies), often by calling attention to writing’s mechanical status before us and disrupting it, complicating it—along the way making self-conscious traditional reading assumptions and processes—by means of various graphictional play, a term I employ here in its widest possible sense to include not only the introduction of image into text, but also unexpected typography, layout, spacing, punctuation, collage elements, etc., thereby giving rise to HETEROMEDIAL INTERTEXTUALITY. (Olsen “Graphiction” 155)

Olsen’s coinage of heteromedial intertextuality draws upon Michel Foucault’s definition of heteroclite. He likens Sukenick’s complex and multilayered texts to what Foucault meant by heteroclite, “the linking together of things that are inappropriate . . . the disorder in which fragments of a large number of possible orders glitter separately in the dimension, without law or geometry” (Foucault *The Order of Things* xix). The understanding of textuality as heterogeneous, layered, fragmented and disrupted is not only constructed by a postmodern sensibility but also, and most importantly, reflects a spatial awareness of textuality. The text is space that hosts a variety of texts given through different media. In a heteroclite, space is not organized according to a certain order but defies any systematic planning and laws of geometry.



Fig. 27. Robert Smithson. *Spiral Jetty*. 1970. Great Salt Lake, Utah. Photograph by Gianfranco Gorgoni. KhanAcademy.org. www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-1010/minimalism-earthworks/a/smithsons-spiral-jetty.

In the following sections, *Theories of Forgetting* will be analyzed through the three categories that have been used in the first two chapters. Similar to *House of Leaves* and *VAS*, *Theories of Forgetting* offers three major levels of space: spatial from, the narrative space, and the material space. On the structural level, the novel builds up spatial form through collage and genre blending, metafiction, and the multiplicity of narrative voices given synchronically. Although the novel handles issues concerning time, erasure and forgetting, it takes a spatial construct, *Spiral Jetty*, as a model for its formal, narrative and material structure. In relation to these, in the second section of this chapter, the focus will be on the narrative space of the novel and in the third one, the focus will be on the material features of the spatial design of the book.

3.1. STRUCTURAL SPACE: SPATIAL FORM AND POSTMODERN NARRATIVE ELEMENTS

With such a critical awareness, it is no surprise that Olsen has produced a novel like *Theories of Forgetting* that redefines the form, the content and the shape of the novel. *Theories of Forgetting* tells three stories centering on three family members. The first narrative is about the wife Alana who is making a short documentary film called *Theories of Forgetting* on Robert Smithson's earthwork the *Spiral Jetty* (1970) on the Great Salt Lake in Utah as she suffers from the Frost, an epidemic that has recently broken out. Alana suffers from the cold and her bodily movements, memory and finally her use of language deteriorate. The second narrative is about the husband Hugh, a bookshop owner in Salt Lake City. After the death of his wife Alana, he becomes disoriented and occupies his old house where a woman whose identity is not clearly given lives. After living/occupying her/his house for a while, Hugh makes a journey to Jordan where he is kidnapped by the Sleeping Beauties, a global religious cult worshipping barbiturates. The third narrative is written in the first person by their daughter Aila who is an art critic living in Berlin. In her notes attached to Hugh's diary, it is revealed that her father's diary was sent to Aila after he disappeared in Jordan. Aila writes notes and letters to her absent brother Lance from whom she is long driven apart. It is also stated on the cover of the book that the book is edited (not written) by Lance Olsen. He turns out to be the absent brother Lance in the novel whom Aila writes to and he is the one who finally brings the three narratives of the family together in the book *Theories of Forgetting*.

Theories of Forgetting situates the stories of these three characters by making use of the space of the page in experimental ways. The pages are separated into half, each narrative occupying a certain section while they also interact as can be seen in Alana's and Hugh's narratives. The positioning of Alana's and Hugh's narratives on different sides of the page creates a cinematic effect known as the "reverse angle shot" which is "a shot that views the action from the opposite side of the previous shot, as during a conversation between two actors" (*Dictionary.com*). Just as in the reverse angle shot, the topographical use of the page in such a manner gives "the effect of looking from one actor to the other"

(*Dictionary.com*) and in this case from Alana to Hugh, and from Hugh to Alana. Moreover, Aila's notes are attached to Hugh's section and they are given mostly in marginalia and sometimes overwritten on Hugh's diary blocking and erasing his words (figure 28).

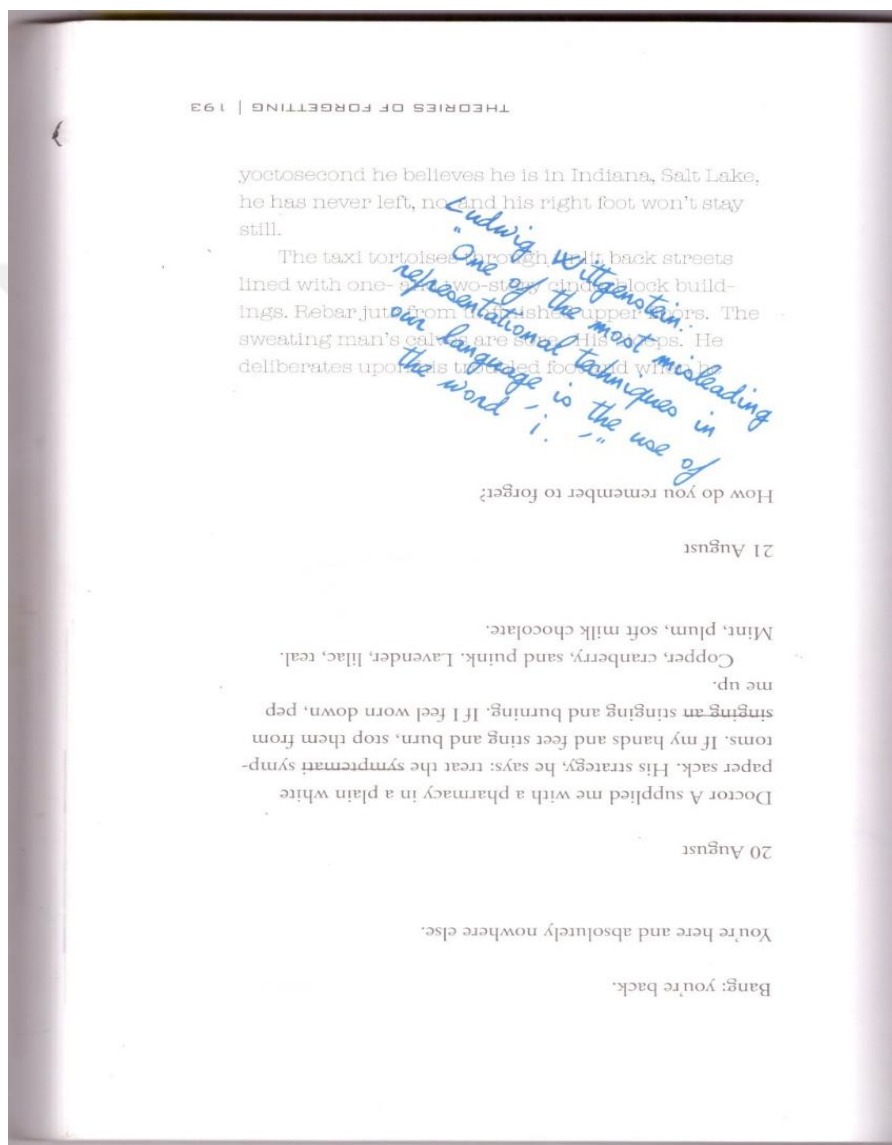


Fig. 28. Lance Olsen. *Theories of Forgetting* (FC2, 2014), Hugh's section, p. 186.

The book cover (figure 29) may also surprise the readers who expect to see a front cover that signals the right place to begin reading. Both the front and back covers of *Theories of Forgetting* have the same design and as one flips the book s/he sees the very same page. With its innovative techniques as well as the stories on forgetting, remembering, memory,

time and erasure, *Theories of Forgetting* has received favorable criticism since its publication in 2014. Yuriy Tarnawsky remarks that with his inventive narration techniques, Olsen both “delight[s] our souls and stimulate[s] our minds” (17). In his review of the novel, Luke Taylor defines *Theories of Forgetting* as “a masterful work structured around Robert Smithson’s earthwork” and an “elegantly crafted novel.” Michael McLane considers *Theories of Forgetting* a continuation of Olsen’s “long-running, cross-genre experimentation with fragmentary and disintegrating narrative,” and the novel carries Olsen’s project further “into new territories preoccupied with both the nature of memory and the materiality of language and books.” Nick Kocz states that *Theories of Forgetting* is a novel that successfully sustains readability despite its self-conscious innovation.

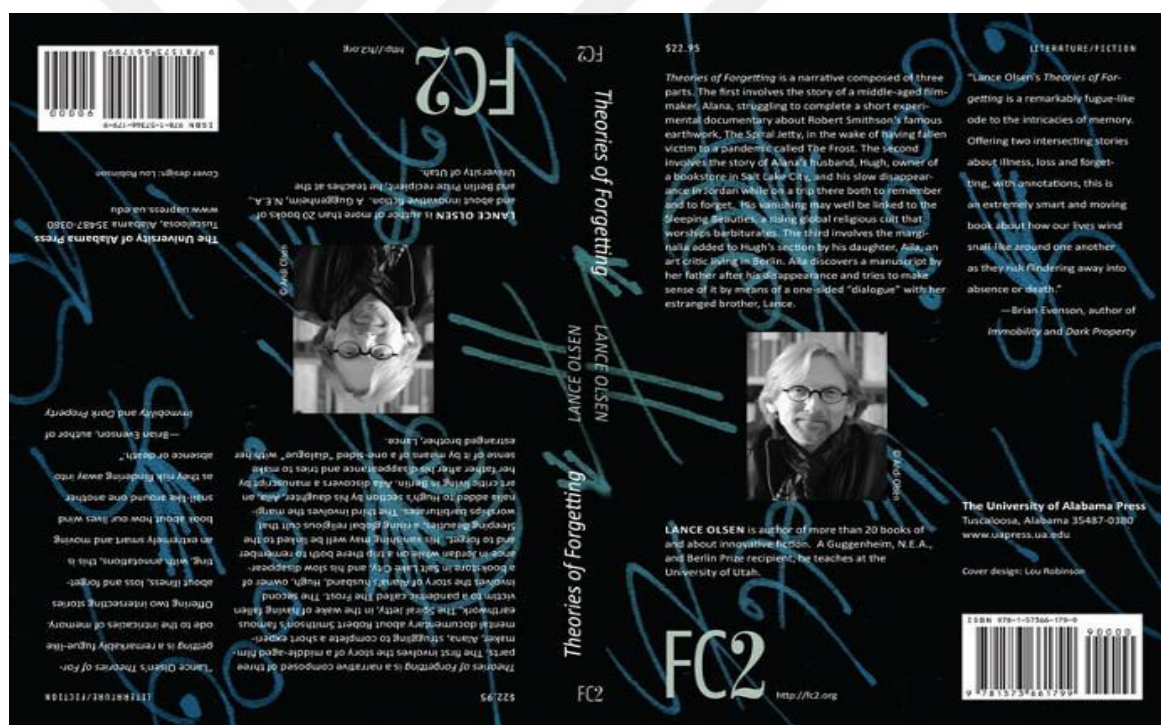


Fig. 29. Cover copy. Lou Robinson. *Theories of Forgetting*, by Lance Olsen, FC2, 2014. HeavyFeatherReview.com. heavyfeatherreview.com/2014/06/18/theories-of-forgetting-by-lance-olsen/.

The amphibious aesthetics of collage Olsen talks about in his article is prevalent throughout the novel. Like *House of Leaves* and *VAS*, *Theories of Forgetting* includes elements of collage such as the inclusion of photographs, charts, x-rays, newspaper clippings, and quotations by Robert Smithson, Michel Butor, Maurice Blanchot, Jacques

Derrida, and Jean Baudrillard to name a few. These intertextual elements not only provide a multilayered textuality but also act as metafictional devices that comment on textuality, fictionality, and the structural features of the novel. These theoretical insights by philosophers, writers, and critics serve as the first aspect of collage aesthetics. For instance, Roland Barthes is quoted by Aila where he states “[a] writer is a person for whom language is a problem” (Hugh’ section 231). In the three narratives of the novel, it is seen that the language and the way it is used by the characters are reflective of their mental status, and for all of them, language has become problematic due to different reasons. Or at another instance, Robert Smithson is quoted stating that “For my film—a film is a spiral made up of frames—I would have myself filmed from a helicopter—from the Greek helix, helikos, meaning spiral” (Alana’s section 182). This quotation illuminates not only the shape of Smithson’s earthwork and the form of his film but also the structure of the book *Theories of Forgetting* which is shaped like a spiral. Similar intertextual elements can be found throughout the novel that act as self-reflective devices. Upon these, Olsen situates another multilayered narrative, the fictional stories of Alana, Hugh, and Aila by often blending genres and fact and fiction. With a sense of “fractal aesthetics” (Alana 300), *Theories of Forgetting* brings elements of collage such as Alana’s, Hugh’s, and Aila’s verbal texts, photographs and pictures, and material specificities of the book to the fore. A spatial ground is thereby set up in the novel. On this ground, a linear narration does not function since the reading process does not follow a certain progression from the beginning to the end but is disrupted with multiple narratives and verbal/visual texts.

As a cross-genre fiction, *Theories of Forgetting* incorporates the features of diary novels with word-image novels. Each section in the novel is in the form of journals and diaries and the characters write their lives as Robert Smithson who wrote “his autobiography in space” with *Spiral Jetty* (Alana 102). Alana’s section, for example, starts with her journal entries after she starts to feel the effects of her illness. She tries to diagnose her condition and the reason of her inability to use her hands properly. She writes about different types of illnesses in her diary as the probable causes of her condition, she also adds newspaper clippings that inform the reader about an epidemic that has recently broken out. This part

of the novel contemplates on the issues of health, illnesses, the transience of life as Alana's condition worsens: "The bewildering thing," Alana states "is that any of us are healthy at all . . . and then you realize that feeling is a temporary illusion" (Alana 112).³⁴ Although her entries proceed chronologically with certain dates on them, when her condition worsens, she loses her sense of time and starts to forget things. Her narrative oscillates between her illness, her past which she remembers in bits and pieces and the present and she tries to create a narrative in "a rabble of connections" (Alana 183). Alana's diary incorporates a variety of media as she includes photographs of her parents (figure 30), blurred photographs of herself, Robert Smithson and his wife Nancy Colt (figure 31), and the *Spiral Jetty* throughout her narrative. Here, her broken and decaying verbal expressions interact with the photographs. This turns her diary into a collage of word and image and therefore into a spatially designed text in which the reader has to move between different layers of verbal and visual texts.

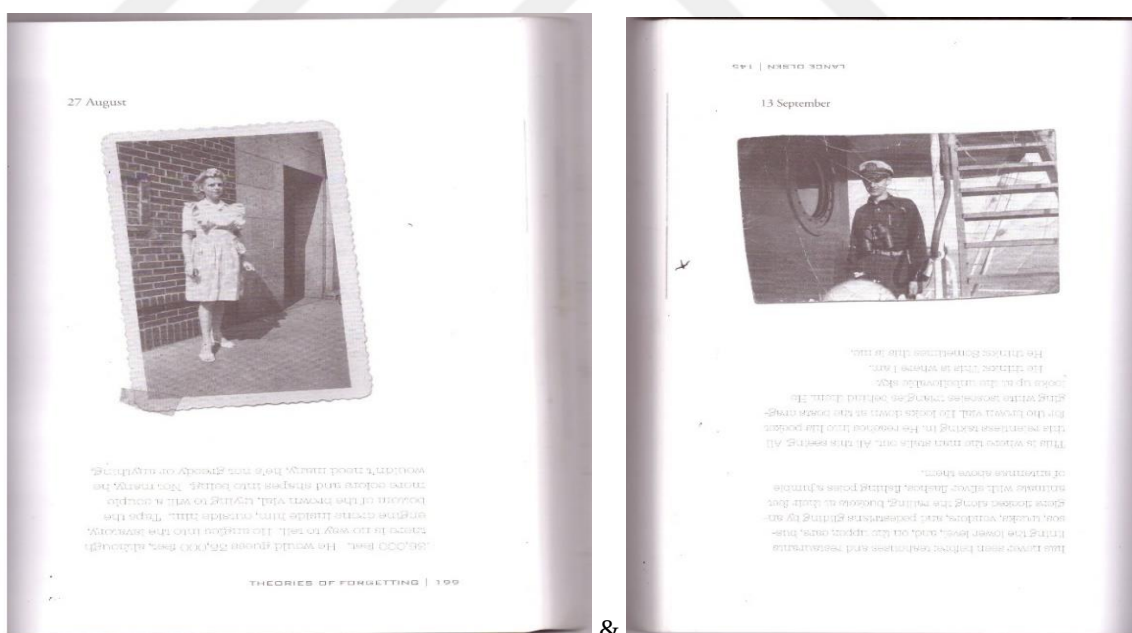


Fig. 30. Lance Olsen, *Theories of Forgetting* (FC2, 2014), pp. 199, 234.

³⁴ As there are three main narrative voices in the novel, citations in the parentheses will be given with the name of the characters who write them.

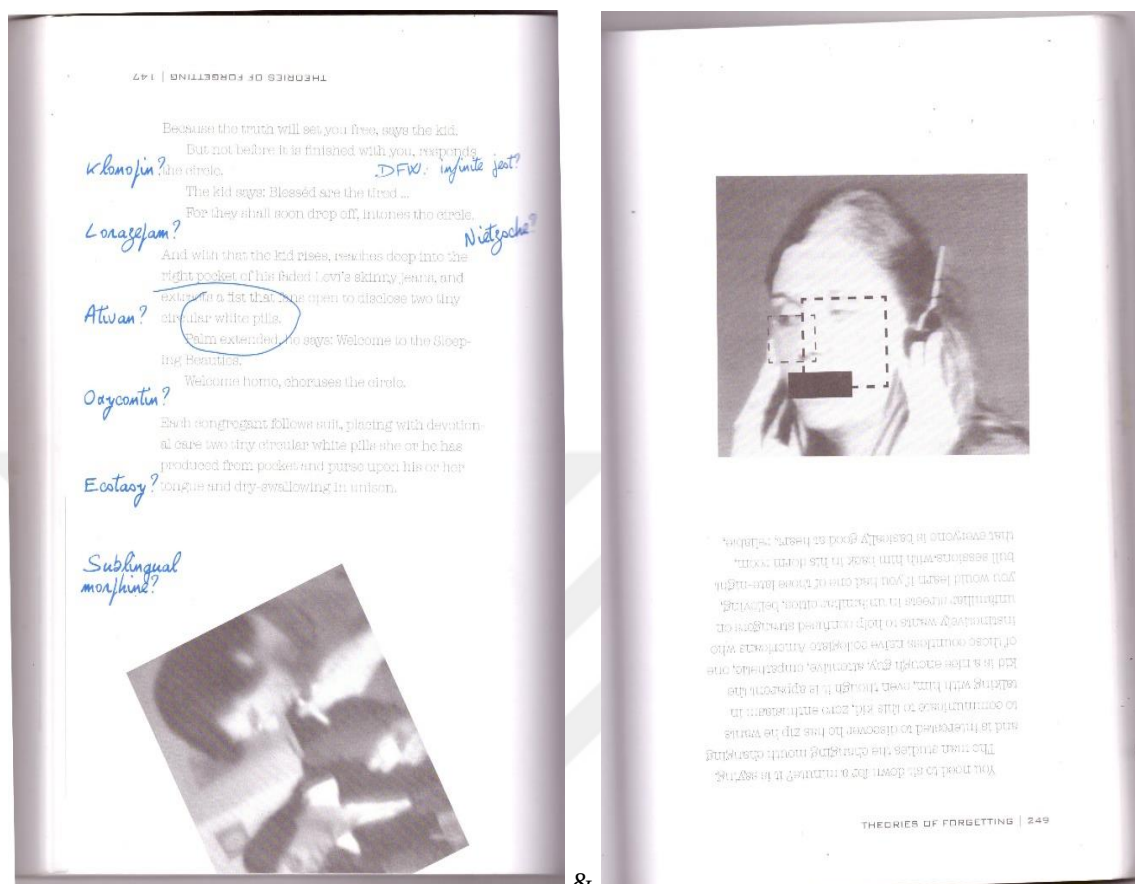


Fig. 31. Lance Olsen, *Theories of Forgetting* (FC2, 2014), Alana's section, pp. 147, 249.

Hugh's diary does not have any specific dates on it since the sense of time is lost in this world and in this section. As his narrative progresses, it is revealed that he starts keeping a diary straight after his wife Alana dies. Hugh reads and responds to Alana's diary as he writes his own. In order to remember her, he tries to immerse himself into her diary: "He didn't read paragraph by paragraph, or sentence by sentence, or even word by word, but letter by letter, how she formed each one, how the lines made their adventures across the page, the looped l's, the slants" (Hugh 156). Whereas in Alana's section, there is a gradual mental deterioration due to her illness; in Hugh's section, there is a continuing sense of amnesia from the beginning. Hugh's alienation from himself is exemplified by his referring to himself as "the Man" and the use of third person narration in his personal diary. "Sometimes the man had the feeling," Hugh states, "he had misplaced himself" (Hugh 155). The language Olsen uses in this section is fragmented, disrupted and cancel

itself all the time that is reflective of Hugh's disturbed mental state. It becomes a language of doing and undoing, winding and unwinding with a series of run-on sentences: "He thinks cat before he remembers there isn't any cat before he remembers there was no cat, but maybe now there is," (Hugh 14) or in another instance: "He can see it and then he can't and then he can" (Hugh 16).

With hypertextual links, Aila's personal notes and letters, "may be a novel, and may be a warped autobiography" (Olsen "Book Notes"), are attached to Hugh's diary. Generally, Aila seems less interested in her father's writings than she is in her estranged brother Lance (Kocz). Associating the name of the character with the name of the author is used in postmodern fiction in a playful way to question the identity constructions and classifications that appear as the author-the character dichotomy. It also becomes a tool to blur the boundaries between genres of fiction and autobiography, a genre that claims to have a hold on the truth by depending on facts. In *Theories of Forgetting*, Olsen uses his name for the absent character in the narrative which further complicates the narrative layers and ontological boundaries between fiction and reality. It may bring some questions on the fictional level: If Lance has long been estranged from his family and is absent, how and why does he bother to edit the journals of his family members? This literary device known as "self-insertion" (*Your Dictionary*) may lead to questions concerning the boundaries of fact and fiction: Is Lance Olsen writing about his real life, or does he use the postmodern way of mixing the two, or make the readers question the fictionality of life and the truth one can find in literature? Aila incorporates a number of quotations besides her own comments in the marginalia to Hugh's narrative. These three characters along with the absent brother Lance are not only engaged in the processes of writing diaries but are also occupied with the processes of reading (in Alana's case, making a documentary about *Spiral Jetty* can be considered as a process of reading). Aila's incorporation of J. M. Coetzee's ideas on autobiography³⁵ act as a self-conscious and self-reflexive narrative tool

³⁵ The 2003 Nobel Prize laureate, J. M. Coetzee (1940-) is famous for his "autre-biographies" or "anti-autobiographical" books. His Works *Boyhood* (1997), *Youth* (2002), and *Summertime* (2009) are such examples in which he writes about himself in the third person. In *Summertime*, there are interviews by a

in the novel. Coetzee states that “[a]ll autobiography is autre-biography” (Hugh/Aila 155). This idea is exemplified in the novel where the characters read personal histories of other family members. Each one of them also keeps an account of her/his own life and becomes a writer of her/his own personal histories. While writing about themselves through and under the workings of memory and forgetting, they also write on many things other than their own selves. The motives behind writing about one’s self and how accurately it can be done are discussed by Olsen in his “anti-textbook” *Architectures of Possibility* (2012) where Olsen defines reading and writing as practices of “understanding” the world around us:

Writing is a manner of reading. It is a mode of engaging with other texts in the world, which itself is a kind of text. And reading is a manner of writing, interpretation, meaning-making. Which is to say that writing and reading are variants of the same activity. Existence comes to us in bright, disconnected splinters of experience. We narrativize those splinters so our lives feel as if they make sense—as if they possess things like beginnings, muddles, ends, and reasons. The word *narrative* is ultimately derived, through the Latin *narrare*, from the Proto-Indo-European root *gno-*, which comes into our language as the verb to know. At some profoundly deep stratum, we conceptualize narrative as a means of understanding, of creating cosmos out of chaos. (14)

Alana, Hugh and Aila read each other’s narratives and write their own with the similar motives Olsen is referring to. The processes of reading and writing by the characters reflect the status of the reader of *Theories of Forgetting*. In a nested chain of narratives, the reader becomes the fourth person after Hugh, Aila, and Lance who reads the diaries of these family members. And hypothetically, s/he can create a fifth textual level by adding notes and comments or by underlining and highlighting certain sections in the novel. These superimpositions of textual layers—one diary on the other—are metafictional devices destabilizing the status of the narrative worlds as well as the status of the subject “I” and

fictional character, Mr. Vincent who writes a biography of J. M. Coetzee, a famous writer who has recently passed away. He interviews with people who often define Coetzee in negative terms. According to Thomas Jones, *Summertime* is “an elegant request that the sum of Coetzee’s existence as a public figure should be looked for only in his writing.” Jones, Thomas. “*Summertime* by J. M. Coetzee.” 6 September 2009. *The Guardian*, www.theguardian.com/books/2009/sep/06/jm-coetzee-summertime.

opening them up to critical practices.³⁶ These devices remind the reader there is no “pure” fiction, a definite reality, or an uncontested sense of self but a series of rewritings and interpretations that blend and produce fictional and personal narratives.

The novel uses metafictional devices such as contemplations by the characters on the stories and their structures. For example, both Hugh and Alana comment on the nature of their (hi)stories in a self-conscious manner. Alana is aware of the fact that she is living in a story called life. No matter how hard she tries “to outwit its narrative arc,” one day “something will go wrong” and the story will end (Alana 99). Similarly, Hugh contemplates on the nature of life and stories by referring to their repetitiveness. “[T]hat is the human hub,” he thinks, “believing every story has more or less the same beginning and the same ending, the same bedrock and architecture” (Hugh 131). Aila’s annotations further illuminate the self-conscious narrative providing its criticism already within it and turning the novel into metafiction.

There are other metafictional devices rendering the ontological status of the fictional world unstable, similar to the ones encountered and discussed in *House of Leaves* such as when the character Will Navidson reads a book called *House of Leaves* within the fictional frame of *House of Leaves*. There are two specific examples in the novel that break the narrative frames between the fictional and “extratextual reality” (Malina 1) and thus create metalepsis, “a paradoxical contamination between the world of the telling and the world of the told” (Pier) in the narrative. According to Debra Malina, more than being a mere playful narrative device, metalepsis “dramatizes the problematization of the boundary between fiction and reality endemic to the postmodern condition” (2). As Alana’s memory fails her at the end of her narrative, she cannot recognize her husband Hugh who at the time happens to be reading a book called *Theories of Forgetting*:

~~what are they doing? I ask the strange man.~~³⁷

³⁶ Ludwig Wittgenstein is quoted in the novel suggesting: “One of the most misleading representational techniques in our language is the use of the Word ‘i’” (Hugh 186). The representation of the subject through the personal pronoun “I” is problematic because it is a linguistic construct.

Who?

he is sitting in a chair next to my bed reading The title of the book in his hands
is *Theories of Forgetting*.

His face is well lit yet I can't place him

he seems like a good person, someone

I can count on, but i don't trust him

All the people, I tell him.

Where are you now he asks (Alana 327).

It is not clear at this point whether Alana remembers the title of her documentary film and imagines the book having the same title or Hugh actually reads *Theories of Forgetting*. In either case, the fictional frame of the narrative is broken while creating a "Tangled Hierarchy" (McHale 119) between the fictional and meta-fictional/extra-textual worlds. A second example of this sort occurs when Hugh watches a video in a modern art museum during his wanderings in Europe and Jordan. The video shows a woman crawling and "kissing everything in her path" (Hugh 147) and while Hugh is watching the video over and over again, the readers are referred to a website that exists beyond the fictional world (figure 32 and 33). This hypertextual link that directs the readers to the World Wide Web similarly breaks the narrative frame of the fictional world.

³⁷ Footnote 17 in the first chapter can be reviewed for a discussion of the act of putting words under erasure with strikethroughs. This same device is used by Danielewski and Olsen for different narrative purposes.

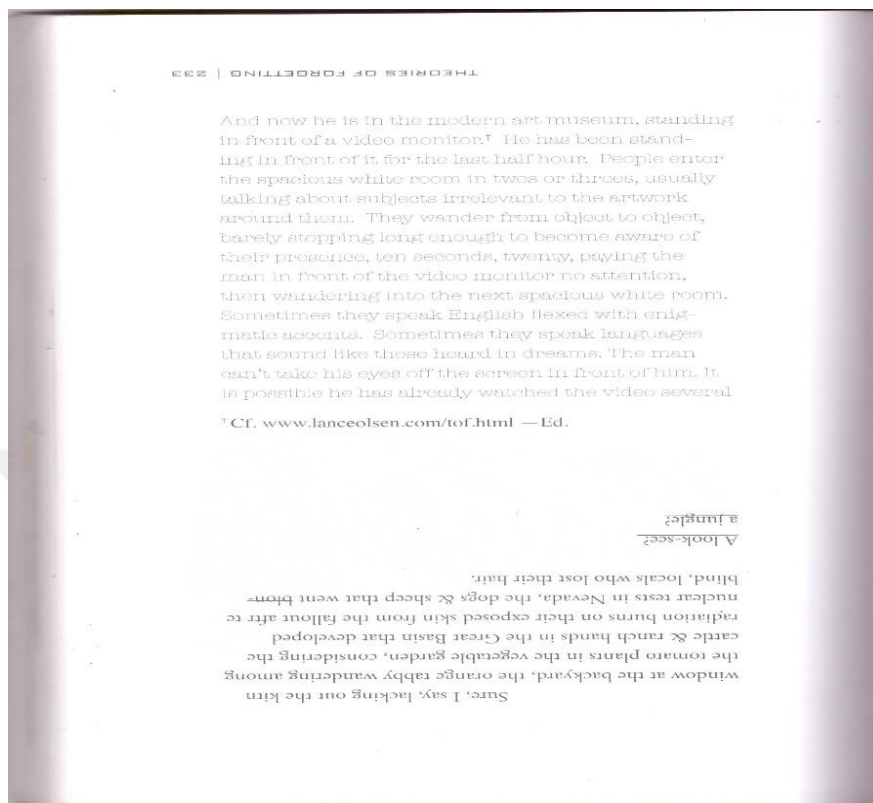


Fig. 32. Lance Olsen, *Theories of Forgetting* (FC2, 2014), Hugh's section, pp. 146.

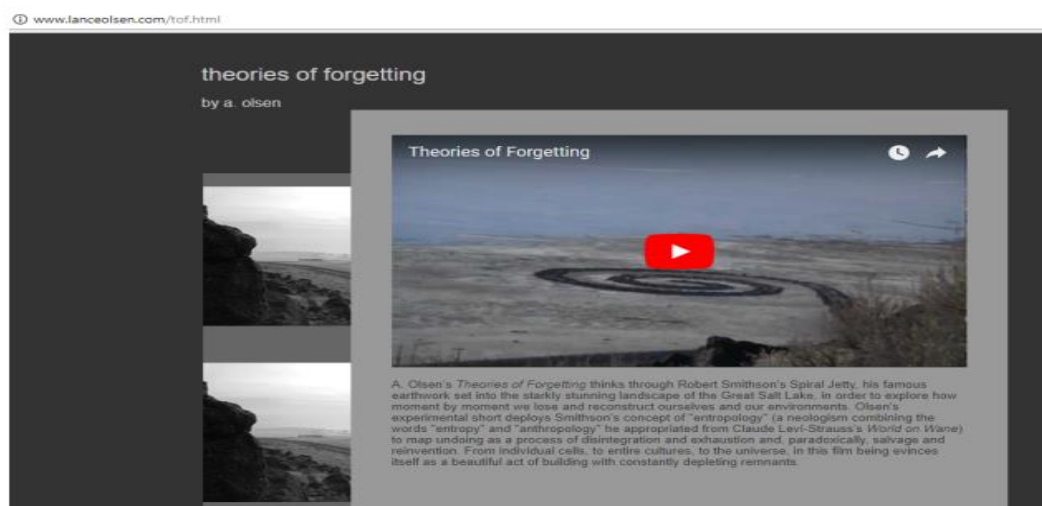


Fig. 33. The screen shot of the webpage that is referred to in the novel on page 146 in Hugh's section (<http://www.lanceolsen.com/tof.html>). The interaction between the novel and the web is prevalent here since they refer to each other in a self-reflective manner. While Hugh is watching a video in a modern art museum in the novel, he comes across the name of a website. When the reader of the novel goes to that website s/he comes across a video where Lance Olsen reads the section from the novel in which Hugh is watching the video.

Besides these metafictional moments, similar to *House of Leaves* and *VAS*, *Theories of Forgetting* maintains the multiplicity of narrative voices by a synchronic arrangement of the text which renders the narrative a spatial construct. As discussed above, the three narrative voices in the novel attach themselves to one another, Hugh to Alana's and Aila to Hugh's diary. The synchronicity of narration is sustained by the page design and hypertext both of which necessitate a conscious approach to the materiality of the page. First of all, Alana's and Hugh's sections are separated by occupying different sections of the same page. Secondly, Aila's annotations to Hugh's text are given in marginalia and sometimes superimposed on Hugh's text (figure 34).

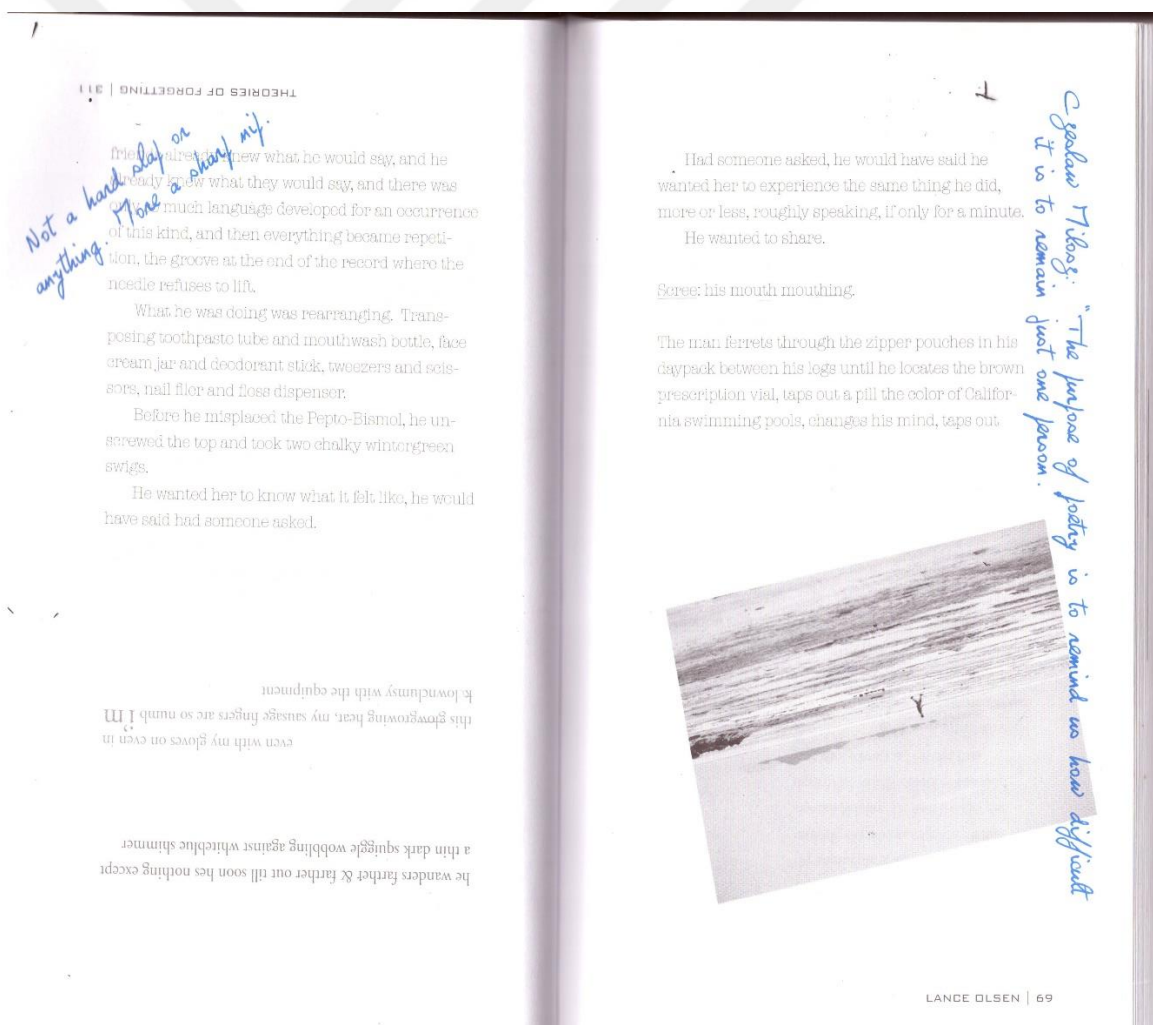


Fig. 34. Lance Olsen, *Theories of Forgetting* (FC2, 2014), Hugh's section, pp. 68, 69.

3.2. NARRATIVE SPACE: *SPIRAL JETTY* AND SMOOTH SPACE

The landscape artist Robert Smithson (1938-1973) created one of his iconic earthworks *Spiral Jetty* on the Rozel Point peninsula, then “an abandoned industrial site” (Alana 31) on the Great Salt Lake in Utah three years before he died in a plane crash. In the making of this earthwork, Smithson used “over six thousand tons of black basalt rocks and earth from the site” (www.diaart.org/visit/visit/robert-smithson-spiral-jetty). The use of such industrial waste as material for his work was Smithson’s way of “turning back deeper into himself, shaped by the environments he grew up around New Jersey: rusted-out factories, abandoned quarries, the turnpike, the shambled landscape of Atlantic City” (Alana 29). He finally created “a glassy black spiral 1500 feet long and 15 [feet] wide stretching counter-clockwise into a vast swath of translucent red water—in Smithson’s mind the color of the primordial sea” (Alana 105).

A spatial figure itself, *Spiral Jetty* is an inspirational source for Olsen in shaping the text in various ways (figures 28, 29 and 35). First, it serves as a structural principle in connecting the multiple verbal/visual texts and narrative voices showing that they are inextricably linked to each other. Second, as McLane points out, it is an important focus for the characters in the novel for it acts “as an instrument of both centripetal force . . . and centrifugal force” as can be seen in “Alana’s turn inward” and “Hugh’s exile of himself from his old life and immersion in foreign travel.” *Spiral Jetty* not only symbolizes centralizing and diverging drifts in the memories and psyches of the characters, it becomes a character itself by frequently being referred to, explained and contemplated on. The fractured and hypertextual spatiality in the form that is discussed in the first section is evoked on the fictional/narrative level with *Spiral Jetty*. As the multiple voices spatially turn to each other, *Spiral Jetty* turns to itself, finally leading to absence and rejecting a conventional and systematic understanding of space.

In Alana’s journal, the reader encounters the photographs of *Spiral Jetty*, the ideas of Robert Smithson concerning space and time, and the idea that the experience of watching the *Spiral Jetty* is one that is never repeated and it never remains the same. For Robert

Smithson, *Spiral Jetty* (figure 35) is one of the “new monuments” which “cause us to forget the future” unlike the old monuments that cause “us to remember the past” (Alana 119). For Alana, *Spiral Jetty* symbolizes the futile search in one’s life as it “is a device designed to focus . . . [one’s] attention on what isn’t there” (Alana 204), compelling one to approach it in a way that deconstructs learned and accustomed ways of thinking. Alana states that *Spiral Jetty* is experienced “without convention—or, closer to the point, with the idea of convention always bracketed, always foregrounded precisely in its contingency and instability” (Alana 149).

The concept of “entropology” coined by Levi-Strauss is a central idea in Smithson’s art and *Theories of Forgetting*. By entropology, Levi-Strauss means “highly developed structures in a ~~straight~~ state of disintegration [sic]” (Alana 241). With *Spiral Jetty*, Smithson contemplates on the ideas of fragmentation, dissolution and transience of objects and entities with the continuous passage of time. The counter clockwise shape of the spiral suggests not a forward progression in time but a return to the present which turns into past with time passing. As one watches *Spiral Jetty*, s/he has to watch it rather than look at it, because it is in a state of change. This does not only mean that the monument physically changes within time due to weather conditions or other geographical phenomena (as it was submerged under the waters of the lake between 1972 and 1993), but the act of perceiving it as time passes is inconstant. While one is in the presence of *Spiral Jetty*, s/he has to “[a]cknowledge time’s process in the perceptive act. The longer you do, the stronger becomes the dislocation of every everyday thought” (Alana 205) and the monument emphasizes the absence it refers to with its presence.

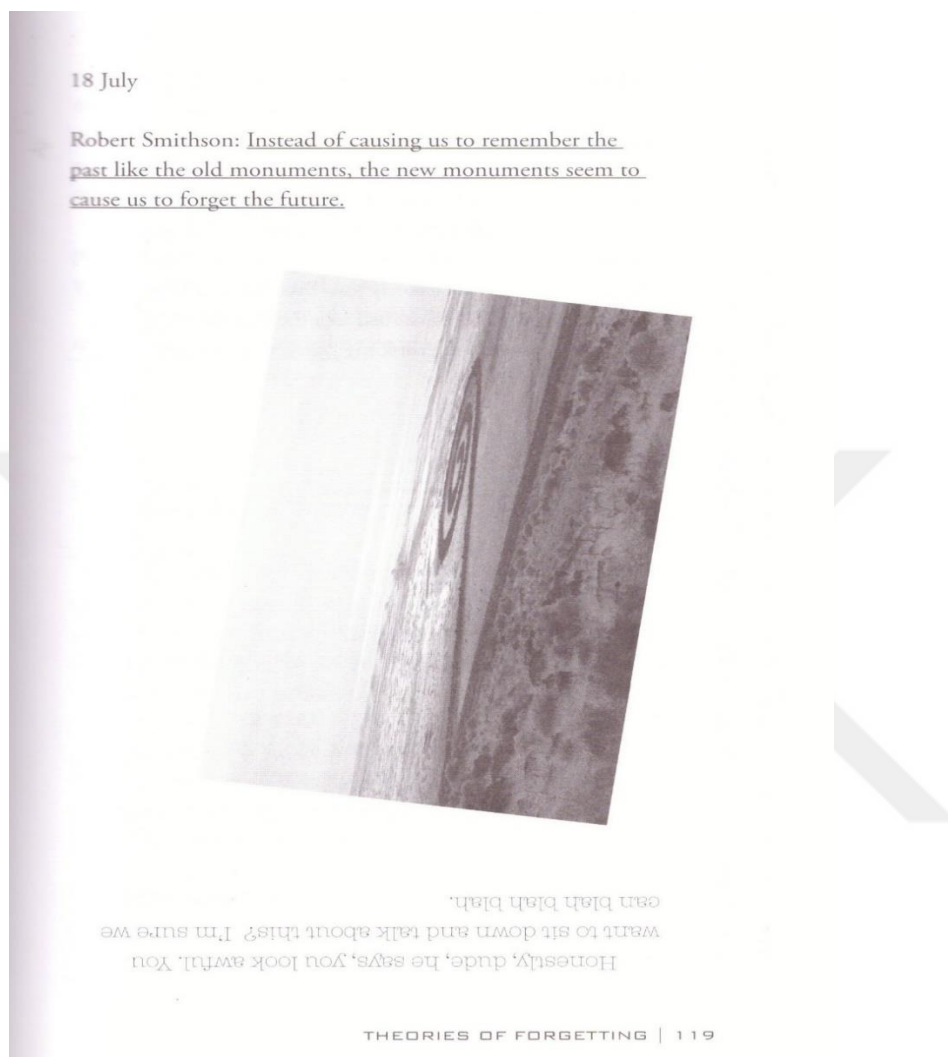


Fig. 35. Lance Olsen, *Theories of Forgetting*, FC2, 2014, Alana' section, p. 119.

A symbol of the process of disintegration, *Spiral Jetty* attains a greater significance in the novel not only for Alana as the “Frost slowly robs her of writing, syntax and conventional temporal sense” (McLane), but also for Hugh who is drifted into wanderings as he forgets and loses his sense of self and time. Similarly, Yuriy Tarnawsky points out the fact that Olsen also adopts the concept of entropology for his novel and employs *Spiral Jetty* “as a vehicle to depict the process of decaying of human memory” (17). As the characters in the novel write to remember, the reader observes how writing about one’s self and meaning-making is continually deferred since it is a linguistic act in which the signified, or meaning, is forever postponed. The characters face nothing but absence. Similar to the Navidson

house that is both present and absent in the fictional world of *House of Leaves*, the characters in *Theories of Forgetting* are becoming absent as time passes. Lance Olsen refers to the comments on *House of Leaves* that regard the novel as “a riff on the horror film” (“Book Noes”). He thinks the horror in Danielewski’s novel derives from the fact that “the world is absences all the way down” and states that there is a similar concern in his novel:

You can feel Hugh’s lack in every word of Aila’s marginalia, hear his AWOL voice. Alana is nothing if not a growing gap as The Frost colonizes her body and prose. And the novel itself is a text of voids, silences, acoustic deserts, from crossed-out words to large swaths of white space. (Olsen)

Through the depiction of the characters’ psyches in self-writing practices, the novel self-reflexively illustrates that memory is constructed not linearly but through fragments that are connected to each other with associations or non-linear trails of thought. This idea is echoed in the design of the narratives which are constructed through a web of associations and fragments that are linked to each other by collage, or by hypertextuality.

Alana ceases to exist or slowly passes into a state of non-existence like the *Spiral Jetty* leading nowhere which is materially reflected on the final pages of her section with erasures of the verbal and visual texts. Like Alana, Hugh finally disappears in his “Quixotic search” (McLane) in geographies he is not familiar with. Following Alana’s death, at first Hugh “is forever spiraling back to his old house, which increasingly looks less and less like his home” (Kocz). He cannot quite make sense of the Woman in his house as she is not Alana who has recently passed away. His confusion with the identity of the Woman he lives with, who is indeed the new owner of his old house, as well as with himself who adopts “a new range of personalities” (Hugh 108) cause him to be alienated from his surroundings. Later, he travels first to Europe and then to Jordan. His final drive through Jordan to the desert or the “smooth space” (Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus* 353)³⁸ implies his arraying himself “in an open space, of holding space, of

³⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s definition of smooth space can be reviewed in footnote 9 in the Introduction.

maintaining the possibility of springing up at any point . . . [his] movement is not from one point to another, but becomes perpetual, without aim or destination, without departure or arrival” (Deleuze and Guattari 353). Hugh turns into a subject who can only survive through his wanderings in the open space.

Having lost his wife, his last connection to his family and going beyond familial borders, Hugh is reminiscent of the deterritorialized individual or the schizophrenic subject, the figure defined by the French critics Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in their works *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972) and later developed into the figure of the nomad in *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). According to Deleuze and Guattari, deterritorialization is the process of going beyond and after territory or being in a state of “off-territory,” in other words “to be in a state of homelessness” (Aslan 9).³⁹ The deterritorialized subject or the nomad ventures into voyages that are beyond the borders of his family, state, nation, and society outside “the circles of convergence” (9). Deleuze and Guattari maintain that in the process of deterritorialization, the schizophrenic subject “is displacing himself in space, his is a journey in intensity” (*Anti-Oedipus* 131) instead of being “banded with zones, localized with areas and fields, measured off by gradients, traversed by potentials [and] marked by thresholds” (*Anti-Oedipus* 84). As he wanders, Hugh gradually transcends the borders in which he previously stayed and was contained.

The places Hugh passes through during his wandering—like airports and hotels which are hectic places of transition, change, and flux—reflect his disturbed mental state which is floating, forgetting and “remember[ing] to forget” (Alana 193). Hugh is described as a “motion addict” by the Kid he meets in Jordan. The dialogues between Hugh and the Kid are given in a series of short sentences which accelerate the reading and narrative pace and

³⁹ In my Master’s Thesis, I made a comparative analysis of the novels *The Music of Chance* by Paul Auster, *Martin Dressler: The Tale of an American Dreamer* by Steven Millhauser and *The Museum of Innocence* by Orhan Pamuk within the theoretical framework offered by Deleuze and Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze and Guattari’s ideas on space, territory, the process of territorialization under psychoanalysis, and the process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization under schizoanalysis which they offer as an antidote to psychoanalysis provided influential theoretical insights for my analysis. Therefore, my analysis of space in relation to the travels of the character Hugh draws partly on my previous study: Aslan, Gülşen. *Wandering Schizo-Nomads in Postmodern Spaces*. Lambert Academic Publishing, 2014.

exemplify, on a textual and narrative level, Hugh's growing amnesia. Hugh does not even remember which country he is in:

[Hugh] Can I ask you a question?

[The Kid] Shoot.

[Hugh] What country is this?

[The Kid] We're both motion addicts.

[Hugh] What?

[The Kid] Motion addicts. (Hugh 202-203)

Before his final flight into non-existence in the desert, Hugh is kidnapped by a global religious cult called the Sleeping Beauties who worship barbiturates on the face of global catastrophes like nuclear wars or environmental disasters. Believing in the inevitability of a global apocalypse, the Kid speaks during one of their conventions:

That history's real lesson is how the world is today will absolutely, positively not be how it is tomorrow?

And/or that future humans will therefore someday look back on us, here, now, with a mixture of dumbfounded awe, deep-structure exasperation, and unadulterated loathing in the face of what we allowed to happen? (Hugh 231)⁴⁰

Here, Levi-Strauss's idea of entropology assumes a global scale. As *Spiral Jetty* changes and as the characters' memories disintegrate, the world changes with advanced technology, massive environmental damage and global terrorism. Despite being a community in reaction to the dominant power mechanisms and the state apparatus, the Sleeping Beauties

⁴⁰ The discussions on politics and history in *Theories of Forgetting* turn the novel into "historiographic metafiction." A term coined by Canadian academic Linda Hutcheon, historiographic metafiction represents the point where history and fiction meet, offering an approach to the subject of history from the area of literature. According to Hutcheon, the concept represents the poetics of postmodernism. For her, the word "historiographic metafiction" refers to "those well-known and popular novels which are both intensely self-reflexive and yet paradoxically also lay claim to historical events and personages"; engaging in "rethinking and reworking of the forms and the contents of the past" (5). Hutcheon, Linda. *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, London: Routledge, 1988.

symbolize a temporal reterritorialization for Hugh. Reterritorialization is a temporary re-settling on territorial borders only to be followed by the process of deterritorialization. Not being able to identify with their apocalyptic politics, Hugh leaves for his final voyage to the desert which “feels like space, not place. Unvaried sans landmarks, and hence . . . an absence of landscape” (Alana 138). Before disintegrating in space, Hugh leaves behind the stories that make up his identity:

He throws out his wallet, his passport.

The stories he tells himself while he works don't seem like his stories anymore. It feels as if he got them from some biography he read somewhere, some film he half-recalls, and eventually like they have reached him by hearsay, from somebody else who heard them from somebody else.

He thinks: What you don't remember never happened. (311)

As he drives across the desert Hugh finally disappears and so does the text on the final pages in his section. This final act of deterritorialization and his death in smooth space outside the borders of state and nation is a way for Hugh to “dismantle” himself in space in Deleuze and Guattari's terminology. Hugh paints himself “gray on gray” (*A Thousand Plateaus* 197) with this final act of deterritorialization: “A moment later, maybe a day, and the man is walking through wasteland, silence occurring continuous impact: non-sound, high-pitched and tinny and not there and there” (Hugh 333). Turning into a nomad through the process of deterritorialization, Hugh exemplifies that space is not only somewhere people exist and live in but also an actor in shaping the subject and her/his experiences. In other words, the subject construction in the novel is done through a portrayal of their experiences in space. In Alana's case, it is given through her connection to the *Spiral Jetty* which is an iconic monument in the desert space. Her subjectivity is under erasure like the *Spiral Jetty* which is under constant change due to weather conditions and geographical phenomena. In Hugh's case, it is given through his disappearance and death in the desert space. This illustrates that the spatial practices in *Theories of Forgetting* are not limited to the novel's spatial form, narrative space, and material space but can be observed in the thematization of space by its influence on the characters.

3.3. MATERIAL SPACE: THE SPIRAL THAT IS THE BOOK

The processes of reading and meaning making in *Theories of Forgetting* are inextricably linked to the book's physical design. This complies with Katherine N. Hayles's statement that "all texts are instantiated and the nature of the medium in which they are instantiated matters" ("Print Is Flat, Code Is Deep"). Therefore, in critical practices, the specificities and nature of any medium should be taken into consideration via Media Specific Analysis as material properties have their own signifying practices and processes that are as crucial as the signifying practices prevalent in the narrative (Hayles 67). A fictional work would not produce the same effect when it is put on the printed page or when it is performed on stage. Similarly, there would be different textures when a work is produced through software systems to be read on the computer screen or when it is produced in the form of a pop-up book. To Hayles's critical terminology of Media Specific Analysis, Lance Olsen adds a practice for fiction writers which he calls "Media Specific Generation (MSG)" and by which he means

the idea that when writing you should always-already be cognizant, not only of the thematics of the text you are working on, and, as it were, the internal components of its narrativity (character, language, plot, etc.), but also of the material embodiment those components take, and, perhaps most important, the material embodiment those components *can* take.

In other words, the way texts *matter* matters. (*Architectures of Possibility* 185).

Just as literary critics need to take the material features of the book into account in their analytic and interpretive activities, the writers should be conscious of the materiality of the medium of the printed book while writing their novels and designing their books. In the same book, Olsen names some of the novels that have been generated with a media specific consciousness such as Raymond Federman's *Double or Nothing* (1971), Ronald Sukenick's *98.6* (1975), Anne Carson's *Nox* (2009), Shelley Jackson's *The Skin Project* (2003), and the two other novels that are analyzed in this study, Mark Z. Danielewski's *House of Leaves* and Steve Tomasula's *VAS: An Opera in Flatland*. *Theories of Forgetting* can well be regarded among these works with its creative design foregrounding the material features of the book. As McLane suggests "the form of *Theories of Forgetting*

acts as one its main, if not the main, characters.” By using the physical space of the page as a field of experimentation, *Theories of Forgetting* problematizes and changes the conventional use of the page from left to right and from top to the bottom in straight lines and paragraph indentions. *Theories of Forgetting* exemplifies “how a literary work might react against mass reproduction and textual disembodiment in the digital age” by foregrounding the materiality and embodiment of the print book (Olsen “Book Notes”).

The multiple narratives of Alana, Hugh and Aila are given through an ingenious book design by Olsen. First of all, the front and back covers of the book have exactly the same design in reverse. The back cover seems like a mirror that is held upside down to the front cover of the book, or vice versa. This renders it difficult to decide which cover is the front cover and the right side to begin reading the book. Following these, the first ten pages on each side like the bio page, acknowledgements, dedication pages are the same. However, from the eleventh page on both sides, the reader encounters two different narratives given in different typefaces starting from opposite sides. Alana’s diary in first person narration is given in Garamond, whereas Hugh’s diary in third person narration in which he refers to himself as “the Man” is given in “a typewriter font” (Erica Olsen). Each narrative occupies the top of the page in its own section, while the other narrative is given below and turned upside down. In other words, the page is divided into two sections as the top and bottom and the main narrative—depending on which narrative is being read—occupies the top side. In addition to these, Aila’s writings are given in the marginalia in Hugh’s section in a blue typefont resembling handwriting.

The unconventional structure of the *Spiral Jetty* that changes from “second to second” (Alana 156-157) depending on how one looks at it leads its viewers/watchers to a continuous sense of dislocation and absence. This is suggestive of the feelings of the readers of *Theories of Forgetting* who are faced with a book shaped like a spiral forever turning on itself (figures 29, 34, 35, and 36).

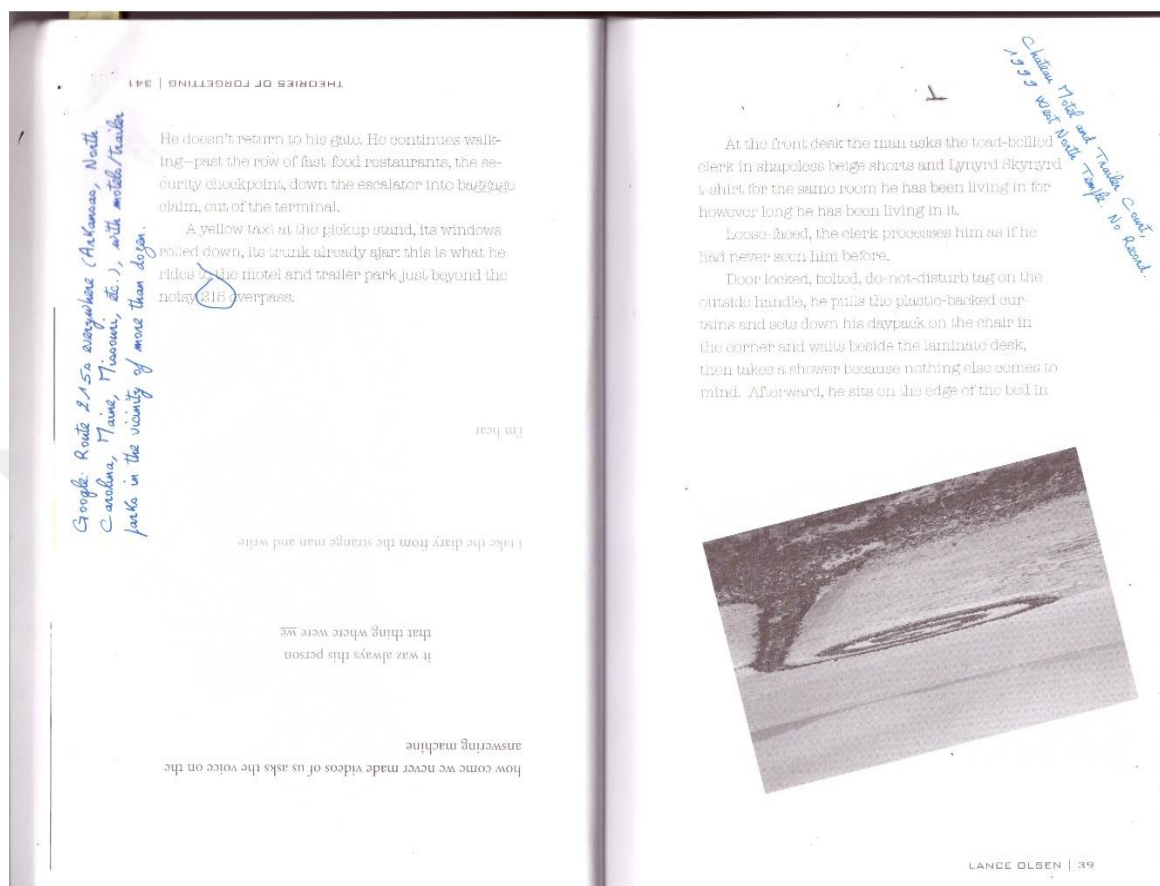


Fig. 36. Lance Olsen, *Theories of Forgetting* (FC2, 2014), Hugh's section, pp. 38, 39.

McLane also points out that “[a]ll the turning and manipulation the book asks of the reader, and the moments of reflection and perplexity it allows, is emblematic of, and parallel to, tensions entangled in the text that are best reflected in the presence of the *Spiral Jetty* itself.” First of all, having no front and back covers, it becomes a question for the reader to decide from which side to begin reading the book. There can be different ways of reading the book such as starting from Alana’s section and reading to the end and then flipping the book and reading Hugh’s and Aila’s combined section. During these readings, the reader is continually faced with the text other than the main text, or paratext, which is turned upside down and occupies the other half of the page. Another way of reading the novel can be a simultaneous reading of Alana’s and Hugh’s narratives page by page by continually turning the book upside down and from right to left to right. Though not impossible, this way of reading can be very difficult in understanding the novel because as

one reads the beginning of one narrative on the top of the page, s/he reads the end of the other narrative. Therefore, as the reader progresses forward in one narrative, s/he looks at the past while reading Hugh's section (since his diary starts after the death of Alana), and towards the future while reading Alana's section. The multiple ways of reading the text and depending on "[w]hose narrative you engage with first" influence the reading and understanding of others (Olsen "Book Notes"). Each narrative also provides information that is missing in the other as the characters are connected to each other as members of the same family. In this respect, the narratives not only share the same space of the page but also a narrative dis/continuity with one another.

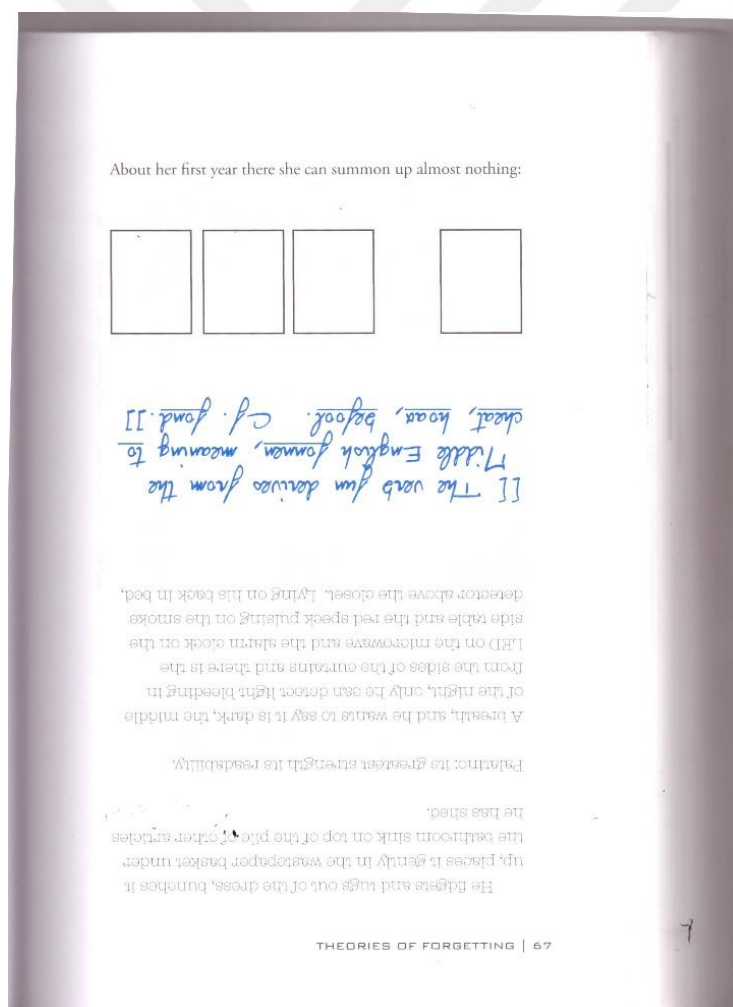


Fig. 37. Lance Olsen, *Theories of Forgetting* (FC2, 2014), Alana's section, pp. 67.

The narrative and material fragments in *Theories of Forgetting* are connected to each other through a hypertextual arrangement. Unlike *House of Leaves*, which uses hypertextual footnotes or VAS which uses vertical lines as linking points, *Theories of Forgetting* uses a dispersed hypertextual design. Alana's and Hugh's narratives are connected to each other on the narrative level not through hypertextual links but through narrative connections. Although Hugh's narrative is given in blocks and paragraphs with a visually linear structure most of the time, both Alana's text at the bottom of the pages and Aila's notes in marginalia visually disrupt his narrative. In a font type resembling handwriting, Aila's notes and comments are attached to Hugh's diary in marginalia with the links she draws by circling out some words or by drawing arrows. Aila builds up a network of ideas in association with her father's narrative. As the reader of Hugh's diary, she becomes the bricoleur of her own text and sometimes her notes disrupt Hugh's narrative by covering an entire page (figure 38 and 39). Aila's practice of writing in the form of comments to another text reminds the readers that taking notes on a book while reading is indeed a hypertextual practice. The associative logic of the reader, which is discussed by Vannevar Bush in his famous essay "As We May Think,"⁴¹ is thus activated by (hyper)linking the readers' ideas to that of the author's.

⁴¹ Bush's essay has been discussed in the Introduction.

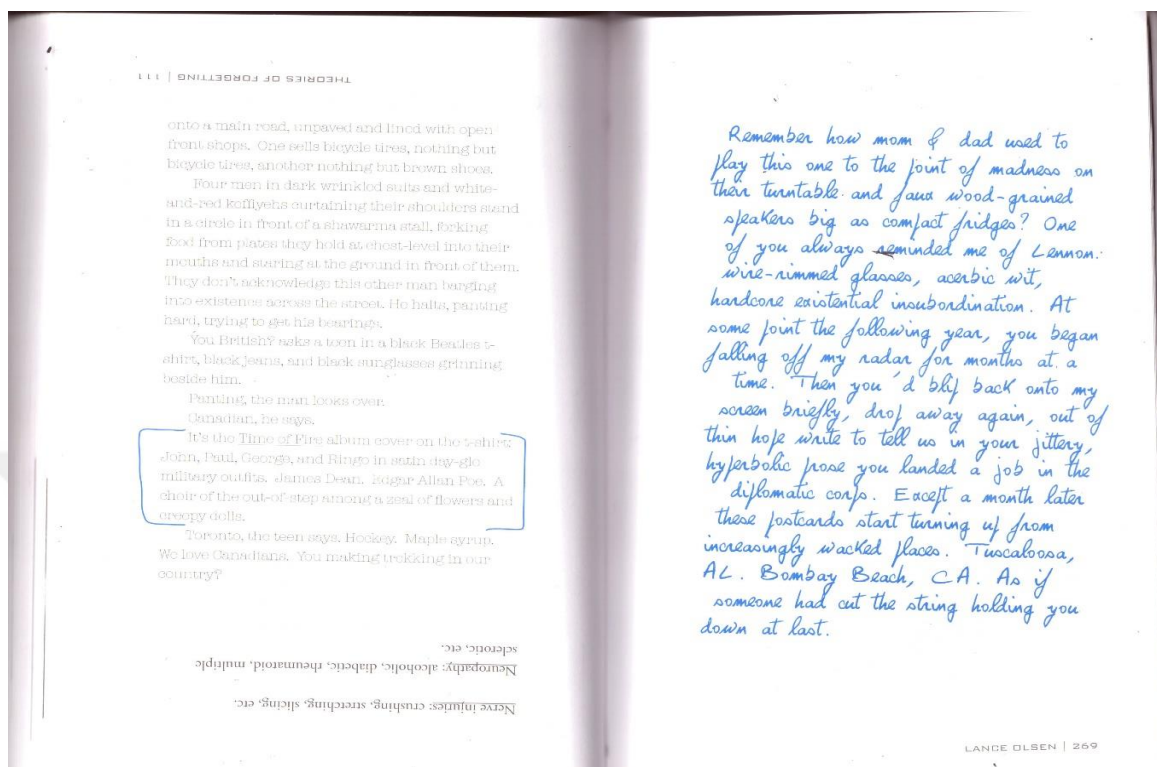


Fig. 38. Lance Olsen, *Theories of Forgetting* (FC2, 2014), Hugh's section, pp. 268, 269.

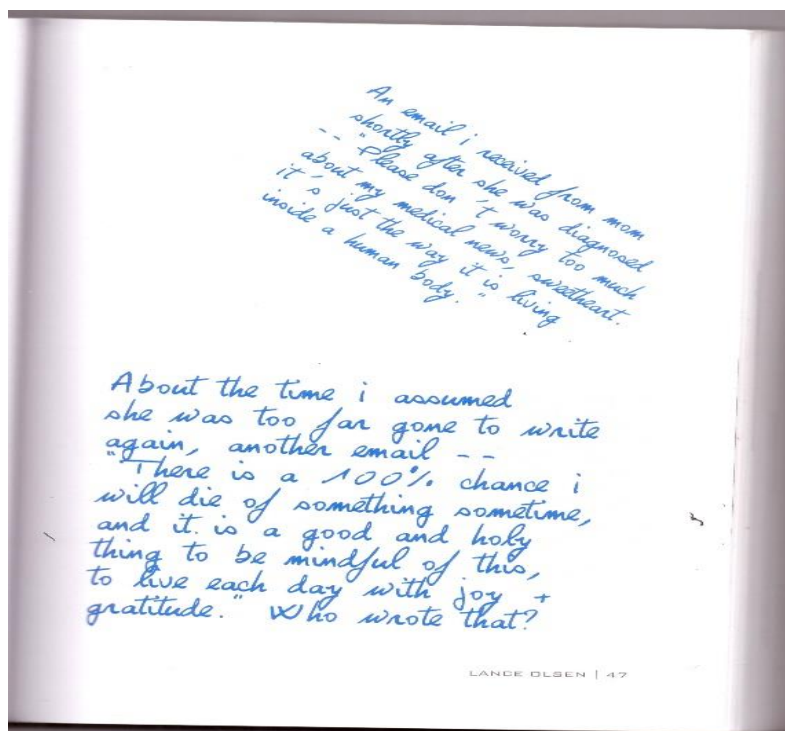


Fig. 39. Lance Olsen, *Theories of Forgetting*, FC2, 2014, Hugh's section, p. 47.

As a film director, Alana's journal is loaded with visual material. Besides including many photographs of the *Spiral Jetty* and Robert Smithson, she attaches multimedia material to her text such as newspaper clippings (figure 40), x-rays of her hands as she tries to diagnose her illness and screen shots from films such as *The Time Machine* (1960) by George Pal and Robert Smithson's short documentary film *Spiral Jetty* (1970). The inclusion and remediation of such diverse media within the scope of the novel complies not only with collage aesthetics but also with multimedia, or hypermedia aesthetics that are also observed in *House of Leaves* and *VAS*. The use of hypermedia serves to illustrate on a material level what the characters are going through on a fictional level. For instance, reflecting Alana's disintegrating memory on a visual level, there are gradual fade outs in the photographs of dead birds (Alana 230) and the barren landscape of the desert (figure 43). Alongside these, as her language starts to break down and "undergoes slow erasure, a form of linguistic entropology" (Olsen "Book Notes") due to her illness and failing memory, the sentences and lines start to change visually on the page undergoing a sort of material entropology. There are gaps, continuous misspellings and erasures in the form of strikethroughs (figure 41). In the final sections of Alana's narrative, the font colors turn from black to gray. This "experimentation in grayscale suggests her drifting consciousness" (Kocz) on a narrative level while it also illustrates the process of disintegration and the erasure—motifs that frequently recur in the novel—on a visual/material level.

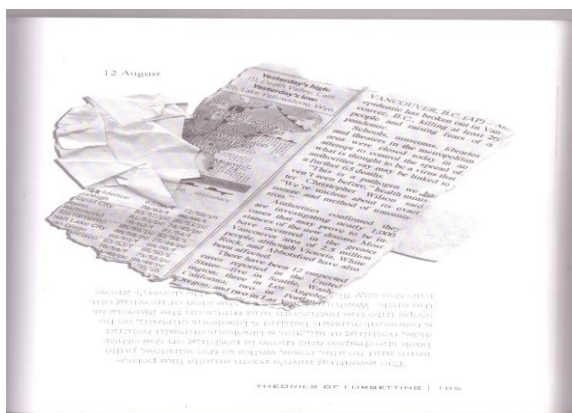


Fig. 40. Lance Olsen, *Theories of Forgetting* (FC2, 2014), Alana's section, p. 185.

In both Alana's and Hugh's sections, the use of white space attains a significance. As Alana approaches her death, the empty space is widened in a way to erase all the other verbal/visual texts from the space of the page. Similarly, when Hugh finally disappears while he is driving across the desert, the white spaces are enlarged on the page. The use of white space on the page in a way to complete and contemplate on the narrative action is another topographical device employed by Olsen (figure 42 and 43).

The spiral-shaped book in which the stories of family members return to one another through spatial form, narrative and material design becomes its own concrete metaphor. As a novel generated through media consciousness, *Theories of Forgetting* offers a rich ground for an analysis of space. It uses spatial form with an eye on the amphibious aesthetics of collage and heteromedial intertextuality, presents spatial non-entities like the *Spiral Jetty* and geographical non-places like the desert in its narrative space, and it employs the use of a heterogeneous visual space on its pages. Like the previous novels discussed in this study, is *Theories of Forgetting* not only a novel to be read but also an art object to be looked at and physically experienced.

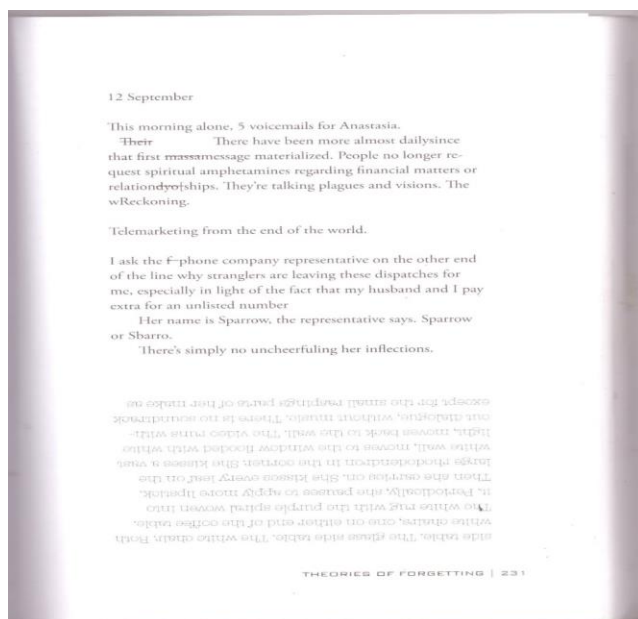


Fig. 41. Lance Olsen, *Theories of Forgetting*, FC2, 2014, Alana's section, p. 231.

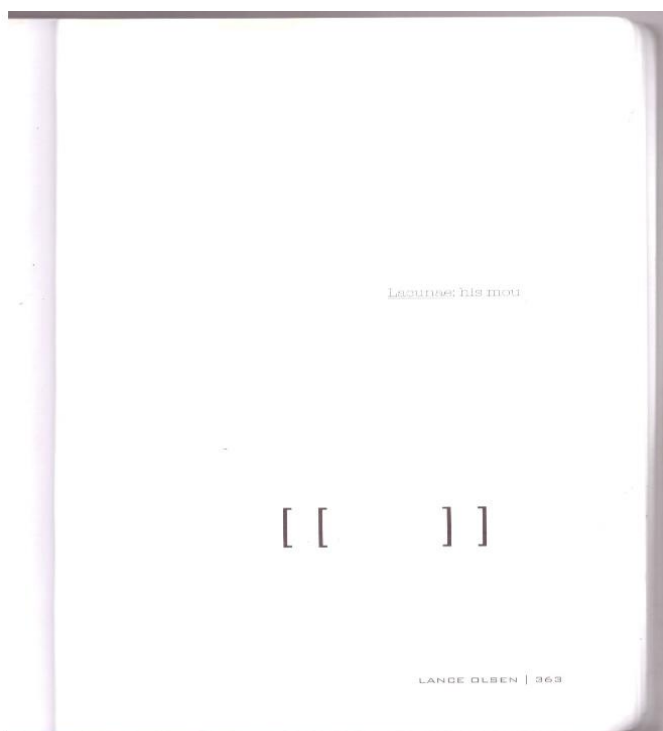


Fig. 42. Lance Olsen, *Theories of Forgetting* (FC2, 2014), Hugh's section, pp. 363.

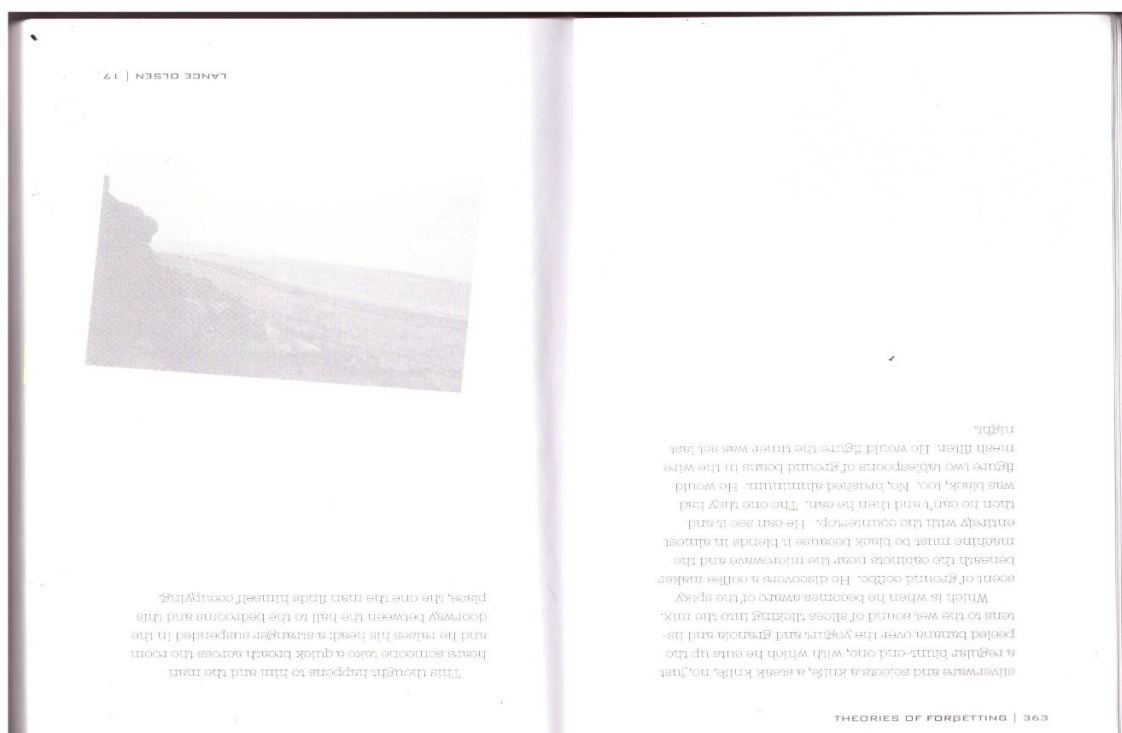


Fig. 43. Lance Olsen, *Theories of Forgetting* (FC2, 2014), Alana's section, pp. 362, 364.

CONCLUSION

Written language is inherently a spatial construct which has occupied space on the papyrus roll, the codex book, the printed book, and most recently, on the computer screen. The contemporary American novelists, Mark Z. Danielewski, Steve Tomasula and Lance Olsen have designed textual, narrative, and material arrangements that remind, foreground, add to the spatial dynamics of language in their novels. By extending the linguistic literary devices of image and metaphor to material and concrete practices, they focus on the construction of space from different angles. The aim of this dissertation has been to analyze the spatial dynamics inherent in *House of Leaves* (2000) by Mark Z. Danielewski, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* (2002) by Steve Tomasula, and *Theories of Forgetting* (2014) by Lance Olsen from three different perspectives. These novels have a literary architecture that is shaped through spatial form, narrative space, and spatial design which all interact with and are inseparable from each other.

Although postmodernist narrative techniques are observed in American literature from the 1960s to the 1990s, its effects are still prevalent in literature. In the novels analyzed in this dissertation, postmodernist narrative devices such as metafiction, collage, fragmentation, and plurality of voices and texts populate the narratives. These tropes inherently enable a critical reading of the novels because they offer a ground on which to contemplate the subject matter of literature and writing strategies and the structure. These postmodern literary devices remodel the narrative spatially by breaking the linear narration in favor of a dispersed, disrupted and a multilayered one. Since Joseph Frank's critical insights on spatiality in Modernist literature, spatial form has evolved and expanded under the postmodern sensibilities of fragmentation, plurality, and decentralization. It has been used by early postmodern writers and is still employed as a narrative design that breaks chronology, linearity, singularity, and authority of the narrative voice.

The second level of spatiality that has been discussed in this study is the narrative space which is the space of the fictional world where the characters exist and act. This fictional level of space can include a wide range of spatial entities from geographical locations like

continents, countries, and cities to smaller architectural structures like castles, buildings, houses, rooms and even human bodies. In the novels under scrutiny in this study, narrative space is shaped by a house in *House of Leaves*, the human body of the flatland in *VAS*, and the *Spiral Jetty* in *Theories of Forgetting*. These spatial entities in the novels present deconstructive elements and they also serve as spatial models that inspire the design of the books.

Besides their postmodern literary characteristics, as the products of the culture they are produced in, these novels are not free from the effects of digital technology and the writing techniques and technologies introduced by them. The advent of hypertext, the development of the World Wide Web and the predominant presence of digital technologies in people's lives make it inevitable for fiction writers to respond to these changes in various ways. In connection with the writing and designing tools, computers have changed reading habits by replacing the print page with the computer screen. The cognitive processes of reading from the computer screen is different from reading printed materials. In other words, computers change the way people write and read in contemporary times, as it has been discussed.

While the computer takes the lead in presenting, designing, and storing information and by offering advanced communication opportunities, the printed book still has a dominant place as a medium through which information is shared. There are two major differing viewpoints on the future of these two media and their competing roles in information transfer. On one hand, people believe that the advent of computers will finally put an end to the existence of the printed book in this "late age of print" (Bolter *Writing Space*). On the other hand, advocates of the print book defend it as the medium most convenient for reading practices and that they would not give it up for the computer screen.

In the course of these discussions, there is a growing critical awareness of the influence of the digital world on the print book. As hypertext has become the dominant form of digital writing, it has also been used, or remediated, in print novels in experimental ways. The use of hypertext in print fiction expands the spatiality by further freeing the text from linearity. Hypertext makes it possible for fiction writers to narrate their stories by an associative

logic activated by navigational links that work between the diverging synchronic narrative threads. Hypertext creates a web of connections and this web is a spatial plane which the readers enter and navigate through.

Employing hypertext writing on the print page brings the material specificities of the book to the foreground by reshaping the elements of the narration, as well as the form and design of the book. This introduces the third category of space, the spatial design, that has a significant place in the novels. Such an influence can clearly be observed in the novels *House of Leaves*, *VAS*, and *Theories of Forgetting*. The reader of these novels has to use the book not just only by reading it from left to right, and top to bottom, and from beginning to the end, but changes her/his reading habits in puzzling and playful ways, sometimes by turning the book upside down, sometimes trying to follow disrupted narratives by jumps and skips on and among the pages. S/he needs to pay attention to the topography of the page, typographic variety as well as the visual materials such as pictures and photographs.

In the first chapter of this dissertation, Mark Z. Danielewski's debut novel *House of Leaves* has been analyzed from the aforementioned perspectives of space. Danielewski paves the way for contemporary fiction writers by opening the space of the novel to experimental techniques. Employing postmodern narrative devices extensively such as metafiction, multiplicity of narrative voices and threads, and intertextuality in the form of theoretical sources and genre-blurring, *House of Leaves* makes use of the spatial form that breaks down linearity. It extends spatial form with the use of hypertext. Its narrative space focuses on an architectural work, the Navidson house which is a dark and vast labyrinthine space that continually expands with nothing inside it. Danielewski uses the Navidson house as an inspiration for the design of his novel. The incorporation of visual and material devices and reorganizing the traditional use of the page with topographical and typographical experiments shape the physical space of the book. As has been discussed, *House of Leaves* creates a literary architecture that necessitates its readers to interact with it not just by reading but also by looking at and feeling the object of the book.

In the second chapter, Steve Tomasula's *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* has been analyzed within the same framework. *VAS* makes use of spatial form by an intertextual hypertext, multiplicity, and genre blending. Spatiality is extended to its narrative space by its treatment of the human body as a space which is shaped by political and historical discourses. The human body in *VAS* has been greatly changed by bio-engineering and transformed into a cyborg, part human and part machine. This understanding of the human body as a construct defies the traditional humanist understanding of the body as organic and beautiful, and the mind as capable of rational thinking. In this sense, *VAS* takes place in a posthuman space populated by cyborg and monster-like bodies. With various representations of the body in diverse media that are embodied in the form of a book, *VAS* is a book to be read and an object to be looked at and physically experienced.

In the third chapter, Lance Olsen's *Theories of Forgetting* has been discussed in connection with *House of Leaves* and *VAS* and how it similarly presents a visitation to postmodern space that is being reshaped by digital technologies. In a similar structure, *Theories of Forgetting* makes use of spatial form through collages of fiction and theory, and visual and verbal texts, metafictional elements, and multiplicity of narrative threads. *Theories of Forgetting* extends its discussion of space into its narrative space with representations of Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* and different places in other parts of the world. *Theories of Forgetting* is generated through a media specific consciousness which treats the material space of the book as a field to be worked in and re-designed. Placing the image of the labyrinthine spiral in the center of the novel, Olsen builds up his novel on the form, idea, and design of the *Spiral Jetty*. Like the previous novels in this study, *Theories of Forgetting* is an embodied object to be read and analyzed.

The influence of digital technologies on these novels can be seen not only in their use of hypertext but also their consciousness of the digital platform which is visible within the novels. On one of its initial pages, *House of Leaves* refers its readers to the website of the novel given as a link, which is currently redirected to the author's website.⁴² On the back

⁴² www.houseofleaves.com re-directed to www.markzdanielewski.com/.

cover of the novel, there is a second link to the singer Poe's website. Poe is Danielewski's sister and her album *Haunted* is inspired by and a complementary work on *House of Leaves*.⁴³ Similarly, in *Theories of Forgetting*, there is a link to a website⁴⁴ which shows a page entitled "theories of forgetting by a. olsen" and a six-minute video in which several photographs of the *Spiral Jetty*, Jordan, deserts, lakes, mountains, and highways are superimposed on each other. In a voice-over Lance Olsen reads the section from the novel where Hugh is watching the video of a woman and sees the link to this website. In *VAS*, in the screenshots of several web pages, there are links to different websites which exist beyond the fictional world of the novel like the website of Strategene,⁴⁵ a biotechnological company, or RosAngeles,⁴⁶ a pornography site. These links that connect the novel to the World Wide Web as well as different media like Poe's album, or the video by a. olsen,⁴⁷ extend the borders of fiction, connect them to virtual reality and render them as intermedia art works. As a metafictional device, the usage of these links within the novels echoes the presence of the novels beyond the fictional universes and in the virtual space of the Internet.

These novels certainly alter the ways fiction is written, read, analyzed, and enjoyed. Since they are expansive word-image novels, they offer a rich ground for literary analysis that can center on a variety of topics. The multilayered verbal and visual textuality encountered in these works can be analyzed within the history of textuality and how the conventional understanding of text as a verbal construction has been changing. Another rich ground would be analyzing the changing notions of authorship as exemplified in these novels. The author continues to become a figure of less authority as Roland Barthes observes in his essay "The Death of the Author" (1967) than a "function" as Michel Foucault observes in

⁴³ www.realpoe.com is re-directed to www.officialpoe.com/.

⁴⁴ www.lanceolsen.com/tof.html

⁴⁵ The link given in the novel www.stratagene.com is now broken.

⁴⁶ www.ronsangels.com/hdvideos.html is a website that was advertised as auctioning the eggs of supermodels, however as it turned out later, it was only a pornography site. See the story of Ron's Angles in hoaxes.org/archive/permalink/rons_angels.

⁴⁷ The name "a. olsen" refers to Alana who is an artist working on the *Spiral Jetty* in the fictional world of *Theories of Forgetting*, and it also refers to Andi Olsen, Lance Olsen's wife, who took the photographs that were used in the video.

his essay “What Is an Author?” (1969). Authorship does not only include writing practices but also the design of the visual tropes of the book. Danielewski states that while writing *House of Leaves*, he designed each visual element in his novel with the computer programs of Random House Publishing. Steve Tomasula collaborated with a graphic artist and typographer Stephen Farrell in creating his imagetext novel *VAS*. Similarly, Lance Olsen collaborates with Andi Olsen who is a collage artist, photographer and videographer. These collaborations show that in our present age authorship is problematized by the design of the books and the materiality of the medium. Reading a novel like *House of Leaves*, *VAS*, and *Theories of Forgetting* is an experience that requires both a mental and a physical interaction with the book that necessitates a careful and slow progression and comprehension. In this respect, the process of reading hypertext and multimedia novels can be topics for further study, since they require a more performative interaction from its readers.

As observed, covering each and every aspect of these novels is beyond the scope of this study since the novels are rich in presenting and problematizing multimedia practices within fiction writing. In this study, *House of Leaves*, *VAS*, and *Theories of Forgetting* have been analyzed in terms of their use and understanding of the concept of space with the effects of the postmodern narrative techniques of the earlier eras and virtual reality of the present and future times. An analysis of *House of Leaves*, *VAS* and *Theories of Forgetting* that focuses on their literary architecture has not been done before. In this respect, this study illuminates and foregrounds issues regarding space through literary spatial practices and contributes to the discussions regarding these matters.

Depending on what has been covered so far, it can be said that experimental fiction writing is not a recent phenomenon. Starting from Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy*, novels have incorporated topographical writing practices. Postmodernism brought a critical consciousness into the space of fiction writing. Since the advent of hypertext and digital media, however, experimental practices have become more common. Works of experimental literature are updating themselves and adapting to the contemporary scene by incorporating and remediating the elements of digital media, or new media. Apart from

hypertext fiction in print, three examples of which have been discussed so far, there are examples of hypertext fiction which are produced through software programs and meant to be read on the computer screen.⁴⁸ The first and second generation of hypertext fiction offer a rich body of literature that remains to be explored by the literati. There is also an increasing critical interest in new media and computer games. By combining the elements of hypertext fiction, visual and audial effects of virtual reality, combinatorial processes shaped by the elements of chance and randomness within multiuser systems, computer games offer innovative multimedia practices of fiction writing. The opening of new academic programs like Game and Internet Studies prove that the study of new media and the workings of the digital landscape is becoming a necessary field of critical studies.

House of Leaves, *VAS: An Opera in Flatland* and *Theories of Forgetting* treat space as a character and illustrate that in the present age, space is multilayered, heterogeneous, dispersed, and shaped with a fractal aesthetics presented on different levels. The postmodern understanding of space as multilayered, plural, perplexing, or as “hyperreal” creates an innovative understanding of space as decentered, dispersed, networked, and further complicated by the virtual space of the digital world with which it is closely intertwined. The readers’ understanding of space does not only include real and conceptual environments and entities but it should extend into the space of the Internet and the World Wide Web. Like the cyborg bodies that are part human and part machine in *VAS*, the contemporary notion of space incorporates a hybrid aesthetics which is structured by the real and the conceptual and extended into the virtual realms.

The intersection of the verbal, visual and material characteristics in these novels takes place in a context shaped by postmodernism, poststructuralist theory, digital technology and media specific consciousness. Mark Z. Danielewski's, Steve Tomasula's, and Lance

⁴⁸ In the Introduction, some examples of hypertext fiction such as *afternoon: a story* (1990) by Michael Joyce, *Marble Springs* (1993) by Deena Larsen, *Victory Garden* (1992), *Hegirascope* (1995) and *The Unknown* (1998) by Stuart Moulthrop, *Patchwork Girl* (1995) by Shelley Jackson and *Grammatron* (1997) by Mark Amerika have been mentioned. These works are prominent examples of hypertext fiction produced through software programs and can be read on the computer screen.

Olsen's intellectual sensibilities are attuned to the cultural changes in contemporary times and their works reflect such a consciousness through the form and the content. These writers are informed on critical conventions and they incorporate criticism and theory into their creative writing. Thus, their works seem to offer a direction for the status of the novel in the present age and point to an imaginative and ingenious change in the genre.



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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1: SOME EXAMPLES OF BOOK ARTS/ARTISTS' BOOKS

Fig. 44. Jen Bervin's *The Desert: Further Studies in Natural Appearances*. New York: Granary Books, 2008.

And there you have the most decorative landscape in the world, a landscape all color, a dream landscape. Painters for years have been trying to put it upon canvas—this landscape of color, light, and air, with form almost obliterated, merely suggested, given only as a hint of the mysterious. Men like Corot and Monet have told us, again and again, that in painting, clearly delineated forms of mountains, valleys, and rivers kill the fine color-sentiment of the picture. The great struggle of the modern landscape is to get on with the least possible form and to suggest everything by tones of color, shades of light, drifts of air. Why? Because these are the most sensuous qualities in nature

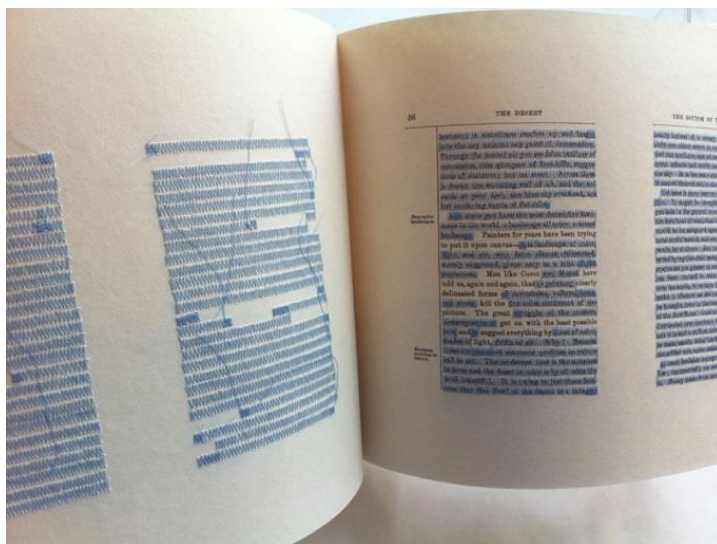
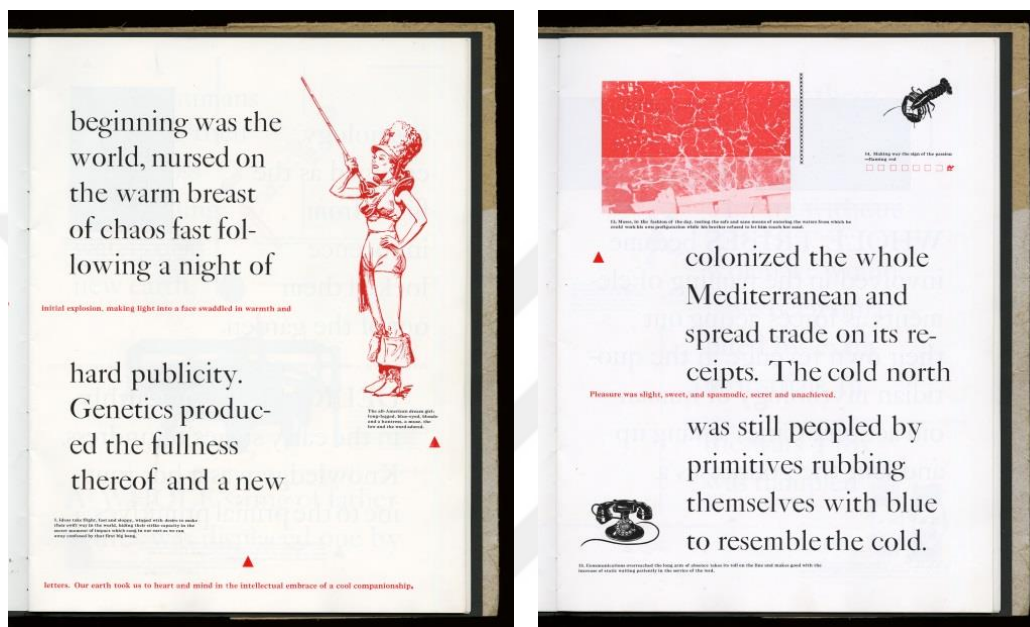


Fig. 45. Johanna Drucker's *History of the/my Wor(l)d: Fragments of a Testimonial to History, Some Lived and Realized Moments Open to Claims of Memory*. New York: Granary Books, 1995.



(blogs.massart.edu/artistsbooks/2015/11/05/the-history-of-themy-world-by-johanna-drucker/)

Fig. 46. Clifton Meador's *Kora*. Chicago: Clifton Meador, 2006.



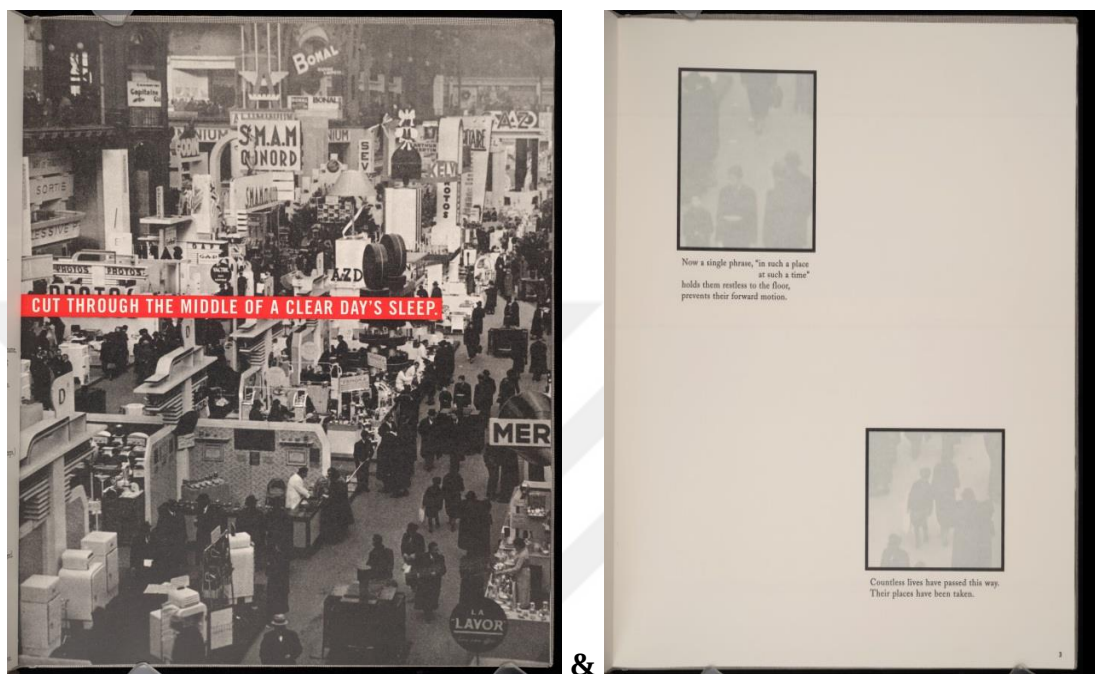
(centralbookingnyc.com/galleries/gallery-1-artist-books-prints/artists-work/clifton-meador-2/)

Fig. 48. Ricky Moody and Daniel E. Kelm's *Surplus Value Books: Catalog Number 13*. Danger! Books, 1999.



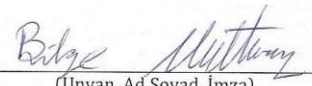
(www.indulgencepress.com/Books/R.MoodySVB13.html.)

Fig. 49. Emily McVarish's *Was Here*. Granary Books, 2001.



(sophia.smith.edu/blog/artistsbooks2013/page/4/)

APPENDIX 2: ORIGINALITY REPORT

 HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ YÜKSEK LİSANS/DOKTORA TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORJİNALLİK RAPORU
HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA
Tarih: 21/02/2018
Tez Başlığı / Konusu: "Postmodern Mekâna Yeniden Dönüş: Mark Z. Danielewski, Steve Tomasula ve Lance Olsen'in Seçili Romanlarında Hipermetinsellik ve Maddesellik." ("Postmodern Space Revisited: Hypertextuality and Materiality in the Selected Novels of Mark Z. Danielewski, Steve Tomasula, and Lance Olsen.") Yukarıda başlığı/konusu gösterilen tez çalışmamın a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 179 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 20/02/2018 tarihinde şahsım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda belirtilen filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 6'dır. Uygulanan filtrelemeler: 1- Kabul/Onay ve Bildirim sayfaları hariç, 2- Kaynakça hariç 3- Alıntılar hariç/dâhil 4- 5 kelimedenden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları'nı inceledim ve bu Uygulama Esasları'nda belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim. Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.  21.02.2018
Adı Soyadı: GÜLŞEN ASLAN USLU Öğrenci No: N11144680 Anabilim Dalı: AMERİKAN KÜLTÜRÜ VE EDEBİYATI Programı: DOKTORA Statüsü: ☐ Y.Lisans ☒ Doktora ☐ Bütünleşik Dr.
<u>DANIŞMAN ONAYI</u> UYGUNDUR. DOÇ. DR. BİLGE MUTLUAY ÇETİNTAŞ  (Unvan, Ad Soyad, İmza)



**HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
THESIS/DISSERTATION ORIGINALITY REPORT**

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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
TO THE DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE**

Date: 21/02/2018

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21.02.2018

Name Surname: GÜLŞEN ASLAN USLU

Student No: N11144680

Department: AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE

Program: PH. D.

Status: ☐ Masters ☒ Ph.D. ☐ Integrated Ph.D.

ADVISOR APPROVAL

APPROVED.

DOÇ. DR. BİLGE MUTLUAY ÇETİNTAŞ

(Title, Name Surname, Signature)

APPENDIX 3: ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORM

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<u>DANIŞMAN GÖRÜŞÜ VE ONAYI</u>
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**HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORM FOR THESIS WORK**

**HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE TO THE DEPARTMENT PRESIDENCY**

Date: 21/02/2018

Thesis Title / Topic: "Postmodern Space Revisited: Hypertextuality and Materiality in the Selected Novels of Mark Z. Danielewski, Steve Tomasula, and Lance Olsen."

My thesis work related to the title/topic above:

1. Does not perform experimentation on animals or people.
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I respectfully submit this for approval.


21.02.2018

Name Surname: GÜLŞEN ASLAN USLU

Student No: N11144680

Department: AMERICAN CULTURE AND LITERATURE

Program: PH. D.

Status: ☐ Masters ☒ Ph.D. ☐ Integrated Ph.D.

ADVISER COMMENTS AND APPROVAL

APPROVED.

DOÇ. DR. BİLGE MUTLUAY ÇETİNTAŞ


(Title, Name Surname, Signature)