



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

**AN ANALYSIS OF CYCLICALITY
IN THE NOVELS *IN THE LAKE OF THE WOODS* BY
TIM O'BRIEN, *S.* BY JEFFREY JACOB ABRAMS
AND DOUG DORST, AND *ONLY REVOLUTIONS* BY
MARK Z. DANIELEWSKI**

Ali BUDAK

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YAYIMLAMA VE FİKRİ MÜLKİYET HAKLARI BEYANI

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ETİK BEYANI

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, kullandıđım verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadıđımı, yararlandıđım kaynaklara bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduđumu, tezimin kaynak gsterilen durumlar dıřında zgn olduđunu, **Dr. đr. yesi Z. Aya GERMEN** danıřmanlıđında tarafımdan retildiđini ve Hacettepe niversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstits Tez Yazım Ynergesine gre yazıldıđını beyan ederim.

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ÖZET

BUDAK, Ali. *Tim O'Brien'in In the Lake of the Woods, Jeffrey Jacob Abrams ve Doug Dorst'un S. ve Mark Z. Danielewski'nin Only Revolutions Romanlarında Döngüsellik Analizi*. Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Ankara, 2022.

Postmodern kurmaca, dünyayı açık ve net bir şekilde betimlemekten kaçınan özellikler ileri sürer. Postmodern kurmaca ile ilişkilendirilmiş olan üstkurmaca, parçalama, otoritercilik karşıtlığı, yüksek ve alt kültürlerin birleşmesi, ironi, metinlerarasılık, deneyselcilik, öykünme ve çoğulculuk gibi özellikler, bölünmüş, öz-düşünümsel, güvenilir, zorlayıcı ve keşfedilebilir öyküler ortaya çıkarır. Bu anlatılar, anlam yaratma sürecinde okuyucudan daha fazla katılım gerektiren okuma deneyimleri yaratır. Bu tez, bir anlatının okuyucuyu hikâyeyi tekrar tekrar okumaya teşvik etme özelliğine “döngüsellik” adını vererek, Tim O'Brien'in *In the Lake of the Woods* (1994), Jeffrey Jacob Abrams ve Doug Dorst'un *S.* (2013) ve Mark Danielewski'nin *Only Revolutions* (2006) eserlerinin çeşitli derecelerde döngüsellik olanağı sunan postmodern metinler olduğunu öne sürmektedir.

Bu çalışma, söz konusu romanların döngüselliklerini incelerken Gerard Genette'in bir anlatıyı anlaşılabilir kılan özelliklerini tanımladığı *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1983) kitabında yer alan çerçeveyi esas almaktadır. Genette'in işaret ettiği ilk kategori anlatının “zamanı” ve zamanın metinle olan ilişkisinin sorunsallaştırılmasıdır. İkinci kategori “kip” anlatıcıların hikâyeyi aktarırken takındığı bakış açılarına odaklanır. Üçüncü kategori, anlatının “ses”i ve olaylara göreceli konumu, anlatı seviyeleri, üstkurgusal özellikleri ve anlatıcı şahıstır. Son kategori, anlatı metni ve romanın maddesel gerçekliğidir. Bu tez, söz konusu dört kategoriye odaklanarak, bu romanların döngüsel okuma deneyimlerini nasıl oluşturduklarını çözümlemeyi amaçlar.

Anahtar Kelimeler

döngüsellik, postmodernizm, anlatıbilimi, maddesellik, *In the Lake of the Woods*, *S.*, *Only Revolutions*

ABSTRACT

BUDAK, Ali. *An Analysis of Cyclicity in the Novels In the Lake of the Woods by Tim O'Brien, S. by Jeffrey Jacob Abrams and Doug Dorst, and Only Revolutions by Mark Z. Danielewski*. Master's Thesis, Ankara, 2022.

Postmodern fiction brings forward those qualities that stray from a direct and clear representation of the world. The qualities that are associated with postmodern fiction such as metafiction, fragmentation, anti-authoritarianism, fusion of high and low culture, irony, intertextuality, experimentation, pastiche and pluralism create stories that are fragmented, self-reflexive, unreliable, challenging, and explorable. Such narratives create reading experiences that require more participation in the process of making meaning compared to linear narratives. Calling this quality that encourages the reader to re-read the story in a narrative "cyclicity," this thesis argues that *In the Lake of the Woods* (1994) by Tim O'Brien, *S.* (2013) by Jeffrey Jacob Abrams and Doug Dorst, and *Only Revolutions* (2006) by Mark Danielewski are postmodern texts which offer varying degrees of cyclicity.

In analyzing the cyclicity in the novels mentioned, this study uses the framework outlined in Gerard Genette's *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1983), in which Genette studies those aspects of a narrative that make it obscure. The first category he points out is the "tense" of narration and the problematization of time in relation to the text. The second is "mood" which focuses on the perspectives that narrators assume in relaying the story. The third category is the "voice" of narration and its relative position to the events in narrative, its narrative levels, metafictional qualities and the narrating person. The final category is the narrative text and the novel's material reality. By focusing on these four categories, this thesis aims to analyze how these novels create narratives that present cyclical reading experiences.

Key Words

cyclicity, postmodernism, narratology, materiality, *In the Lake of the Woods*, *S.*, *Only Revolutions*

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INTRODUCTION

Postmodernism as a movement has been in the literary scene for over half a century with its peak attributed to the late 1960s. There are many general qualities that are associated with postmodern literature/fiction, including, but not limited to, the use of irony, inter-textuality, metafiction, eclecticism, anti-authoritarianism, fusion of high and low culture, pastiche, pluralism, experimentation. Because of its tendency to experiment and resist categorization, postmodern fiction is generally regarded as one of the more problematic movements to define and categorize in history. Regardless of this tendency, however, many literary critics and theorists such as Jean-François Lyotard, Ihab Hassan, Susan Sontag, Linda Hutcheon and Brian McHale have attempted to describe and map out the qualities associated with postmodernism.

Focusing on postmodern fiction, Bran Nicol argues that those qualities that create obscurities in narratives, like irony and pastiche, stem from the notion of “incredulity towards realism” against the idea of “mimesis,” the Greek term for imitation meaning that art represents and replicates aspects of real life (17). Explaining incredulity, Nicol says that it is “a state of mind which does not necessarily conclude that representing the postmodern world accurately, realistically, is no longer desirable, but is convinced that the act of representation cannot be performed as unselfconsciously and wholeheartedly as it was in the nineteenth century” (19). Adopting this state of mind, postmodern fiction may be said to bring forward those qualities that stray from a direct and clear representation of the postmodern world, which, in turn, results in texts that present various possibilities of interpretation, and that require more reader participation.

The kind of fiction that requires a heightened form of reader participation, according to Marie-Laure Ryan, can be deemed as interactive (17). It is not a literal interactivity in the sense that the novel gives a physical response or an equivalent reaction to the reader but a “figural” one. “Figural interactivity” can be defined as the “collaboration between the reader and the text in the production of meaning” (17). According to this definition, every text could be considered interactive in a figural sense as even the most straightforward text would require collaboration with the reader. However, texts that demand more participation from the reader create a stronger figural activity since “it

takes an even more demanding activity to convert temporal flow of language into a spatial configuration of meaning” than “form[ing] a mental image of the fictional world” (17). Texts that require more discipline in the process of making meaning create variations in understanding, and these variations lead to a personalized interpretation where the reader essentially arrives at one possible interpretation among many others.

Various possible interpretations in a given narrative create a story that can be explored. In such narratives the reader frequently goes back to a sentence, a page, a chapter, and even re-reads the entire novel to be able to make meaning, fill in the gaps, and explore other interpretive possibilities. Calling this quality that promotes exploration in a narrative “cyclicity,” this thesis argues that postmodernist texts that present such narratives and that have a strong figural interactivity can be called cyclical. The study focuses on *In the Lake of the Woods* (1994) by Tim O’Brien, *S.* (2013) by Jeffrey Jacob Abrams and Doug Dorst, and *Only Revolutions* (2006) by Mark Danielewski as postmodern, cyclical texts which offer varying degrees of challenging reading experiences and practices that result in explorability. In analyzing “cyclicity” in these novels, it will use the perspective offered by Gerard Genette’s *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1983), in which he studies those aspects of a narrative that make it obscure and harder to navigate. However, before specifically focusing on Genette’s study of narrative, it is imperative to look at the position of the reader in postmodernist fiction.

POSTMODERNIST FICTION AND READER PARTICIPATION

Many theorists approach postmodernism as being closely associated with modernism. Accordingly, Jean-François Lyotard who is said to have brought the postmodern to Europe’s attention states that “postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end, but in a nascent state, and this state is constant” (79). Brian McHale further comments on this issue in his book *The Cambridge Introduction to Postmodernism* (2006) stating that “[p]ostmodernism in this sense, thus, precedes the consolidation of modernism – it is modernism before it has been ‘edited,’ with the unassimilable parts left in” (17). It is this “unedited” version of modernism that presents the kind of fiction

that breaks the line between fiction and reality and that does not allow for passive consumption. Commenting on the characteristics of the postmodern era Waugh argues that “[t]he historical period we are living through has been singularly uncertain, insecure, self-questioning and culturally pluralistic. Contemporary fiction clearly reflects this dissatisfaction with, and breakdown of, traditional values” (6). Comparing modernism to postmodernism, Waugh contends that “novels like Virginia Woolf’s *To the Lighthouse* (1927) or James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922) signaled the first widespread, overt emergence in the novel of a sense of fictitiousness: ‘a sense that any attempt to represent reality could only produce selective perspectives, fictions, that is, in an epistemological, not merely in the conventional literary, sense’” (7). Postmodernism, then, is “both a response and a contribution to an even more thoroughgoing sense that reality or history are provisional: no longer a world of eternal verities but a series of constructions, artifices, impermanent structures” (7). As such, postmodernism does not represent a complete shift from modernism, but a particular approach to its ideas or worries. According to Linda Hutcheon, postmodernist fiction attempts to show and challenge the instability of a period in which the only consensus regarding any overarching topic is the lack or the illusion of consensus and objectivity (7).

The lack of objectivity and its relation to postmodernist fiction has been a highly debated issue. Commenting on the complicated relation between postmodernist fiction and history, and the competing views of Hutcheon and Jameson on this issue, Duvall states that, “For Jameson, postmodern narrative is ahistorical (and hence politically dangerous), playing only with pastiche images and aesthetic forms that produce a degraded historicism; for Hutcheon, postmodern fiction remains historical, precisely because it problematizes history through parody, and thus retains its potential for cultural critique” (1). The techniques associated with postmodernist fiction such as parody and pastiche create a literary environment in which representation is problematized, and while it is argued that postmodernist fiction degrades historicism on the one hand, it is also said to reflect the instability of the period on the other.

Gerard Hoffman argues that postmodern fiction “joins the rebellion against the Fifties and late modernism in its own way by turning against the three pillars of modern art,

the concepts of reality, identity and totalizing artistic form, and by developing its own ‘imagined alternatives,’” and that it is the “deconstruction of ‘traditional loyalties, ties and associations’” (33). According to Hoffman, the reader is also affected by the tendencies of postmodern aesthetic ideology which “entails a ‘liberation’ of fiction from exhausted traditions” and “brings about an ‘emancipation’ of the reader of fiction from the conventional and the used-to and the chronological sequence, in favor of the simultaneous and non-synchronous” (59). The shift from conventional and chronological reading to the unconventional and non-synchronous brings with it a new challenge to the reader in the process of interpretation: the challenge of indeterminacy.

Ihab Hassan expands upon postmodernism and postmodernist texts in “Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective” (1986) by listing eleven “definiens” that “offer a catena of postmodern features, a paratactic list, staking out a cultural field” (2). First of the eleven definiens Hassan indicates is “indeterminacy, or rather, indeterminacies” which entail “all manner of ambiguities, ruptures, and displacements affecting knowledge and society” (2). In his book *The Dismemberment of Orpheus* (1982), he further elaborates on indeterminacy saying that it is comprised of a list of concepts, some of which are “ambiguity, discontinuity, heterodoxy, pluralism, randomness, revolt, perversion, deformation (269). With a specific emphasis placed on “deformation,” Hassan goes on to state that “the latter alone subsumes a dozen current terms of unmaking: decreation, disintegration, deconstruction, decenterment, displacement, difference, discontinuity, disjunction, disappearance, decomposition . . .” (269). Thus, he attributes to postmodernism a reading experience that is caused by an ambiguous and obscure text, asserting that postmodern narratives inherently display qualities that make the reader’s part more active.

To further explain indeterminacies in narratives, Hassan refers to Wolfgang Iser’s theory on reading that involves the concept of “blanks” (269). In his work “The Reading Process: A Phenomenological Approach” (1972) Wolfgang Iser applies two terms, “artistic” and “aesthetic,” to the analysis of a narrative (279). He takes the physical text itself as the “artistic” part of a literary work which offers “‘schematized views’” through which the subject matter in a text can be realized (279). The realization

of the subject matter through the participation and interpretation of the reader, on the other hand, is referred to as the “aesthetic” part of a literary text (279). He asserts that a literary work must be constructed between these two poles in such a way that does not relay the subject matter as a whole but that leaves room for the reader’s imagination, allowing them to participate in the creation of meaning (280). Iser associates these gaps with literature in general, since

even in the simplest story there is bound to be some kind of blockage, if only for the fact that no tale can ever be told in its entirety. Indeed, it is only through inevitable omissions that a story will gain its dynamism. Thus whenever the flow is interrupted and we are led off in unexpected directions, the opportunity is given to us to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections-for filling in the gaps left by the text itself. (284)

While every literary text has gaps, postmodernist texts employ techniques that deliberately create more gaps, hence Hassan attributes creating indeterminacies through gaps that are the unwritten or implied parts of a story as one of the defining factors of postmodernist texts that both allows for and invites reader participation (280).

Expanding on how reading could become a challenging experience for the reader, Wolfgang Iser states that readers have an urge to fit new pieces of information that they gather from the narrative into a pattern that is consistent with the presented world and their imagination of it (11). As the reader gets immersed in reading and imagines specific points, they fit the new information into the already established mold to make a consistent story and its world (11). This drive is also expanded upon by Wayne Booth who states that there are values that interest readers, which he roughly distinguishes into three categories: “Intellectual or Cognitive” which is the drive to reach the “facts” of the story, “Qualitative” which is the drive to see completion of patterns, e.g. seeing a crime take place and looking for punishment, and “Practical” which stems from emotional, positive or negative, attachment to characters, and seeing them complete their journey or change (Booth 125). The reader’s urge to create consistency in line with their respective interests may be obstructed as the reader might meet blockages or inconsistencies that cannot and do not fit or break their immersion in the story totally. In other words, elements that do not allow readers’ interests to be met make for a harder reading experience as they have to be surpassed through the participation of the reader.

The ninth “definiens” that Hassan names is “participation, performance” (“Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective” 5). According to Hassan, indeterminacies entail a need for participation because “gaps must be filled. The postmodern text, verbal or nonverbal, invites performance: it wants to be written, revised, answered, acted out” (5). It is by “writing,” “revising,” “answering” and “acting out” that the reader attempts to fill in the gaps. Richard Gerrig also elaborates on this issue through the metaphor of “performance” (17). According to Gerrig, “the task of the reader is much like the task of the actor” in that they both “must use their own experiences of the world to bridge gaps in texts” (17). As such, texts that display postmodernist tendencies make for a narrative that, through their indeterminacies, leaves room for the reader to fill in the gaps through their own experiences in order to come to understand and put the story together. In such dynamics, the reader is forced out of the role of a passive consumer and made to participate and metaphorically write in the gaps in the narrative, which gives them an authorial position.

Texts that allow the reader to be an authorial figure through their indeterminacies have been an issue explored by Roland Barthes as well. In his terms, “writerly” texts are texts which “make the reader no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text” meaning that they allow the reader to become an authorial figure in the finalization of the story (*S/Z* 4). This aspect of a writerly narrative also causes the reader to pseudo-personalize the story because while the material reality of the book remains unchanging, the story and its interpretation turn out to be a much more personalized version than what might have been intended by the author. Barthes writes that a reader who is reading not a “writerly” but “readerly” text, “instead of functioning himself, instead of gaining access to the magic of the signifier, to the pleasure of writing, . . . is left with no more than the poor freedom either to accept or reject the text” (4). Thus, it is only through writerly texts that the reader can be free to make interpretive practices which leads to limitless possibilities of understanding.

Similar to Barthes’s notion of writerly texts, Umberto Eco writes about the possibilities of limitless interpretation in his book entitled *The Open Work* (1962). Eco makes a clear distinction between the physical form of a work and its interpretation and states that a

work of art has two aspects; the complete “performance” of an artist, which is the end product like a novel, and its “interpretation” which represents the reader’s participation (4). According to this definition, having inexhaustible interpretive possibilities is what constitutes the “openness” of the text which, similar to the idea of indeterminacy, allows a physically finite work such as the novel to have an ever-changing interpretive frame in the process of making meaning (4). Thus, works that allow and encourage multiple interpretations and understandings through their writerly, open, or indeterminate qualities inherently produce a more interactive and challenging reading experience as the reader is prompted to participate in the process of making meaning.

It can be seen that the opposition between texts that can be considered writerly or open and texts that are readerly or closed are similar to Wolfgang Iser’s notion of narratives that have and do not have gaps. Specifically, texts that have more gaps to fill in through one’s own interpretation can be considered writerly with narratives that do not aim at specific discourses to be accepted or rejected. Iser maintains that “the more a text individualizes or confirms an expectation it has initially aroused, the more aware we become of its didactic purpose, so that at best we can only accept or reject the thesis forced upon us” (4). In other words, the more gaps or obscurities a writerly text has, the more interpretive possibilities it offers. Thus, it can be seen that postmodern tendencies have been closely associated with a condition of indeterminacy which inevitably requires heightened participation from the reader and leads to more personalized and explorable narratives that fall under the categories of writerly and open.

In the Lake of the Woods (1994) by Tim O’Brien, *S.* (2013) by Jeffrey Jacob Abrams and Doug Dorst, and *Only Revolutions* (2006) by Mark Danielewski are writerly texts that incorporate unusual printing practices, non-linear narratives, unreliable narrators, and metafictional qualities which make them harder to read, as they lead to various interpretive possibilities. The variety of interpretive possibilities result in explorability, making these texts “cyclical.” Gerard Genette’s *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1983), in which he studies Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time (À la recherche du temps perdu)* (1913) in detail, provides a tool for the analysis of these novels as cyclical texts. Though Genette focuses specifically on Proustian narratives in

his work, he states that “what I propose here is essentially a method of analysis; I must therefore recognize that by seeking the specific I find the universal” (23). Therefore, his work not only provides a useful framework for understanding various aspects of a narrative, but also shows how each of these aspects can be warped and made more complicated.

In the preface to his study, Genette explains how he defines the terms “story,” “narrative,” and “narrating.” He suggests “the word story for the signified or narrative content . . . the word narrative for the signifier, statement, discourse or narrative text itself, and . . . the word narrating for the producing of narrative action and, by extension, the whole of the real or fictional situation in which that action takes place” (27). In line with Genette’s terminology, the present study aims to focus on how the “story” is obscured through making the narrative unreliable and/or indeterminate, and the “narrating text” harder to navigate, which impels the reader to participate more, or in the words of Richard Gerrig, “perform” more (Genette 27, Gerrig 32). Thus, its focus is on those qualities which make the novel harder to read as it is those qualities that lead to various interpretive possibilities and eventually result in explorability.

The following section of the Introduction will delve into the various ways of creating indeterminacies through obscuring the “narrating” of a narrative as proposed by Genette (27). It will explore the narratives which provide cyclical reading experiences through employing various techniques. The first point of focus will be the “tense” of the narrative, that is, the narrative’s temporal sequence which is comprised of Order, Duration and Frequency (31). The second will be the “mood” of a narrative which refers to the distance of the narrating voice to events that take place, and their perspective of these events (31). The final section of narrating, the “voice” of the narrative, will focus on the voice of the narrator in relation to the events that are being reported, the time of narrating, and the level of narrating (31).

TENSE

1. Order

In his study of “tense” in a narrative, Genette first refers to “order” (29). According to Genette, to study the order of a narrative is to “compare the order in which events or temporal sections are arranged in the narrative discourse with the order of succession these same events or temporal segments have in the story, to the extent that story order is explicitly indicated by the narrative itself or inferable from one or another indirect clue” (35). In other words, Genette explains the study of order with regards to the relationship between the diegetic order of events, as in its chronological sequence, and the order of their textual representation. According to this explanation, the ideal orderly structure of a narrative, which can be traced as far back as Aristotle’s *Poetics* (Around 330 BCE), is to have a distinct and proper beginning, middle, and an end. Elements that create indeterminacy, on the other hand, are the instances where this natural and mimetic structure is tampered and broken.

Breaking this structure results in non-linear or disjointed narratives. The most basic forms of non-linearity in the narrative can be found in the form of flashbacks, *in medias res* or starting from the middle of the story, or in the lack of clear ending. Narratives that contain forms of basic non-linearity, whether or not they are defined by this quality, can be found even in Greek epics like the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* which start from the middle of the story and use flashbacks and digressions throughout. In Genette’s terms, these narratives contain “anachronies” or “temporal distortions” (29). Genette proposes two terms for the use of two specific sorts of distortions, “designating as prolepsis any narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later, designating as analepsis any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story where we are at any given moment” (40).¹ Genette reserves the use of “anachronies” to “designate all forms of discordance between the two temporal orders of story and narrative,” which is commonly referred to as non-linearity in narratives (40).

Anachronies are important characteristics of detective novels as well. For example, Umberto Eco’s *The Name of the Rose* (1980) can be regarded as a detective novel that exhibits anachronies. Eco qualifies such narratives as “rhizomatic” in *Reflections on The Name of the Rose* (1985), a postscript that comments on the novel. The word

rhizomatic is first used outside of biology by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, who first identified the term in an interpretive context in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1980) (7). “Rhizome,” which is a botanical term meaning the stem of a plant, refers to the act of reading and interpretation as having no beginning and no destination (7). According to them, all thought and interpretation are rhizomatic in the sense that “any point . . . can be connected to anything other, and must be” (7). Eco applies this rhizomatic structure to crime novels, arguing that “the crime novel represents a kind of conjecture, pure and simple,” and in order to read such a novel a reader would have to have conjectures about the plot points that are connected to each other and make up the logic of the narrative (14). He compares reading and deciphering the clues of detective fiction to traversing through these logically connected conjectures (14). To further clarify this structuration, he uses the metaphor of “mazes” and categorizes them using the term “rhizomatic maze” which means a maze without a clear beginning, an end, or points of closure (15). Thus, for a novel to be rhizomatic, it needs to resist presenting the narrative as already connected, and allow the reader to connect it themselves. This is one of the ways in which indeterminacy through anachronies is made the essence of a genre, demanding more attention from the reader.

In conclusion, the use of anachronies or non-linearity in narratives creates a reading experience that demands more reader participation. Additionally, non-linearity not only entails a story that plays with the traditional understanding of beginning, middle, or end, but also a story that can be interpreted through its rhizomatic structure. The presence of multiple stories and parallels between different plotlines and the play with the Aristotelian understanding of ideal order of a narrative result in a reading that is much like exploring and clearing a maze in which the reader and their interpretation jump from one conjunction to the other in order to arrange, understand and interpret the bits and pieces of information discovered. Thus, narratives that are both non-linear and that can be interpreted in a non-linear way make for a reading experience that requires more interpretive involvement. Such texts that prompt re-reading or are designed to be re-read and re-interpreted, are, therefore, cyclical.

2. Duration

The second aspect of the tense of narrative Genette lists is duration. Specifically, duration refers to the relationship between the length of time the events take in the diegetic world, and in the narrative text, in other words, “variable duration of these events or story sections and the pseudo-duration (in fact, length of text) of their telling in the narrative” (35). This relationship requires, first, the study of the time that passes in the story, which according to Genette is impossible to determine fully “for the simple reason that no one can measure the duration of a narrative,” and then comparing it to how much space it takes in the narrative text, meaning how long it takes to be written or how long it takes to be articulated in the text (86). To provide a rough understanding of duration, he proposes to discern the points of breaks or skips in the order they are written in the text and then section the narrative in order to roughly determine the duration of the sections. To use his phrasing, “if for our demarcating criterion, however, we adopt the presence of an important temporal and/or spatial break, we can establish the separation without too much hesitation” (88). After this separation, he compares the speed at which the events in the diegetic world take place to the length of the words or pages they are presented in the narrative. Through this, he arrives at a schema with sections, which does not precisely present the duration of an event but rather the tempo. The schema that displays the changes in the speed and the length, can be studied to see the tempo of the narrative.

Creating a schema through temporal or spatial breaks and studying the duration of each section, Genette, then, arrives at four specific terms which he names “narrative movements” which are “pause,” “scene,” “summary,” and “ellipsis” (94). Among these four narrative movements, “pause” refers to a moment or a stop in the diegetic events for a length of time in the text; “scene” refers to a one-to-one duration which could commonly be found in instances such as conversations; “summary” is when the diegetic events that have transpired are actually longer than their representation in the narrative text; and finally, “ellipsis” is when the story that happens is not represented in the narrative text, such as the leaps of time through which the reader suddenly find themselves two years ahead of where they last were in the story. As literary works generally adopt most, if not all, of these “narrative movements,” the study of the

existence and frequency of them brings the reader closer to understanding the duration of the narrative.

Genette calls this schematic of duration “anisochronies” of the narrative, in other words, the “rhythm” of it (88). Studying the rhythm of the narrative, the length of a pause or an ellipsis and the frequency with which a narrative switches its narrative movements also show how disruptive the narration of a specific story can be. Specifically focusing on the Proustian narrative, Genette states that, “through the growing importance of very long scenes covering a very short time of story; and on the other hand, in a sense compensating for this slowing down, a more and more massive presence of ellipses” can be synthesized “with the following phrase: the increasing discontinuity of the narrative (93). This increasing discontinuity, and the “abrupt rhythm” which he deems is a characteristic of Proustian narratives, can also create indeterminacies in a narrative. A long ellipsis where much could happen without the reader’s knowledge, or spatial or temporal breaks where the reader could find themselves on a different and seemingly irrelevant point in a story can have disorienting effects and necessitate increased reader participation.

Another example of such abrupt changes in the rhythm can be found in the fiction of William Burroughs whom Bran Nicol describes as having a style that is “a patchwork of different texts: streams of consciousness, dreams, and hallucinations rub shoulders with passages from essays, history books, official documents, or propaganda. The effect is disorienting for the reader, who finds him or herself suddenly transported, often in the middle of a sentence, into a different place and situation without warning” (65). It can be understood that the rhythm in Burrough’s fiction has many breaks and that this rhythm is abrupt in a temporal and spatial sense because the passage of time is presented through the reader’s sudden transportation. Nicol further comments that this style of writing “implicitly invites the reader to reconsider how he or she reads the text, and to trace meanings in other directions” (65). The disorienting effect that a narrative with an abrupt change in rhythm can result in a challenging reading experience where the reader is constantly trying to get a bearing on their place in the story. Such dynamic narratives require the reader to be much more active in the process of understanding the

narrative, and they lead to a more personalized and indefinable story with a variety of understandings and interpretations ready to be explored.

3. Frequency

The final aspect of the tense of a narrative is frequency. Genette defines frequency as “relations of frequency (or, more simply, of repetition) between the narrative and the diegesis” (113). At first glance, such a distinction seems to point to an obvious contradiction as the two instances of the same event repeating itself could not be the same, since “the sun that ‘rises’ every morning is not exactly the same one day to another-any more than the ‘8:25 P.M. Geneva-to-Paris’ train . . . is made up each evening of the same cars hooked to the same locomotive” (113). However, Genette claims that the frequency of the same events in a narrative is the result of the assumption that these are “similar events considered only in terms of their resemblance” (113). As such, “repetition” that arises from the frequency of these events “is in fact a mental construction” which eliminates the originality of each event and replaces their identifying qualities with their similarities to each other. In other words, there are repeated references to different but similar events in the narrative (113).

Along with this understanding of the repetition of events, Genette distinguishes four forms of frequency that can be found in narratives. The first of these is “*narrating once what happened once*” (114). As the name implies, such an instance is not necessarily a form of repetition as both the narrative event and its representation happen once. As it is technically the absence of repetition, in order “to express specifically that we are dealing with only one possibility among others,” Genette calls it “*singulative* narrative,” giving the example “yesterday, I went to bed early” (114). The second form of frequency is “*narrating n times what happened n times*” (114). While still singulative in nature, because the number of representations is the same as the number of instances of events, the events still correspond with one another “according to a connection that Jakobson would call iconic” and showcase a presence of repetition (115). Genette’s specific example for this type is “Monday, I went to bed early. Tuesday I went to bed early, Wednesday I went to bed early” (115). The third form is “*narrating n times what happened once*” (115). In this form there is a repetition but this repetition is only in the

recount of the events in the narrative text, in other words, one event is recounted multiple times throughout the narrative, as in “yesterday I went to bed early, yesterday I went to bed early, yesterday I went to bed early” (115). The final form of frequency for which Genette uses the term “iterative” is “*narrating once what happened n times*” which is similar to and works together with “summary,” in which the duration of events would be summarized in the relatively short duration of the text (115). For example, phrases such as “each day of the week” inherently include such repetition and is quite common in narratives (115).

Focusing on forms of frequency where singular or multiple events are represented multiple times in the narrative text, or what Genette calls “*narrating n times what happened n times*” and “*narrating n times what happened once,*” it can be remarked that these forms not only bring to attention specific events to check the reader’s attention, but also create metaphorical anchor points (Genette 115). Anchor points refer to points of repetition which the reader may consider as reference points in the narrative. For example, a narrative that opens with the description of a specific event or a scene and then returning to that scene provides the readers with such points. An anchor point that prompts readers to search for similarities or differences between repetitions signaling that the readers are back at that point in the narrative, or a point similar to it, gives the feeling of a circular reading experience. In sum, narratives that have specific points of repetition create indeterminacies by providing anchor points for the reader, showing that a cycle ends and a new one begins in the story. Such anchor points urge the reader to search for similarities and differences, and ultimately give way to an increased demand for reader participation.

MOOD

The second aspect of a narrative that Genette focuses on is the “Mood” of a narrative (161). In Genette’s terminology the term mood means “the different points of view from which the life or the action is looked at” (161). Mood refers specifically to the point of view of the narrator, and “deal(s) with the way in which the narrating itself is implicated in the narrative, . . . that is, the narrative situation or its instance, and along with that its two protagonists: the narrator and his audience, real or implied” (30). He

dubs the points of view a narrator can potentially assume as “focalizations” (186). The narrator having personal focalizations can limit the scope and nature of the information on events relayed to the reader, and by determining the focalization of a narrator, the reader may understand the frame of information and whether it is intended to be objective or not. Being one of the characters limits the narrating voice to the perception of one person, and though speculations about specific events that the narrator is not involved in might be given in the narrative, they are not more than speculations, creating unreliability and indeterminacy on the part of the narrator.

The focalization of a narrative, according to Genette, is made up of two aspects which work together. The first of these is the “distance” of the narration (162). According to Genette, “the narrative can furnish the reader with more or fewer details, and in a more or less direct way, and . . . thus can seem . . . to keep at a greater or lesser distance from what it tells” (162). The amount of the detail that a narrator relays to the reader shows how close they are to the events of the diegetic world. In this spectrum, the more detailed the account of the event is, the closer the narrator becomes to the events. Conversely, the less detailed and shallow the summaries are, the more distant the narration becomes. The two ends of this spectrum have two different possibilities: the narrator is either one of the characters, or is above the diegetic events possibly assuming the voice of the author or a godlike omniscient being.

The second aspect of the focalization is the specific “perspective” of the narrator. While the closeness of a narrator is associated with the amount of detail provided in the narrative, perspective relates to how personalized the recount of the diegetic events are. Genette maintains that

The narrative can also choose to regulate the information it delivers . . . according to the capacities of knowledge of one or another participant in the story (a character or group of characters), with the narrative adopting or seeming to adopt what we ordinarily call the participant's “vision” or “point of view”; the narrative seems in that case . . . to take on, with regard to the story, one or another perspective. (162)

Assuming a perspective in the story leads to the possibility of bias in the narration. The narrator who takes on the perspective of a character in a narrative will only be able to recount the events as that specific character sees and comprehends them, also limiting

the reader to a personalized view of events. As such, specific perspectives that a narrator adopts can create a reading environment in which the reader might be led to distrust or even disbelieve the narration, which is, in fact, the only real source of information of the story.

Through the distance and the perspective of the narrator one arrives at the “focalization” of narrative (189). Genette then distinguishes two types of focalizations, or “focus of narration” (189). The first of these types is a narrative with zero focalization, in other words, a nonfocalized narrative (189). Nonfocalized narrative is the equivalent of a narrative which has an omniscient narration where the narrator knows and says more than the characters, even the protagonist in the narrative. In such narratives, the narrator can explore the feelings and thoughts of other characters, relaying information that the character telling the story might not have any way of knowing. Genette associates such focalization with classical narratives referring to Todorov’s formula of “Narrator > Character” (189). In such narratives the reader is not readily made distrusting or suspicious as the narration follows an objective and descriptive method.

The second type of focalization Genette describes is “internal focalization” where the narrator only relays the information about the character whose point of view they take (189). Being the equivalent of Todorov’s formula of “Narrator = Character,” this type of focalization is made up of three sub-types which are “fixed,” “variable,” and “multiple” (189). In fixed internal focalization, the character through whom the narrator perceives the world and speaks never changes throughout the narrative. This type of a narrator provides a limited view and understanding of diegetic events, and the reader is only privy to the information that the character has witnessed and processed through their own knowledge or beliefs. Fixed narration has possibly the most unreliable narration where the reader sees one side of the story only, with the character’s biases and worldviews.

While the disposition of the narrating voice causes inherent unreliability, it may also cause a more active form of distrust. In the case of a highly personalized recount of a story, the narrator can potentially withhold information or present it in a more

personalized manner. The narrator as a character whose qualities do not match the scope of information they have is termed as an “unreliable narrator” by Wayne Booth. According to Wayne Booth, such unreliability and distrust can occur later in the narrative as narrators “whose characteristics change in the course of the works they narrate” may also lead to a change in the scope and the nature of information relayed to the reader (Booth 157). Such an unreliable narrator whose view changes in the course of the novel can make the reader question what they understood from the story so far. As Wolfgang Iser remarks, “we may be so much in doubt that we begin to question all the processes that lead us to make the interpretative decisions” (16). Narrators with internal focalization possess qualities that make them unreliable, depending on their closeness to and their limited knowledge of the diegetic events. Additionally, the narrator’s changing their views and discourses in the course of the narrative can make the reader unsure of their interpretative decisions. In the interpretive process, these qualities create indeterminacies as they make the reader doubt the information that is presented to them as well as their own interpretation of that information.

The second and third sub-types that Genette distinguishes include multiple narrators. The second sub-type is the variable focalization, where the narrator changes the target character of their focalization throughout the story, often going back and forth. The third sub-type of multiple internal focalizations refers to multiple characters being the narrator and narrating the same events through different perspectives (189). Brian McHale also explores the effects of narrative practices containing multiple narrators in a story, referring to them as “parallax” in his article titled “Constructing (Post)Modernism: The Case of *Ulysses*” (5). McHale argues that “a character’s interior construction of the world diverges from the authorial projection of it, and the ‘angle’ of this divergence serves to inform us about the structure of this character’s consciousness” (5). It can be seen that such narrations put forth the character’s mental construction of the diegetic world more than the actual events. McHale also argues that “the obvious extension of this principle of parallax is to juxtapose two or more characters’ different constructions of the same world, or some part of a world” (5). The multiple narrators the reader comes across in the course of the story relay the events that are happening through their own mental reconstruction of them. This, however, has

the additional effect of reaffirming the events that take place in the narrative, as parallax works both in favor of and against the reader according to McHale. McHale proposes that parallax “confirm[s] the stability of the world outside the consciousness (on the assumption that one may be mistaken, but two mutually corroborative versions must be reliable)” of narrators (5). Through the use of parallax in which there are contradicting voices, the reader is left either to choose one of the voices or compare different voices in order to get to an acceptable representation of the story. Thus, while coherent voices serve to solidify the reality outside of their internal constructions, the contradicting parallax necessitates a more active participation from the reader to have to a more solid and coherent understanding of the story in a narrative situation that creates indeterminacies.

The final type that Genette distinguishes is “external focalization” (190). External focalization, as it can be understood from the name, refers to a focalization through a character outside of these events. Genette refers to Todorov’s formula of “Narrator < Character” where the character actually knows more than the narrator and thus the reader (189).² While other forms of focalization give the thoughts of at least one character in the novel, this form of focalization does not give any hints about the motives or the thoughts of any of the characters, leaving it to the reader to figure them out. This form of focalization is commonly used in adventure or mystery novels where “the author ‘does not tell us immediately all that he knows’” (190). In such a narrative where there is a gap in the real thoughts of the characters, the reader is expected to participate in the act of giving meaning to the actions taken as well as the indeterminacies created by it.

To conclude, choices regarding the narrator can create unreliability and indeterminacies. More specifically, whether the narrating voice is in the narrative and how much of a personal attachment they have to the events may cause them to withhold information or tell it differently, and in the case of multiple narrators, there is even a clash of narrators where the reader might be forced to choose or compare the narration of different voices. These choices regarding the mood, along with the reader’s potential distrust of the narrator, lead to a fragmented and incomplete understanding of the

narrative, and create indeterminacies as some events might have happened but not been relayed to the reader properly or at all. In short, such narratives ask for the reader's participation and performance to be able to understand and move through the story.

VOICE

1. Narrating Instance

The final aspect of the narrative Genette distinguishes is the “voice” of narration (212). Genette maintains that the voice of narration refers to the subject of the narration and its “mode of action,’ . . . ‘of the verb considered for its relations to the subject’—the subject here being not only the person who carries out or submits to the action, but also the person (the same one or another) who reports it, and, if need be, all those people who participate, even though passively, in this narrating activity” (213). In other words, it focuses on the relation of the narrating voice to the events that are happening, specifically in terms of time and narrative.

The first aspect of the voice of narration is the narrating instance, or the time of narrating. Genette emphasizes that “the chief temporal determination of the narrating instance is obviously its position relative to the story,” that is, when the diegetic events of the story occur as opposed to the instance of the narration that takes place in, and that can be inferred from, the narrative text (Genette 216). Concerning this temporal relationship, Genette specifies four variations: subsequent, prior, simultaneous and interpolated (217). Subsequent narration, which is the most common form of narrative according to Genette, is associated with a narrative that is relayed in the form of past tense, where the time of narrating is in the relative future to events of the diegetic order, (217). In prior narrating, which can also be termed as “‘predictive’ narrative in its various forms (prophetic/ apocalyptic, oracular, astrological, chiromantic, cartomantic oneiromantic, etc.),” the narrating voice narrates the story in a future tense as the narrator is in the past relative to the diegetic events (216). The third form, simultaneous, refers to the voice narrating the events as they happen in a present tense which can bring the narrative to “the height of objectivity” (219). The last form is the interpolated narrating instance, that is, “between the moments of action” (217). According to

Genette, “the last type is a priori the most complex, since it involves a narrating with several instances, and since the story and the narrating can become entangled in such a way that the latter has an effect on the former” (217). This form combines live and the prerecorded account of the diegetic events and relays them both in the narrative where the reader is exposed to a story which frequently looks to the past and the present.

The effects of these four forms on the narrative regarding potential indeterminacies is similar to the temporal distortions that are the results of tampering with the order of narrative. What the reader perceives in such narratives is a narrator who jumps back and forth in time, creating a non-linear narrative. However, potential causes of indeterminacies and the resulting reader participation are not equally tangible. In other words, in the case of interpolated narratives, the temporal distortions are not necessarily caused by the arrangement of the diegetic events in which the beginning, the middle, and the end is warped into a seemingly different design, but by the narrating voice’s relation to them. Thus, temporal distortions are caused by the narrating voice’s internal focalization and choice of narrating different sections of a narrative in a way that oscillates between the present and the past, making it interpolated. Though it is a different method of distorting the temporal sequence of narrative, it still has the effect of requiring a heightened reader participation in order to make sense of the narrative.

2. Narrative Levels

The second major aspect of a narrating voice is its narrative levels. Narrative levels refer to the narrative’s various diegetic levels, or levels of reality where one end would be the narrative reality, and the other, the author of the book and the reader. Genette defines this difference in level by saying that “*any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed*” (228). Genette calls a fictive author, or the “I” narrating a story about themselves or about events of which they were a part as “extradiegetic,” other narrated characters and their act of narrating other stories as “intradiegetic,” and intradiegetic characters who narrate the stories as “metadiegetic” (228). Any instances of a narration which breaks these levels or a character shifting from level one to another, is called a “narrative metalepsis” by Genette (235). A narrative that practices

such metalepsis makes for a story that deliberately plays with the narrative levels and reminds the reader of the fictitious nature of the narrative creating indeterminacy.

Genette's definition of narrative metalepsis can be associated with metafiction, a term that is commonly associated with postmodern fiction, in that they both play with the boundaries of narrative levels. According to Waugh,

Metafictional novels tend to be constructed on the principle of a fundamental and sustained opposition: the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion. In other words, the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction. (6)

Implicit forms of metafiction can be seen even in works as early as Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1387) in which many characters tell different stories, and later on in Cervantes' *Don Quixote* (1607) where the line between fiction and reality seems to be blurred for the main character. This is achieved through the use of "metalanguage (or "metasemiotic" language)," a term that the linguist L. Hjelmslev coined in 1961 (119). According to Hjelmslev, metalanguage is "a semiotic that treats of a semiotic; in our terminology this must mean a semiotic whose content is semiotic," meaning a language that refers to another language rather than whatever reality that specific word is attempting to represent (119). Similarly, Waugh contends that metalanguage "results in writing which consistently displays its conventionality, which explicitly and overtly lays bare its condition of artifice, and which thereby explores the problematic relationship between life and fiction" (4). Problematization of representation and language is one of the fundamental qualities of metafiction, as disconnectedness from the mimetic representation of reality is what causes the self-referential and ever ambiguous language of metafiction. Additionally, a practice such as this serves to bring the artificiality and fictionality of a narrative into the limelight.

William H. Gass states that, "In every art two contradictory impulses are in a state of Manichean war: the impulse to communicate and so to treat the medium of communication as a means and the impulse to make an artefact out of the materials and so to treat the medium as an end" (94). The impulse in art that urges to make an artefact out of whatever medium it uses lies at the basis of metafiction, which Patricia Waugh

refers to as “a celebration of the power of the creative imagination together with an uncertainty about the validity of its representations; an extreme self-consciousness about language, literary form and the act of writing fictions; a pervasive insecurity about the relationship of fiction to reality; a parodic, playful, excessive or deceptively naïve style of writing” (2). Through metafiction, the reader is constantly reminded that they are not a part of the story and that they are merely observers made aware of the fictitious nature of the narrative.

Another quality Waugh attributes to metafictional narratives is the element of play. Patricia Waugh, in line with the definition of “frame” in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, which means “‘construction, constitution, building; established order, plan, system . . . underlying support or essential substructure of anything,’” argues that everything, whether it be modern or postmodern, is seen through a frame, and adds that “contemporary metafiction, in particular, foregrounds ‘framing’ as a problem, examining frame procedures in the construction of the real world and of novels” (28). Specifically, “play is facilitated by rules and roles, and metafiction operates by exploring fictional rules to discover the role of fictions in life. It aims to discover how we each ‘play’ our own realities” (35). Play is achieved in metafiction through recontextualization, by shifting the frame, the context and thus understanding of any sign (36). This frame is not one that contains the story and diegesis, but the reader’s understanding of and outlook on the story itself. Linda Hutcheon refers to the questions that are associated with postmodernism, which are also in line with the recontextualization and shifting of the frame:

postmodern inquiry into the very nature of subjectivity is the frequent challenge to traditional notions of perspective, especially in narrative and painting. The perceiving subject is no longer assumed to a coherent, meaning-generating entity. Narrators in fiction become either disconcertingly multiple and hard to locate . . . or resolutely provisional and limited . . . In Charles Russell’s terms, with postmodernism we start to encounter and are challenged by “an art of shifting perspective, of double self-consciousness, of local and extended meaning” (11).

Similar to Hutcheon’s view of postmodernist challenge of perspective, Waugh argues that both modernism and postmodernism are aware of frames and how they are used to perceive everything, whereas postmodernist metafiction problematizes these frames and

tries to break them by forcing the boundaries of the narrative (28). Such a playful use of language through shifting the frame results in a narrative that eludes understanding and interpretation.

According to Wolfgang Iser, metafictional qualities are the fundamental ways of creating gaps in a narrative. Iser states that the reader has various expectations throughout the reading process to be fulfilled (6). In this tug of war between illusion and blockages that are alien to illusion, the reader becomes frustrated as they attempt to find consistency in the narrative, and fit everything into a mold that is appropriate to the prior cycles of expectation and realization. Through consistency the reader arrives at a state of illusion or immersion, since “where we have expectations, there too we have one of the most potent weapons in the writer's armory—illusion” (12). The “alien associations,” which are “other impulses which cannot be immediately integrated or will even resist final integration,” cause the reader to be frustrated, checks reader participation and blocks it, ultimately forcing the reader to reapproach it (14). These alien associations break the reader’s immersion as they meet a blockage in their reading process, and their search for consistency and the immersion is put to a halt through narrative metalepsis which goes against the already established narrative levels (13). As the reader is made aware of the constructed nature of the story through the presence of narrative metalepsis, they are never allowed to be immersed, or to practice the “suspension of disbelief” that has been attributed to the core of reading fiction by Samuel Taylor Coleridge (216). The oscillation between reality and fiction creates dynamism between consistency and inconsistency, and results in a dynamic reading experience, as it prompts a reapproach and re-read to better understand the story.

This movement of back and forth between the narrative levels has also been represented in the analogy of the “Möbius strip” which has been used to describe postmodern narratives. Nicol comments:

Unlike a circle, the Möbius strip is distinctive for the twist along its surface which means that as one proceeds around it one alternates between the “outside” and the “inside” edge. This logic applies to the fictions in *Lost in the Funhouse*: at times we appear to be “outside”, namely in an imagined world created by Barth, only to suddenly find ourselves on the “inside” of

the fictional apparatus itself, watching the machine generating the fiction, as it were. (78)

Applying this analogy to Barth's work, Nicol argues that the form of the Möbius strip and its twists allow one to travel on its surface being both inside and outside of the strip, representing the oscillation between the real and the diegetic associated with postmodern fiction.

A similar parallel can be drawn between Marie-Laure Ryan's explanation of figural interactivity and how metafictional writing makes for a stronger form of figural inactivity. She elaborates on this issue by saying that "the inherently interactive nature of the reading experience has been obscured by the reader's proficiency in performing the necessary world-building operation," that is to say, narratives that immerse the reader into them make them unaware of the mental participation that they perform (17). On the other hand, metafictional narratives that break the reader's immersion cause an opposite reaction from the reader as readers are made aware of the need for mental participation which frustrates them and checks their participation. Ryan names such active reader involvement through immersion breaking as "self-referential demystification" meaning a self-referential text that keeps the reader from immersing themselves in it and requires them to be in a state of active and deliberate participation in the process of making meaning (17). Metafiction thus causes "an ontological expulsion from the fictional world" according to Ryan. This expulsion is one of the ways that keeps the narrative dynamic and requires deliberate participation from the reader (18).

Texts that continuously and deliberately expel or repel the reader back to, in Genette's terms, the extradiegetic level cause them to "reclaim [their] 'native reality' as ontological center," and result in a narrative that is hard to follow and keep being interested in, as Ryan states that narratives that exhibit a structure that promotes immersion and then draw the readers back to the real world are more interactive than narratives that do not exhibit this tug-of-war (18). Giving the example of John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* Ryan states that

The fictional world may be eventually demystified as a textual construct, yet the text succeeds in creating an immersive experience. At times, the

reader regards the characters as human beings and invests an emotional interest in their fate, at other times he is made to acknowledge their status as literary creations. It is the memory of the immersive power of the text that engages his critical faculties during the self-reflexive moments. The object of the reflexive activity is as much the phenomenon of immersion as the artificiality of fictional worlds. . . . Under this interpretation, periodic de-immersion is essential to the “tilting game” of interactive reading. (18)

This process allows the reader to be immersed in the text at times and to approach the text critically, aware of other interpretive possibilities. Iser writes, “as we work out a consistent pattern in the text, we will find our ‘interpretation’ threatened, as it were, by the presence of other possibilities of ‘interpretation,’ and so there arise new areas of indeterminacy (though we may only be dimly aware of them, if at all, as we are continually making decisions which will exclude them)” (15). While reading such narratives that create additional narrative gaps the reader personalizes the story by interpreting and filling in the gaps through their own experiences. In doing so, the reader unwittingly chooses a path from amongst many to advance in the plotline. As the reader personalizes an otherwise static piece of text, they are made aware of other possibilities of interpretations, of paths to be taken and explored, which shows the explorability of a narrative, and makes the reader aware of indeterminacies that lead to a re-read.

3. Person

The third and final aspect of a narrating voice is the narrating person. According to Genette, using the terms “first-person” or “third-person” for the narrator is “inadequate” as these terms focus on the grammar of the narrating person to determine the voice of narrative (244). He states that

The novelist's choice, unlike the narrator's, is not between two grammatical forms, but between two narrative postures (whose grammatical forms are simply an automatic consequence): to have the story told by one of its “characters,” or to have it told by a narrator outside of the story. (244)

Genette proposes the terms “homodiegetic” and “heterodiegetic” for these two narrative positions. In homodiegetic position the narrator is a part of the story and has at least witnessed parts of the story (245). Traditional first-person narration which is associated with a character narrating their own story is only a type of homodiegetic narrator and is

termed “autodiegetic” by Genette (245). In heterodiegetic narrating position, the narrator is not a character in the story but above it and knows a lot more than the characters. These distinctions help categorize the narrating person “that moves all of a sudden from ‘I’ to ‘he,’ as if he were unexpectedly abandoning the role of narrator” or the narrator that “moves inversely from ‘he’ to ‘I’” as the differentiating factor here is whether or not the narrator is within the story rather than the grammar they use (246).

Both heterodiegetic and homodiegetic narrating positions present inherent problems in the narrative as they may cause unreliabilities and gaps in the narration. Regarding potential unreliabilities in the narrative text, Anderson writes, “homodiegetic narrators are able to manifest every type of unreliability, and all heterodiegetic narrators are able to underreport, underread, or underregard - to commit sins of omission” (5). A homodiegetic narration presents a narrator that is above the characters, who knows more and is able to, and usually does, withhold information and therefore misdirect the reader. A heterodiegetic narrator, on other hand, is limited by what the character sees, knows or guesses, thus presenting an inherently limited scope of knowledge. Additionally, a personified heterodiegetic narrator, or a narrator who is only using their own perspective “can misread and misregard” the diegetic situation and the story revolving around them (5). A non-personified heterodiegetic narrator who “has chosen to act as a hypothetical witness, to limit himself intradiegetically although outside the mind of any character” cannot “misread and misregard” the diegetic situation because they deliberately choose to act this way, which makes them unreliable in the sense that they withhold information rather than misrepresenting it. In sum, studying the narrating person and understanding whether they are a part of the diegetic world or not provides the reader with the knowledge of the kind of potential unreliabilities that the narrative can present.

NARRATIVE TEXT

In the main categories that Genette distinguishes the narrative text is analyzed in the same way the order of a narrative is analyzed, but these categories are related only to the medium of storytelling. In recent years, there has been an increasing interest in experimenting with the medium of narrative and the novel format itself as well as the

interpretive choices that are maintained through physical means. For there to be physical choices in a novel, however, the novel has to display an awareness of its own medium as well as its attempt to break its physical limitations. In the book *Comparative Textual Media* (2013) N. Katherine Hayles and Jessica Presman call the play with the physical form of the novel and the medium itself as “materiality” (xxviii). Materiality is defined as “the properties of the paper, the presence (or lack) of covers, the signs of use, the personal inscriptions” (xxviii). In other words, as explained in an interview with Lisa Gitelman, materiality is “a selective focus on certain physical aspects of an instantiated text that are foregrounded by a work’s construction, operation, and content” (qtd. in Gitelman 9). Thus, materiality refers to a material awareness and play in the signifying practices of any narrative rather than just the physical reality of a novel or narrative.

The material awareness of a work’s signifying practices is not foregrounded in traditional critical outlook according to Hayles. She maintains that “by and large literary critics have been content to see literature as immaterial verbal constructions,” with there being “a sharp line between representation and the technologies producing them” (*Writing Machines* 19). Nevertheless, Hayles states that materiality has always been a part of creating art, in the texts that “foreground their interaction with materiality” (Gitelman 9). She also states that “the material properties are actively constructed by the text and made resonant with significance, becoming semiotically important components of the text’s meaning-making processes” (9). Narratives that foreground materiality not only alter and play with the traditional understanding of the physical reality of novels but also make this play one of their defining literary features. Playing with the materiality of the novel displays itself in alternative printing methods, irregular margins and typography, or even in additions of different media. Playing with a novel’s materiality creates a narrative that forces readers to make choices that are not limited to interpretive ones only and necessitates an active reading of the text. In some cases, the reader could even be prompted to move the book physically and change their perspectives while reading it.

One of the most basic forms materiality can be seen in Choose Your Own Adventure books. While there are many iterations and titles under this genre, the main quality they share is to allow readers to make choices and thus personalize the reading experience. Classifying *Fight for Freedom* (1990) a Choose Your Own Adventure book, Kelly Angileri notes that the reader is “presented with two or more possibilities of action. If she selects one course of action, she must go to page such and such to continue the story; if she chooses another, she must go to such and such other page. . . The situation may at times be altered radically by any single decision” (68). In such a novel, the awareness of the materiality of the book is foregrounded through the page design that separates multiple stories in a such way that the reader is driven to specific pages, skip through the book and omit some pages according to their decisions and instructions of the narrative. The leftover pages and untaken paths leave the content to be investigated later on making for a narrative that is open to exploration.

A novel can also exhibit materiality in the form of the addition of other media which Alison Gibbons terms as “multimodal” in her novel *Multimodality, Cognition and Experimental Literature* (2012) (8). Gibbons describes multimodal printed literature as “employ[ing] multiple semiotic modalities, primarily the verbal and the visual” (1). Rather than a semiotic sequence, multimodal narratives contain multiple semiotic sequences of relaying the story. As this classification also includes graphic novels or “forms of shaped texts like concrete poetry,” Gibbons makes a disclaimer saying that “while the form of experimental literature that is the focus of this book does, to greater and lesser extents, share commonalities with other text-types such as these, on the whole multimodal printed literary fiction is treated as a genre in itself” (1). Gibbons’ list of examples of the manifestations of multimodality in novels are as follows:

- (1) Unusual textual layouts and page design.
- (2) Varied typography.
- (3) Use of colour in both type and imagistic content.
- (4) Concrete realisation of text to create images, as in concrete poetry.
- (5) Devices that draw attention to the text’s materiality, including metafictional writing.
- (6) Footnotes and self-interrogative critical voices.
- (7) Flipbook sections.
- (8) Mixing of genres, both in literary terms, such as horror, and in terms of visual effect, such as newspaper clippings and play dialogue. (2)

Multimodality refers to specific manifestations of materiality where the reader is expected to read the text along with other sequences. It creates a content that cannot be linearly consumed like reading a complete sentence thereby forcing the reader to choose one medium to experience first, and then another, creating a movement back and forth between choices and the various media present in the novel.

Gibbons further suggests that the use of such modes of communication are not exclusive to each other, rather, they work together to create meaning: “one mode is not privileged, but rather narrative content, type-face, type-setting, graphic design, and images all have a role to play” (*Multimodality 2*). Gibbon’s view seems to cancel out explorability as the reader does not necessarily choose a semiotic sequence but goes through several of them to create meaning. For example, the text may require the reader to read a word that describes a character’s emotion like “anger,” but it also requires them to read the faces, presenting different paths for the reader in the interpretative process. Any form of semiotic sequence in a novel could aid the telling of the story; however, the employment of different sequences inevitably forces the reader to choose one or the other. Additionally, there may be discrepancies in the information they present to the reader. Similar to the use of parallax in a narrative in which the story is presented through multiple perspectives, the addition of other media creates the possibility of presenting the same events through different wording/images. Thus, the presence of multimodality results in a narrative that presents choices to readers and forces them to choose one, making room for the unchosen that eventually creates a re-read and re-interpretation.

Materiality and multimodality create a narrative that necessitates both an active reading and exploration. Espen Aarseth, in his book *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature* (1997), terms such texts which necessitate an active reading through their materiality as “cybertexts” (1). According to Aarseth, a cybertext

focuses on the mechanical organization of the text, by positing the intricacies of the medium as an integral part of the literary exchange. However, it also centers attention on the consumer, or user, of the text, as a more integrated figure than even reader-response theorists would claim (1).

In other words, different from “materiality” proposed by Hayles, cybertexts both foreground their materiality in their presentation of semiotic sequences, and depend on their readers to be able to present the information fully, with no restrictions.

The demand for reader participation, Aarseth writes, does not appear in the form of interpretive practices as focusing more on the plotline of the story or deducing information from the story, but through physical means of participation (1). The reader’s performance when reading traditional texts “takes place all in his head, while the user of cybertext also performs in an extranoematic sense” (1). The physical performance which “effectuate[s] a semiotic sequence” is what Aarseth terms as “ergodic,” which is “a term appropriated from physics that derives from the Greek words *ergon* and *hodos*, meaning ‘work’ and ‘path’” (1). While the addition of “cyber” could be misleading as it has digital implications, the concept of cybertext “does not limit itself to the study of computer-driven (or electronic) textuality” (1). Aarseth further explains that an ergodic work is “one that in a material sense includes the rules for its own use, a work that has certain requirements built in that automatically distinguishes between successful and unsuccessful users,” meaning that it depends not on the specific medium, but how that medium is used (179). The process of distinguishing whether users or readers are successful or not depends on the decisions they take as well as the information that is obstructed by their decision:

Each decision will make some parts of the text more, and others less, accessible, and you may never know the exact results of your choices; that is, exactly what you missed. This is very different from the ambiguities of a linear text. And inaccessibility, it must be noted, does not imply ambiguity but, rather, an absence of possibility-an *aporia*. (Aarseth 3)

Thus, ergodicity is determined by how explorable a text is. Aarseth’s use of the term excludes textual ambiguity and focuses specifically on physical exclusions of a part of the narrative in question, which in turn determines the “success” of the reading experience.

The order, mood and the voice of the narrative focus on the interpretive qualities that give way to indeterminacies in a narrative. These qualities render a narrative explorable as they allow for numerous interpretations. Explorability can also be the result of playing with the narrative text. Such experimental techniques not only lead the reader to

participate in the process of making meaning but also physically move the book or follow the commands to advance in the narrative. This kind of reading experience is a physical form of pseudo-personalization that is more limited than interpretive personalization, still, it offers paths that are untaken yet to be explored.

In the following chapters, the structures of the novels will be analyzed through the categories outlined by Genette, which are the Tense, Mood, Voice, and Narrative Text. The first chapter will analyze Tim O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods*. *In the Lake of the Woods* is a detective novel that deals with the themes of trauma and memory loss by creating an unreliable and disjunctive narrative which becomes a part of the signifying process. The second chapter will analyze Dorst and Abrams' *S. S.* is a novel that utilizes both the narrative and the narrating text to create a reading experience in which the reader is urged to study and participate along with the two characters. The third chapter will analyze Mark Z. Danielewski's *Only Revolutions* which plays with the novel format and weaves its symbols of cycles in its experimental printing practices. It presents a reading experience in which the reader may open the book from either of the sides only to realize that there is a parallel narrative to be read on the bottom of the page, thus rotating the novel constantly to read both sides of the story. This thesis aims to prove that these three narratives present unique ways of creating cyclical reading experiences by weaving their themes and symbols in the narrating and the narrative text and present a spectrum of material awareness.

CHAPTER 1 – *IN THE LAKE OF THE WOODS*

William Timothy O'Brien is an American novelist born in Minnesota in 1946. After studying political science at Macalester College, he went to serve in the Vietnam War in 1968. Then, he worked as a reporter in the *Washington Post* from 1971 to 1974, publishing both newspaper and magazine articles. Mostly known for his novels, O'Brien has been praised for his works that deal with the Vietnam war. His first work focusing on the war is *If I Die in a Combat Zone, Box Me Up and Ship Me Home* (1973) which he wrote by combining his experiences in the form of memoirs and fiction. His first work is indicative of the rest of his works on the Vietnam War, in which he blurs the line between reality and fiction. In an interview with Verlyn Klinkenborg in 1994, O'Brien expands upon his style saying; "what stories can do, I guess, is make things present" (Klinkenborg). Weaving his memoirs and fiction together, O'Brien brings the tragedies that occurred in Vietnam to readers in his most well-known works *Going After Cacciato* (1978), and his most acclaimed novel, *The Things They Carried* (1990).

The object of the present study, *In the Lake of the Woods* (1994), is another novel that reflects O'Brien's style. The story begins at night in a cabin in Lake of the Woods, Minnesota, USA and focuses on a couple, John and Kathy Wade. The reader later learns that the story begins right after senatorial elections which John is running for and in which he receives a crushing defeat. In the morning of that night, it is found out that Kathy is missing. John, who wakes up near noon, seems worried about his wife but thinks of looking for her much later, towards the end of the day. Search parties scour the area for weeks only to find nothing, eventually questioning John, who seems to be eerily calm about her disappearance. As time goes on, less and less parties search for Kathy and official search groups being called off, only personal search parties remain. The story concludes with John riding off into the north towards where he thinks Kathy might have gone, following a straight line and cutting off communication with people who try to get into contact with him, eventually himself also getting lost.

During the main sequence of events, however, the story fills in missing gaps of information through flashbacks and tells other stories when they seem relevant to the

main series of events. Through these flashbacks, readers learn of Kathy's mannerisms and her tendency to occasionally willingly disappear, John's obsessions with Kathy and their relationship, his mental traumas, his career and how he gets into contact with Tony Carbo who was his manager in the campaign, the time he spent in Vietnam, why he is named Sorcerer, how he fabricates his past and makes the records look like he did not participate in the My Lai Massacre despite the fact that he did, his alcoholic and depressed father whose death by suicide John could never really get over, and the night of the disappearance where he gets up and in a haze kills several houseplants and, potentially, Kathy.

The main storyline explores the disappearance and its aftermath, and as the story goes on, the non-linear structure of the novel discloses four more timelines in John and Kathy's lives; John's childhood and the early death of his alcoholic father, the beginning of John and Kathy's relationship and its complications, John's service in the Vietnam War and his letters to Kathy, John's career and his campaign to become a senator. These four points are interwoven into the main plot of the disappearance of Kathy with many flashbacks and breaks in the linear narrative. In addition, there are two different styles of chapters titled "Hypothesis" and "Evidence," as Eggers points out, "Several chapters, entitled 'Evidence,' consist of quotations (both factual and fictional), trial transcripts from real participants in the My Lai massacre, and various readings about war . . . Another set of chapters, called 'Hypotheses,' presents scenarios that may or may not explain what happened to Kathy after she disappears" (164). Furthermore, the four timelines and the two additional styles of chapters are explored in such a way that makes the reader question the initial idea of the disappearance of Kathy in the Lake of the Woods.

The novel has been studied from two main perspectives. The first of these focuses on the subject of the Vietnam War and anti-war themes. Paul Eggers states that "*In the Lake of the Woods* is remarkable in teasing out of Vietnam even more layers of felt truth" (162). By weaving fact and fiction into the story and also presenting it as a documented journalistic report rather than fiction through various footnotes and quotations, O'Brien presents an unhampered and seemingly factual representation of

the Vietnam War. As Peaco remarks “most of the notes are scholarly citations or background on interviews. This ‘documentation’ provides extra reminders that the novel is made up, but it also sheds a weird aura of fact” (1). However, O’Brien’s focus is not wholly on the events that transpired during the war, he is also concerned about the longer lasting effects that those who are involved have been plagued with in the aftermath of the war.

The second approach focuses on the book’s narration and how the issues of memory are reflected through a disjunctive and deceptive narrative. Into the process of presenting such visceral stories about the events of the war, O’Brien weaves the theme of trauma and memory-loss. As Pederson remarks, “Do we forget the traumas we suffer, losing them in an amnesic haze, or do our moments of deepest pain remain available to us? This question drives Tim O’Brien’s 1994 novel, *In the Lake of the Woods*” (333). Studying the themes of trauma and memory in the novel, Melley argues that “O’Brien’s novel is largely about failures of memory, the ways in which a traumatic past can infect and distort the memory” (112). Significantly, the novel presents the subject of memory-loss as a part of its narrating process. O’Brien uses memory problems to aid in the mystery that the narrative aims to create as it gives way to a much more deceitful and unreliable narration. Tobey C. Herzog remarks that “O’Brien frequently introduces narrative deception and contradictions (lies) into his novels” and this is “O’Brien’s occasional tactic, in both his writing and public forums, to draw attention to his narrators’ and his own unreliability” (893). As such, besides studying the issues of memory and trauma in the novel, one also studies the narrative conditions and the resulting issues of unreliability.

Unreliability results in a narrative that counts on its reader to participate much more in the meaning making process than a traditional narrative would. Matthew C. Stewart argues that “O’Brien creates a multi-leveled narration, and as he has frequently done in his stories, he creates a narrator who forces the reader to collaborate heavily in piecing together the story’s various possibilities” (182). Thus, the issues of memory and trauma that are woven into the story as a part of representing the Vietnam War and its lingering effects are used in shaping the story, which results in the reader to participate more in

the reading process, as Rawson writes, “Like much of the literature of the Vietnam War, Tim O’Brien’s *In the Lake of the Woods* demands the reader continually reassess and challenge every historical narrative” (80). In sum, the novel is an honest account of the Vietnam War that utilizes a multi-level narration and weaves in fact and fiction while at the same time it employs the theme of the Vietnam War to shape the story and create mystery through unreliabilities towards itself and also historical narratives. These themes and narrative techniques make for a reading experience that leaves a lot to the reader to connect and stitch together.

In the Lake of the Woods is an open-ended mystery novel unique in its play of what a mystery novel does, removing the revelation, that is, the end of the story. Weaving into itself the themes of trauma and memory loss, the story makes the reader more active in the interpretation process, participate more in solving the mystery and thus making the narrative harder to read. As such, it can be analyzed within the framework offered by Gerard Genette’s *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* which sections narratives and points out how these sections can be read. The first of these sections is the Study of Tense, which is made of up Order, Duration, and Frequency.

1.1. STUDY OF TENSE IN *IN THE LAKE OF THE WOODS*

1.1.1. Order

The first category of study in Genette’s book is the order of narrative. The study of order focuses on the comparison between the order of diegetic events and the order in which they are relayed in the narrative. In defining the various forms that this relationship could take, Genette proposes the terms “analepsis” and “prolepsis” that refer to writing about an event after it has occurred in the story, and writing about an event that has not yet happened in the story respectively, and an umbrella term “anachronies” that encompasses both of these techniques. Anachronies can take a variety of forms from re-organizing the beginning, middle, or the end of a story to removing or obscuring one of them, or adding an altogether new section.

The use of non-linearity is an essential characteristic of detective novels and it can be argued that, traditionally, a detective novel contains first the “discovery of a crime, then . . . the casting of suspicion on the members of a community, and finally (the longest part) . . . the mechanism of investigation and solution” (Nicol 171). Crime novels contain two stories: “The first story (the crime) happened in the past and is—insofar as it is hidden—absent from the present; the second story (the investigation) happens in the present and consists of uncovering the first story” (Hühn 1). Therefore, it is not only the story that utilizes anachronies, but also the narrative as it takes the reader back and forth throughout the reading process to the point of making them lose themselves in weaving these two timelines together. Thus, crime novels are texts that exemplify how non-linearity and reader-participation in the process of making meaning is normalized and rendered a part of the signifying process in a narrative. The reader not only reads through the narrative but also brings together pieces from different points by navigating its rhizomatic structure and eventually makes meaning through a varied and thus personalized interpretation.

While detective fiction has anachronies as a characteristic of the genre, Tim O’Brien presents a narrative with problematized tense that also reflects the relationship John Wade has with his volatile and maskable memories. In an interview with Scott Sawyer, O’Brien acknowledges this relationship as follows:

Events, especially those that carry elements of trauma, tend to get scrambled in terms of chronology. And I try to present them that way as much as I can in my writing. I don't clearly sort out for the reader what happened first, second, third, and fourth in a causal chain. I take this approach because I think it's the way our memories often work. We take the beads off the string and put them in a jar and look at them the way we remember them. We pick one up and look at it, then repick one up and look at it again. At least that's the way my memory tends to operate. (“In the Name of Love”)

It can be seen that O’Brien’s preference of anachronies in the narrative stems from his tendency to reflect human memory and its disjunctive and non-linear nature, which can also be seen in *In the Lake of the Woods*. Indicating how “[m]emory loss has been part of the criteria for PTSD,” Bessel Van de Kolk argues that “[t]raumatic memories are fundamentally different from the stories we tell about the past. They are dissociated:

The different sensations that entered the brain at the time of the trauma are not properly assembled into a story, a piece of autobiography” (185). It is worth noting that the effects of trauma on the memory and how its recalled, are relayed in O’Brien’s novel in a similarly disjunctive fashion.

The first chapter of the novel is titled “How Unhappy They Were” and it continues from after John Wade loses the election and just hours before Kathy, his wife, disappears (1). While starting from the middle is not anything new, the reader nonetheless encounters a narrative which is non-linear, and this non-linearity becomes much more prevalent as the chapter progresses with occasional breaks from the linear storytelling in the form of prolepsis, or writing about an event that has not yet happened in the story. The first one occurs quite early on, during a conversation between Kathy and John where Kathy says, ‘It’s not really so terrible,’ Kathy told him one evening. ‘I mean, it’s bad, but we can make it better.’ It was their sixth night at Lake of the Woods” which is immediately followed by “In less than thirty-six hours she would be gone” (3). Another such example can be seen when O’Brien states how Wade will feel about this night after Kathy goes missing: “Two days later, when she was gone, he would remember the sound of mice beneath the porch. He would remember the rich forest smells and the fog and the lake and the curious motion Kathy made with her fingers, a slight fluttering” (4). Thus, the non-linear nature of the narrative is made apparent from the very first lines, by starting from the middle of the story, and from the prolepsis that follows it.

At the end of the first chapter, O’Brien sets up for the disappearance of Kathy by describing the peaceful scenery. He says, “There was the steady hum of lake and woods. In the days afterward, when she was gone, he would remember this with perfect clarity . . . He would remember a breathing sound inside the fog . . . feel of her hand against his forehead, its warmth, how purely alive it was” (7). However, that night is put aside in the pages that follow and he takes the reader on a journey of flashbacks that explore John Wade’s and Kathy’s circumstances and their problems before coming back to the mystery no earlier than page 47, in the chapter entitled “How the Night Passed” (47). From the first chapter on, the reader comes across anachronies not only

on a chapter-to-chapter basis, but also within chapters. The reader is expected to re-adjust themselves to being thrown into a random position in the chronological order of the story potentially with each paragraph and each chapter of the story.

As the story progresses, the reader witnesses more frequent anachronies in the narrative. For example, in chapter 10, in the conversation starting with “She smiled brightly at a spot over his shoulder,” the story is still the one that takes place in the first chapter, right after the loss of the election, which then switches to John Wade’s Vietnam flashbacks, “Sorcerer didn’t say a word about PFC Weatherby,” switching again to John Wade’s childhood memories right after his father’s death, “On the afternoon his father was buried, John Wade went down to the basement and practiced magic in front of his stand-up mirror,” finally ending up at a random point in time that reveals Wade’s night terrors and screaming, “It was in the nature of their love that Kathy did not insist that he see a psychiatrist” (75). In one of the most prime examples of O’Brien’s attempt to reflect the volatility of human memory, the reader has to navigate their position in the story in each chapter as well as four times in one page, as a result of which the page itself resembles a streak of Wade’s memories rather than the narration of a third-person narrator.

In addition to the shorter and more abrupt forms of anachronies in the narrative, O’Brien utilizes another way to create a disjunctive story: removing one of the main parts from it, the ending. Though there is a semblance of an ending in the story, as John and Kathy end up being lost in the Lake of the Woods, the mystery itself is never really revealed. Instead, whenever the night of the disappearance is mentioned, the loss of memory through trauma and the anachronic nature of the narrative are used to obscure the events, further increasing the mystery. Kowalczyk seems to agree with Bassel Van de Kolk when he says, “The chaotic representation of his war trauma leads to a series of spatial (there and here), temporal (then and now) and emotional ruptures. . . . By lending the events a convenient signification, he temporarily displaces the unprecedented knowledge in the background of his consciousness” (3). The knowledge that is displaced in Wade’s mind is thus set to be the answer to the mystery of what happened to Kathy.

In the story, Kathy disappears on the night of Wade's losing the senatorial election in a 12-hour time frame through which Wade remembers having slept except for a late-night anger fit which led him to kill every plant in the cabin with hot water, using phrases like "kill Jesus" the whole time, the most violent and obscene phrase that he could think of (53). The chapter "How the Night Passed" focuses on the night where the disappearance took place, and is written in a way that reflects a disjunctive memory where Wade frequently loses himself:

In the dark he heard something twitch and flutter, like wings, and then a low, savage buzzing sound. . . . Again, for an indeterminate time, the night seemed to dissolve all around him, and he was somewhere outside himself, awash in despair, watching the mirrors in his head flicker with radical implausibilities: the teakettle and a wooden hoe and a vanishing village and PFC Weatherby and hot white steam. . . . The unities of time and space had unraveled. There were manifold uncertainties, and in the days and weeks to come, memory would play devilish little tricks on him. . . . At one point during the night he stood waist-deep in the lake. (51)

The omission of a clear ending in the story, coupled with the indeterminate and disjunctive nature of the information about the night Kathy disappears confuses the reader. These two aspects of the mystery reflect how confused and detached John was during the night, while at the same time making the story much harder to read.

In addition to never revealing the mystery of how Kathy disappeared on the night of the election, and thus never giving the mystery a clear ending, O'Brien provides the reader with other possible endings. Worthington suggests that, "the novel does not overtly privilege one hypothesis over another; instead, it provides enough evidence for any of the scenarios to seem valid. The truth, then, remains a mystery" (122). There are eight chapters titled "Hypothesis" that are spread throughout the novel. While two of these chapters are the continuation of each other, there are a total of seven possible endings to the mystery, suggesting that Kathy might have just wanted to escape, or John might have killed her on the night of the election during that obscure night, or the couple might have escaped from their problems together and immigrated to Canada as John is also last seen taking a boat to the Lake of the Woods. Peaco regards these hypotheses as "Kathy's imaginative crescendos to match her husband's My Lai nightmares, and the novel, whose voice manages to be both hard-boiled and tender, concludes on that

cohesive note of ambiguity” (330). The mystery ends with ambiguity but is played with in these chapters where the narrator takes the stage to hypothesize about what possibly could have happened during that night. Because the narrator never really defends any of these hypotheses, the reader is encouraged to decide on one or even come up with their own endings to the mystery.

To conclude, the overabundance of possibilities that are presented to the reader, the absence of a clear ending, and the haziness of the night of the disappearance that is achieved through a disjunctive representation are ways through which O’Brien uses anachronies as parts of the mystery. *In the Lake of the Woods* anachronies are not simply anomalies that appear infrequently to confuse the reader but an integral part of the narrative and their purpose is to further obscure the mystery. By making anachronies an integral part of the story, O’Brien puts the reader in a position to become a part of the reading process even more thus creating a cyclical narrative.

1.1.2. Duration

The second aspect of the order of narrative is duration. A study of duration is studying how long events take in the diegetic world compared to how long they take on the written page (27). To categorize the various techniques, Genette uses “Pause” to refer to a halt in the diegetic events, “Scene” to refer to a one-to-one relation between the text and the events, “Summary” to refer to long strings of events mentioned in a few words or sentences, and “Ellipsis” to refer to events that are not mentioned in the text. While it is common to see these four “narrative movements” in a narrative, a rhythm that is erratic or has too many temporal or spatial breaks, or that constantly switches back and forth presents a reading experience that forces the reader to adjust themselves to a new environment or a new scene, ultimately making for a narrative that is much harder to read (94).

Genette states that studying duration meticulously in a text is not necessarily optimal. He argues that “detailed analysis of these effects would be both wearying and devoid of all real rigor, since diegetic time is almost never indicated (or inferable) with the precision that would be necessary” (88). Instead of making such meticulous analyses in every small spatial or temporal break Genette proposes to study duration “only at the

macroscopic level, that of large narrative units, granting that the measurement for each unit covers only a statistical approximation” (88). For traditional narratives where there is a linear narration, this macroscopic approach is more applicable. However, *In the Lake of the Woods* contains frequent and sudden anachronies which can cause a spatial break with every other sentence. In such a narrative, applying a microscopic approach might show whether or not the rhythm is inconsistent more reliably. Therefore, instead of applying a macroscopic approach, this study will make a microscopic analysis of the sections with the most unpredictable rhythm, pointing out how disjunctive and thus cyclical *In the Lake of the Woods* can be.

Due to the non-linear and anachronic form of its narrative, *In the Lake of the Woods* is never allowed to have a consistent rhythm. Except for a few chapters, like the first chapter titled “How Unhappy They Were” where the duration of the mimetic events could be categorized as a Summary, most chapters have rhythms that are highly erratic as they contain many temporal and spatial breaks (1). The unexpected changes in the rhythm starts to make itself apparent in multiple instances where there are many temporal and spatial breaks that skip over the years in the diegetic world. One of the most disorienting breaks takes place in the scene where the story leaps from a conversation between Tony, the campaign director for John Wade, and Wade himself. During that leap, the paragraph, starting with “Still, Tony Carbo was right. Politics was his profession” and ending with “He worked on his posture, his gestures, his trademark style. Manipulation, that was still the fun of it” is left aside as Tony’s words transform into Wade’s time in the government after the election in the next paragraph: O’Brien writes, “The state senate ate up huge chunks of time, including weekends and most holidays, and as a consequence his life with Kathy sometimes suffered” without ever mentioning the campaign process or how they ended up in that situation (155).

Rapid temporal breaks can be seen in many other instances throughout the narrative. For example, early in the narrative, there is a scene that starts from John’s childhood and his conversation with his father who says, “‘Well, sure, anything you want,’ his father would say. ‘Maybe's fine, kiddo. Maybe's good enough for me,’” moving directly to a scene in the Vietnam War where Wade speaks to himself, saying “Something was

wrong. The sunlight or the morning air. All around him there was machine-gun fire, a machine-gun wind, and the wind seemed to pick him up and blow him from place to place” (63). In another example, the narration shifts from the scene in which John, Kathy and Tony are having dinner and talking about campaigns when “Tony's gaze slid along the floor toward Kathy ‘A metaphor,’ he said,” suddenly to John’s spending a long time in the state senate: “John Wade spent six years in the state senate Tony ran the campaigns, which were slick and expensive, but the numbers increased nicely over the years” (154). In another instance that takes place much later in the novel O’Brien ends a paragraph by revealing a moment in Vietnam, “Thinbill started to say something, then stopped and pressed the palms of his hands to his ears. ‘Jesus, man. What I'd give for earplugs,’” and starts the next paragraph by turning to Wade’s defeat in the election, “The polls had gone from bad to depressing, then to impossible, and the landslide on September 9 came as no surprise” (205). As it can be seen in these examples, there are quick and abrupt temporal breaks throughout the narrative. With every new paragraph, the reader finds themselves on a completely different point of the story with a temporal and spatial break as each scene is potentially irrelevant to the previous one, and adjusts themselves to their new position.

Utilization of unexpected changes in the rhythm is made an integral part of the story as it allows for the representation of human memory and obscures very specific and short scenes that render the mystery of what happened to Kathy possible. One of the most outstanding examples is the night of the disappearance where Wade, affected by the election results and in disarray, starts killing the houseplants while shouting obscene words (51). In two paragraphs, Wade is both inside the cabin near Kathy smoothing back her hair, and in the lake waist-deep, seemingly having arrived there with no recollection whatsoever (51). These episodes of memory-loss are initiated with the words “he let himself glide” (110). There are multiple instances where these words are used to initiate such memory-loss episodes in the novel. While most of these instances are not necessarily significantly related to the plot, there are occasions where these glides aid to obscure the mystery, making them an integral part of the mystery.

One such instance is when Wade, who is also known as the Sorcerer in Vietnam, is in the massacre of My Lai where numerous civilians were killed as they are suspected of being a part of Vietnamese forces. In the paragraph, O'Brien writes,

And then for a while Sorcerer let himself glide away. All he could do was close his eyes and kneel there and wait for whatever was wrong with the world to right itself . . . He would both remember and not remember a fleet human movement off to his left. He would not remember squealing. He would not remember raising his weapon, nor rolling away from the bamboo fence, but he would remember forever how he turned and shot down an old man with a wispy beard and wire glasses and what looked to be a rifle. (110)

Again, with the phrase “he let himself glide” the narrative presents the reader a series of summaries, ellipses, and breaks which create an erratic rhythm in just a few lines (110). Additionally, in this instance the abrupt changes in the rhythm is used as a way to further the mystery indirectly by concealing how involved or willing Wade was during the massacre, making the reader question his character and the possibility of whether or not he is the reason for Kathy’s disappearance.

Another significant instance can be found in a “Hypothesis” chapter in which Wade loses himself (94). In only one page, there are sudden changes in the rhythm where the reader might find themselves in a different narrative movement with each sentence:

He refilled the teakettle, watched the water come to a boil, smiled and squared his shoulders and moved down the hallway to their bedroom. A prickly heat pressed against his face; the teakettle made hissing sounds in the night. He felt himself glide away. Some time went by, which he would not remember, then later he found himself crouched at the side of the bed. He was rocking on his heels, watching Kathy sleep. Amazing, he thought. Because he loved her. Because he couldn't stop the teakettle from tipping itself forward. Kathy's face shifted on the pillow. She looked up at him, puzzled, almost smiling, as if some magnificent new question were forming. Puffs of steam rose from the sockets of her eyes. The veins at her throat stiffened. . . . Unreal, John decided. A dank odor filled the room, a fleshy scalding smell, and Kathy's knuckles were doing a strange trick on the headboard — a quick rapping, then clenching up, then rapping again like a transmission in code. Bits of fat bubbled at her cheeks. He would remember thinking how impossible it was. He would remember the heat, the electricity in his arms and wrists. (276)

The first two sentences could be categorized as summaries, while the sentence “He felt himself glide away” points to an ellipsis which withholds information from the reader,

which then suddenly puts the reader in the future where Wade remembers the past, only to be brought back to the scene with Kathy, and towards the end of the page, the scene returns to Wade remembering these hypothetical events (276).

To conclude, the constant temporal and spatial breaks, coupled with a highly anachronic narrative makes *In the Lake of the Woods* a narrative whose rhythm is rapid and, at times, difficult to follow. In addition, this choice in rhythm is used to further obscure the mystery by making microscopic changes through summaries or temporal breaks and hiding facts from the reader. Because of the unpredictable rhythm of narrative, key scenes where the reader might learn the truth of the mystery are more obscured as the reader gets only snippets of information here and there in between the breaks, speculates about the mystery, and comes to a conclusion of their own. The erratic rhythm and the quick switch between different narrative techniques make for a narrative that is hard to follow, creating even more indeterminacies in the narrative and the mystery, thus making it cyclical.

1.1.3. Frequency

The final aspect of tense is the frequency of narrative. The study of frequency focuses on whether diegetic events are repeated in the text or the story. The first of the possibilities Genette distinguishes is a “singulative narrative,” where there is an absence of repetition, the second is “narrating n times what happened n times,” where a repeating event is mentioned multiple times, the third form is “narrating n times what happened once,” which is the repetition of a singular event, the fourth is “iterative” which is “narrating once what happened n times” which is summarizing or phrasing a series of events in one instance (115). These repetitions not only disorient the reader but also create anchor points where the repeated event can give the impression of a cyclical reading experience. In such cases, the narrative prompts the reader to look for differences and similarities between cycles, thus demanding more reader participation.

In the Lake of the Woods utilizes repetitions in the story. In line with the theme of memory loss that O’Brien weaves into the story, significant events are occasionally remembered with different and additional details. An example to such repetitions is Wade’s accidental killing of PFC Weatherby, a soldier from Charlie Company that

Wade was a part of at the time. Wade remembers shooting Weatherby in the trench a total of seven times on pages 64, 68, 75, 112, 218, 220, and 235, occasionally with different and added details. This shooting is first mentioned as a summary: “When it ended, he found himself in the slime at the bottom of an irrigation ditch . . . Weatherby looked down on him. ‘Hey, Sorcerer,’ Weatherby said. The guy started to smile, but Sorcerer shot him” (64). In other reiterations of this event, how he acted afterwards to hide the fact that he shot Weatherby is given: “He was convincing. He had tears in his eyes, because it came from his heart. He loved PFC Weatherby like a brother” (68). Each of these reiterations provide the reader with extra information concerning Weatherby’s indiscriminately firing and killing of the civilians, which is contrasted with Weatherby’s smiling and non-aggressive approach to Wade right before he was shot by him (68). Repetitions of such significant events make the reader expect new details in each iteration to fill in the gaps in what was previously narrated.

An extension of the repetitions of Wade’s shooting of Weatherby is the repetitions of the My Lai Massacre in which Wade took part. The events that took place in this massacre are mentioned very briefly at first: “There was a war in progress, which was beyond manipulation, and nine months later he found himself at the bottom of an irrigation ditch. The slime was waist-deep. He couldn't move” (36). The reader learns later on that Wade’s getting stuck in slime in an irrigation ditch happens after the events of the massacre. This very instance and the prior events are mentioned a total of 4 times in the book, and the reader gradually learns about how he ended up in the ditch. “Something was wrong . . . He didn't know what to shoot . . . He shot the smoke, which shot back, then he took refuge behind a pile of stones . . . When it ended, he found himself in the slime at the bottom of an irrigation ditch” (63). In this instance, Wade is portrayed as a person who is totally out of place and who has little idea of what is going on. Only after some pages the reader learns the true nature of this encounter and the massacre that it reveals. It is also made clear that the slime ditch is actually a mass graveyard where “There were many bodies present, maybe a hundred,” and much later, the reader learns about the horrors that befell those bodies, as soldiers “reloaded and fired into the mush” (112, 219). Again, repetitions are used as a way to give further

details and fill in the gaps created by prior iterations of the same events, making the readers more active in piecing together the story.

Perhaps the most notable repetition is the night Kathy disappeared. As the night is repeated, the details that are added in each iteration are revealed in a way that progressively makes the reader question the assumptions they have made about the nature of the mystery. Apart from single sentence flashbacks, the night of the disappearance is being repeated a total of three times. The first time that it is mentioned, it is mostly summarized in a few sentences that exclude many details (51). In the second instance the reader is provided with more details but it is still written like hazy memories of Wade who is unable to link key images in his mind and who remembers only images like a tea kettle, Kathy's fingers, observing Kathy from the bedside, and ending up waist-deep in the water (134). In the final instance, in a hypothesis chapter, Wade is portrayed murdering Kathy in a gruesome and nonchalant way and dumping her body into the lake, which is never explicitly mentioned on other pages (276). Additionally, with the final iteration, the reader is given a much more vivid and detailed hypothesis which provides an alternative to how the disappearance might have happened, requiring the reader to be more attentive and even compare the images that are relayed before this instance.

Even though these events can create expectations of newer details which require elevated reader attention and create a much harder reading experience, the narrative does not utilize these repetitions to create anchor points. In other words, the repetitions do not provide anchor points from which the prior and latter events could repeat themselves giving the impression that the reader is back where they started. As *In the Lake of the Woods* is written in a disjunctive and anachronic tense, the narrative cannot use these repetitions to give the sense of starting over because the reader might find themselves travelling through a spatial or temporal break, going back to Wade's childhood, or ending up in a slime ditch in Vietnam with each sentence. As such, the narrative utilizes the third form of frequency Genette mentions in his book, where an event is narrated multiple times, but these repetitions in the narrative mostly focus on specific events, like the night of the disappearance. The repetitions make the reader

focus on those significant events and read each iteration more carefully, increasing reader participation and making the narrative more cyclical because of its disjunctive and anachronic nature.

1.2. STUDY OF MOOD IN *IN THE LAKE OF THE WOODS*

The second major point of focus of *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* is the mood of narrative. In his study of the mood of a narrative, Genette places great emphasis on “focalization” which is determined through “distance,” which refers to the amount of detail the narrator gives about the events, and the “perspective” which refers to the degree of the personalization of that information (162). Genette then distinguishes two types of narratives: those with zero focalization, and those with “internal focalization” which is made up of three sub-types namely “fixed” “variable” and “multiple” (189). Determining the focalization of a narrator enables the reader to understand the scope of information and whether it is intended to be objective or not. The narrator being one of the characters or taking the point of view of one implies certain restrictions to the details that the narrator gives which eventually creates unreliability and indeterminacy on the part of the reader.

There are two possible arguments for the focalization of the narrator in *In the Lake of the Woods*. The first of these is that it is a nonfocalized narrative where the narrator is O’Brien himself. According to this perspective, the information relayed to the reader by the narrator is consistent with the scope of information that a nonfocalized narrator or the author is privy to, as the narrator confidently mentions how the characters feel “they would feel the trapdoor drop open, and they'd be falling into that emptiness where all the dreams used to be” (3). The narrator also has qualities resembling those of O’Brien himself, to the point of mentioning that he has been to Vietnam on a footnote (203n90). While this explanation seems to point to an omniscient narration, it might as well be argued otherwise. Throughout the story, the narrator actively treats the characters as real people and makes the novel out to be a journalistic report, showing evidence, taking quotes, and merging the story with real details like “People were talking about killing everything that moved. Everyone knew what we were going to do. — Robert W.

Pendleton (Third Platoon, Charlie Company)” (259). As the story of the disappearance of the wife of John Wade, a senator candidate of the United States, is already a fiction, O’Brien seems to be pushing an intermediary fictional author in the narration.

The second possibility is the fixed internal focalization through a diegetic character who is researching the events of the book later on as a journalistic report. In this argument, the narrator is a diegetic author who records and hypothesizes about the events objectively. Examples of the book’s journalistic nature can be seen throughout the narrative. For instance, in “Evidence” chapters, the author adds relevant information, quotes, and bookkeeping lists, writing “He was always a secretive boy. I guess you could say he was obsessed by secrets. It was his nature — Eleanor K. Wade (Mother) ... Exhibit Two: Photograph of boat, 12-foot Wakeman Runabout, Aluminum, dark blue, 1.6 horsepower Evinrude engine” (8). This explains why the narrator, who also seems to be the author of a fictional report and uses third person pronouns to talk about the characters, treats them as real people and narrates them in a way that weaves facts into the story. While the argument that the novel assumes a fixed internal focalization through the eyes of a fictional author is valid, it should be noted that the nature of information relayed to the reader is inconsistent and inappropriate to a diegetic character’s scope of information.

Other examples that showcase this dichotomy include the narrator’s account of many different events that took place during Wade’s deployment in Vietnam, his subsequent presence in the massacre of My Lai, and even revealing the nature of John and Kathy’s relationship. For instance, the narrator mentions Wade killing his comrade-in-arms PFC Weatherby on multiple occasions, such as on pages 64, 68, 75, 112, 218, 220, and 235, and many of these instances reveal what Wade was thinking during and after the shooting: “He had tears in his eyes, because it came from his heart. He loved PFC Weatherby like a brother” (68). Another example of such private information that even his comrades do not know of is when Wade kills a villager during the My Lai Massacre. This instance is explained in detail and contains such subjective information that the narrator almost assumes the perspective of Wade himself: “He would not remember raising his weapon, nor rolling away from the bamboo fence, but he would remember

forever how he turned and shot down an old man with a wispy beard and wire glasses and what looked to be a rifle. It was not a rifle; it was a small wooden hoe” (111).

This tendency can be observed throughout the narrative and can be traced back to Wade’s past and his psychological state; “On the afternoon his father was buried, John Wade went down to the basement and practiced magic in front of his stand-up mirror. He did feints and sleights. He talked to his father. ‘I wasn't fat,’ he said, ‘I was *normal*.’ He transformed a handful of copper pennies into four white mice. ‘And I didn't jiggle. Not even once. I just *didn't*’” (75). The narrator even relays information about the nature of John and Kathy’s relationship: “He should've talked about the special burden of villainy, the ghosts at Thuan Yen, the strain on his dreams. And then later he should've slipped under the covers and taken her in his arms and explained how he loved her more than anything, a hard hungry lasting guileless love, and how everything else was trivial and dumb” (51).

The dichotomous nature of the narrator shows itself in the nonfocalized narrative which then is focalized while at the same relaying information through nonfocalized or variable internal focalization. In the beginning of the novel, the narrator seems to be using nonfocalized narration, saying: “They needed the solitude. They needed the repetition, the dense hypnotic drone of woods and water, but above all they needed to be together” (1). However, there is a shift in the narrative mood in three main sections. The first of these is the evidence chapters. In these chapters, the events of the story are given as the parts of an investigation. For example, O’Brien says, “He didn't talk much. Even his wife, I don't think she knew the first damn thing about . . . well, about any of it. The man just kept everything buried. — Anthony L. (Tony) Carbo” (8). By listing the characters’ testimonies and comments on the disappearance of Kathy Wade in Evidence chapters as quotes, O’Brien stops the story to show the reader that there is a fictive author documenting the events and speculating on them rather than an omniscient narrator presenting the events.

Another way by which the author’s position is put forth can be found in hypothesis chapters. Hypothesis chapters put the author’s characteristics forward, but there is a subtle difference here because in these chapters the author explicitly refers to himself

and his thoughts. Melley states that “[e]ach hypothesis is a chapter-long imaginative reconstruction that sometimes enters Kathy’s point of view, but only after the narrator has warned us that he is only presenting his own speculations” (113). According to Worthington, these chapters can be regarded as “an act that at first seems to derail the larger project of the novel, which is to cast doubt about whether truth can ever be definitively determined. However, this metafictional moment actually serves to challenge the power of the traditional omniscient narrator, to question the role of the narrator as the undisputed purveyor of truth” (120). O’Brien states, “At no point in this discourse did John Wade admit to the slightest knowledge of Kathy’s whereabouts, nor indicate that he was withholding information. Which brings me to wonder. Is it possible that even to John Wade everything was the purest puzzle?” (305). In this excerpt, the author refers to themselves and breaks the illusion of omniscience and external focalization by presenting the limits of the information he is privy to, even wondering what might have happened if he took up another stance instead of continuing the omniscient narration that has been prevalent until that point.

The final way that the narrator refers to themselves is to use various footnotes in the narrative. In these sections, they use “I” not only to refer to themselves, but also to hypothesize about and even to mourn for Kathy:

Yes, and I'm a theory man too. Biographer, historian, medium — call me what you want — but even after four years of hard labor I'm left with little more than supposition and possibility. Even much of what might appear to be fact in this narrative — action, word, thought— must ultimately be viewed as a diligent but still imaginative reconstruction of events. I have tried, of course, to be faithful to the evidence. Yet evidence is not truth. It is only evident. In any case, Kathy Wade is forever missing, and if you require solutions, you will have to look beyond these pages. (30n21)

In this footnote, the narrator reveals himself to be a part of the diegetic world after narrating from a seemingly nonfocalized position for 30 pages. This fact is reminded to the reader throughout the narrative in six other footnotes where the narrator specifically refers to themselves, (103n36, 149n69, 203n90, 269n120, 301n130 and 304n136). Because O’Brien repeatedly reminds the reader of the narrator’s unreliable nature, the reader is made to rethink their interpretation of what has been presented to them by the narrator. The narrator’s dichotomous nature throughout the narrative results in a cycle

of telling stories from an omniscient perspective, and then reminding the reader of their diegetic and therefore limited nature, showcasing a problematization that tries the limits of Genette's categorization from the first few pages of the narrative on.

According to Wayne Booth, such a narration can be regarded as "unreliable" (160). Unreliable narrators are "often a matter of what James calls inconstancy; the narrator is mistaken, or he believes himself to have qualities which the author denies him" (160). Booth clarifies that what makes a narrator unreliable is not necessarily the distance or the perspective, or whether they are referred to as "They" or "I" or the implications that those pronouns might have, but rather the inconsistencies they display (160). In this sense, they "differ markedly depending on how far and in what direction they depart from their author's norms" (160). The same tendency can be seen *In the Lake of the Woods* as O'Brien sets a norm of an omniscient narrator to then break it and show the perspective of the author character who has limited knowledge and whose skepticism, according to Melley, "has outdone him" at the end of the story as the narrator yields "who will ever know? It's all hypothesis, beginning to end" (Melley 114; O'Brien 303). He sets norms and then departs from them in a looping pattern, only to end in skepticism. Because the changes from external focalization to internal focalization are few and far in between, they give the reader enough time to get used to a seemingly traditional narration where the externally focalized narrator is relaying an omniscient narration. However, in the few times the narrator switches to internal focalization, the reader is reminded that the narrator has been a voyeur, like the reader, cementing their unreliability again as they have been relaying information that they should not be privy to.

It can be seen that *In the Lake of the Woods* exhibits a problematized mood in the narrative as the narrator strays from the norm that is imposed on them by O'Brien himself. This causes the narrator to arguably become more unreliable. Even though categorizing the type of focalization is problematic in the first place since there are both an internal and an external narrations, it might be argued that what makes the narration unreliable is switching the scopes of information relayed to the reader. This switch is made through the narrator who adds their own conclusions and hypotheses about what

might have happened on the night of the disappearance after having narrated the story in a confident and omniscient way, making the reader question the nature of information that was given beforehand.

The problematization of the mood of a narrative as such creates a much harder reading experience for the reader. The narrator creates a loop out of the scope and nature of information relayed to the reader, narrating in a confident external focalization first but then switching back to internal focalization after the reader is used to the norm of an omniscient narration. As this makes the reader circle back in the story and even re-read it to reconfirm or reevaluate their interpretations, they participate more in making meaning. Therefore, it would not be wrong to claim that this narrative creates a cyclical reading experience through its problematized mood and narration.

1.3. STUDY OF VOICE IN *IN THE LAKE OF THE WOODS*

1.3.1. Narrating Instance

The third and final focus of study in Genette's book is the voice of narration (Genette 213). According to Genette, the voice of narration focuses on the narrating instance and its relation to the events that are happening, i.e. narrative levels, for which he specifies four variations which are subsequent, prior, simultaneous and interpolated (213, 217). Subsequent narrative is relayed in the form of past tense, prior narrative is relayed in future tense and the narrator is in the past relative to the diegetic events, simultaneous narrative refers to narrating the events as they happen in a present tense, and interpolated narrative which is "between the moments of action" which is a combination of simultaneous and subsequent narrating instances (217). A narrative instance that switches between different types results in a non-linear narrative and disorients the reader as it makes the reader lose their temporal position in the narrative. However, as opposed to non-linearity mentioned in the Order section, the non-linearity of narrating instance is not caused by the rearrangement of the parts of the narrative, but by the narrating voice's relation to them.

In the Lake of the Woods assumes a narration that utilizes subsequent narration. O'Brien presents the novel as the journalistic report of a diegetic author; therefore, he seems to be recording these past events much later in the timeline. Examples of such subsequent narration can be seen throughout the narrative, "In September, after the primary, they rented an old yellow cottage in the timber at the edge of Lake of the Woods," "He watched Galley stroll over to the body and stoop down, hands on his knees, examining things with an eye for detail. The man seemed genuinely curious. 'Messy, messy,' he said," He was heading north, weaving from island to island, skimming fast between water and sky" (O'Brien 1, 215, 306). The narrator mostly speaks in past tense and uses subsequent narration, still, there are instances of references to the future in the narrative.

Though it can be argued that the narrator's voice in the book is an example of a subsequent narration there are some cases that make references to the future, specifically in the dialogues between the characters or during moments of self-reflection as in this example, "'We'll do it,' she said, and moved closer to him. 'We'll go out and make it happen.'" (4). This can also be seen in Evidence chapters where the narrator gives a stage to characters to comment on the disappearance of Kathy, documenting their statements and quoting them, "Give it time, she'll walk right through that door over there. I bet she will" (12). However, though the characters often talk about the future, the narrator who is firmly situated as a subsequent narrator never does. The narrator always refers to the events of the disappearance as something of the past and speculates about what could or would have happened, never implying anything relating to the future: "'If we could just fall asleep and wake up happy,' she might've said, and Sorcerer might've laughed and said, 'Why not?' and then for the rest of the night they might have held each other and worked out die technicalities" (302). Thus, narrator always refers to events in the past tense, creating a narration that is consistently subsequent and easy to read for the reader.

Even though there are many anachronies in the narrative, they are never caused by the narrator's relation to events as the narrator always seems to be narrating quite confidently what happened or what might have happened in the past depending on what he gathers, and hypothesizes about. The time of narration changes only when the

characters initiate dialogue but even then, the voice of narration refers to the future only. As this type of narrating time is the common type of narration where the reader can comfortably read through without being confused, it can be argued that the narrating instance in this case never causes a narrative with cyclical qualities.

1.3.2. Narrative Levels

The second aspect of a narrator's voice is their level, Genette states that "we will define this difference in level by saying that *any event a narrative recounts is at a diegetic level immediately higher than the level at which the narrating act producing this narrative is placed*" (228). A fictive author, or the "I" narrating the story is categorized as "extradiegetic"; events that are narrated in a book by a character in the book is termed "intradiegetic"; and finally, the narratives told within the book by the intradiegetic characters are referred to as "metadiegetic" (235). Any point in a narrative in which these levels are played with and crossed is considered a "narrative metalepsis" by Genette (235). In line with this definition, it can be argued that metafiction is also a form of narrative metalepsis. According to Patricia Waugh, metafiction is "the construction of a fictional illusion (as in traditional realism) and the laying bare of that illusion" (6). For example, any metadiegetic character's breaking their narrative level and referring to their intradiegetic narrator would be a metalepsis which is at the same time a form of metafiction (6). Writing on metafiction, Ryan states that such narratives that break narrative limits keep the reader attentive because they "reclaim our 'native reality' as ontological center" (18). These narratives repel the reader to the extradiegetic level and make for a narrative that is much harder to be immersed in, one that requires more involvement on the part of the reader in the world building process (18). To conclude, such narratives can create a reading experience that requires more attention from the reader, causing them to re-read it, thus giving way to a cyclical narrative.

In *In the Lake of the Woods* the narrator utilizes the first-person narration. Although rarely, the narrator refers to themselves as "I" in the narrative in the chapters or footnotes where they reveal their ideas and personality. For example, O'Brien writes, "At the Son My Memorial, which I visited in the course of research for this book, the number is fixed at 505. An amazing experience, by the way" (149n69). It can be said

that the narrator is at the extradiegetic level, in other words, they are a narrative level above the characters they are writing about as a journalist who writes a report on the disappearance depending on what information is available to them. Besides, as “the lowest common denominator of metafiction is simultaneously to create a fiction and to make a statement about the creation of that fiction” it might be argued that *In the Lake of the Woods* is a narrative with metafictional qualities as it both narrates the disappearance of Kathy Wade and tells the story of writing a report on it (Waugh 6).

In addition to this subtle narrative metalepsis in which the narrator creates a narrative within a narrative, they act as a diegetic character who treats other characters as real people, supplying pieces of information that would otherwise be impossible for them to get. In other words, even though the narrator is at an extradiegetic level, they are privy to information that intradiegetic characters have, as in the case of John on the night of the disappearance, “He felt crazy sometimes. Real depravity. Late at night an electric sizzle came into his blood, a tight pumped-up killing rage, and he couldn't keep it in and he couldn't let it out. He wanted to hurt things” (O'Brien 5). Aside from the book's being about writing a journalistic report there is no overt narrative metalepsis because neither the narrator nor the characters break narrative levels explicitly.

These subtle forms of narrative metalepsis do not promote reader participation as more overt forms of narrative metalepsis would. The reader meets a narrator who is a part of the world of these characters but who knows as much as O'Brien does, sometimes reporting the events that he has no way of knowing unexpectedly, or hypothesizing about the events of the disappearance. While the transgression of narrative levels does bring a sense of unreliability, it does not make the narrative levels harder to understand, and it does not cause the reader to lose track of what is diegetic and what is real. It may be argued then, that the narrative does not display the qualities of cyclicity in this respect.

1.3.3. Person

In the voice of narrative, the third point of focus is the person, which focuses on the narrating person and attempts to study their position in relation to the story. The first type he mentions is the “homodiegetic” narrator who is a part of the story and has at

least witnessed parts of the story, and the second is a “heterodiegetic” narrating person, situated a level above the story and knows more than the characters (245). This distinction helps differentiate narrators who are, for example, heterodiegetic in nature but who choose to narrate in the first person and assume an internal focalization willingly, limiting their scope of knowledge, and a homodiegetic narrator who is only a character in the story but who chooses to narrate themselves in the third person, or assumes an external focalization, potentially claiming to know more than what information they are privy to. Additionally, a narrator might also choose to switch pronouns in the narration, switching focalizations throughout the narrative but never switching the narrating position. Thus, it can be seen that focusing on the narrating person rather than the pronoun allows for a much-detailed study of narrating persons, and offers different ways of making the narration harder to read or more unreliable.

The narrator in *In the Lake of the Woods* assumes a heterodiegetic narrating position as an author documenting the events in the story and takes on the role of an investigator. Melley states that “the novel’s narrator, is an obsessive researcher who tries—but ultimately fails—to get to the bottom of Kathy’s disappearance” (113). The narrator also mentions this failure while also referring to themselves, “Aren't we all? John Wade — he's beyond knowing. He's an other. For all my years of struggle with this depressing record, for all the travel and interviews and musty libraries, the man's soul remains for me an absolute and impenetrable unknown” (103n36). This is the first instance where the author refers to themselves in heterodiegetic narration. Other similar examples can be seen in the footnotes later on, as in the example, “Thuan Yen is still a quiet little farming village, very poor, very remote, with dirt paths and cow dung and high bamboo hedgerows. Very friendly, all things considered: the old folks nod and smile; the children giggle at our white foreign faces. The ditch is still there. I found it easily” (149n69). The narrator thus appears as a recorder of events that happened in the past, relaying them to the reader in a disjunctive manner.

Examples of the narrator revealing themselves can be seen in “Hypothesis” chapters throughout the narrative. In these chapters, the narrator adds their own suggestions and theories regarding what might have happened to Kathy Wade and though they do not

frequently refer to themselves, their personality comes out in these chapters. O'Brien writes, "Maybe it was something simple. Maybe Kathy woke up scared that night. Maybe she panicked, just walked away. It's conjecture — maybe this, maybe that — but conjecture is all we have. So something simple" which he then continues with own theory in the first Hypothesis chapter (53). These Hypothesis chapters explore the many possibilities of what could have happened to Kathy; for example, "she was light and high, she was soaring through the glassy roof of the world and breaking out into another, and then the lake was all around her, and soon inside her, and maybe in that way Kathy drowned and was gone" (119). There are many instances where the narrator, explicitly or implicitly, show their presence in the journalistic report assuming the position of a heterodiegetic narrator. However, even though the narrator assumes a higher narrating position than the characters, they do not use an authorial voice in announcing the results or presenting key details. Instead, they act like a homodiegetic narrator who has limited knowledge of the events and keep theorizing like the reader.

This narrating position adds up to the mystery of the novel. The narrator relays personal and secret information regarding John's childhood, his close interactions with Kathy, and even his time in the Vietnam war:

His voice was quiet, a monotone. He turned up the volume on the TV It's history, Kath. If you want to trot out the skeletons, let's talk about your dentist." She remembered staring down at the remote control. "Am I right?" he said. She nodded. . . . A moment later the phone rang. John picked it up and smiled at her. Later that evening, in the hotel's ballroom, he delivered a witty concession speech. Afterward, they held hands and waved at people and pretended not to know the things they knew. (56)

However, while they give the information that would only be privy to the heterodiegetic narrator, they do not relay what happened at the night of the disappearance. Instead, they focus on and hypothesize about many different possibilities that could have happened:

Right then, maybe, she walked away into the night. Or maybe not. Maybe instead, partly curious, partly something else, she moved down the hallway to the bedroom. At the doorway she paused briefly, not sure about the formations before her— the steam, the dark, John crouched at the side of the bed as if tending a small garden. (57).

It can be argued that the heterodiegetic narrator in *In the Lake of the Woods* omits the details from the story, tries to create a mystery and further shroud it prompting the readers to actively participate and come up with their own interpretations.

To conclude, it can be said that Tim O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods* has a subsequent narration provided by an extradiegetic and a heterodiegetic narrator. The time of narrating changes only when the subsequent narrator assumes the perspective of the diegetic characters. Otherwise, it stays the same making the narrative easier to read. Similarly, the extradiegetic narration with only a few subtle narrative metalepses creates a reading experience that does not overtly make the reader realize that they are reading a narrative, or cause a blur between the lines. However, the heterodiegetic narrator, similar to the problematic focalization that the narrative presents, makes for a narrator that seemingly deliberately omits details from the story to make the disappearance of Kathy more mysterious. As a result, it can be argued that the voice of narration in *In the Lake of the Woods* gives way to a reading experience that contributes indirectly to its mood and reliability of its narrator, making the narrative cyclical.

1.4. STUDY OF NARRATIVE TEXT IN *IN THE LAKE OF THE WOODS*

The final category of study is the narrative text of *In the Lake of the Woods*. Genette mentions the narrative text as the medium of the narrative and does not include it in his studies, but there has been a recent focus on the narrative text not only as the medium whereby the narrative is relayed, but also an integral part of the narrative and the storytelling process. In her work *Writing Machines*, N. Katherine Hayles refers to this as “materiality” which is “a selective focus on certain physical aspects of an instantiated text that are foregrounded by a work’s construction, operation, and content” (Hayles 28; Gitelman 9). Therefore, rather than referring to the physical reality of a novel or narrative, materiality refers to a material awareness and play in the signifying practices of any narrative. Playing with the materiality of the narrative can create a reading experience that requires more attention from the reader as it is characterized by various different printing styles, addition of other media and even the replacement of text, etc.,

and creates a novel that can be explored through presenting different paths for the reader to choose, leaving others to be explored later.

In the Lake of the Woods utilizes the novel format with fairly common printing practices. It does not have the addition of any other media on the text. However, what is untraditional in this novel is the narrator's use of footnotes throughout the story. As a matter of fact, using footnotes in a novel is not a new practice, but according to Patricia Waugh, it is a form of multimodality. There are a total of 136 footnotes throughout *In the Lake of the Woods*. It can be suggested that the novel displays an awareness of its materiality through the use of footnotes. A novel with footnotes creates a reading experience that forces the reader to go back and forth between the main text and the footnotes. Significantly, most of the footnotes in *In the Lake of the Woods* provide complementary information and/or sources of information. The novel is supposed to be research on the disappearance of one of the characters, and yet, the story seems to continue in some footnotes.

In the novel there are 6 footnotes which provide additional commentary to the story, focus on the author's personality, reflect their worries and issues, as in the following example:

And so I lose sleep over mute facts and frayed ends and missing witnesses. God knows I've tried. Reams of data, miles of magnetic tape, but none of it satisfies even my own primitive appetite for answers . . . Would it help to announce the problem early on . . . To point out that absolute knowledge is absolute closure? (O'Brien 301n130)

His gradual change of heart becomes obvious within the last footnote in the final hypothesis chapter where the author discusses what could have transpired that night and what the worst outcome could have been, with John brutally murdering Kathy:

My heart tells me to stop right here, to offer some quiet benediction and call it the end. But truth won't allow it. Because there is no end, happy or otherwise. Nothing is fixed, nothing is solved . . . There is no tidiness. Blame it on the human heart. One way or another, it seems, we all perform vanishing tricks, effacing history, locking up our lives and slipping day by day into the graying shadows. (O'Brien 303n134).

It should be noted, however, that rather than directly making the narrative harder to read these footnotes indirectly result in indeterminacies.

As the story begins, the reader meets a third person omniscient narrator who is narrating the lives of John and Kathy Wade: “They needed the solitude. They needed the repetition, the dense hypnotic drone of woods and water, but above all they needed to be together” (O’Brien 1). After presenting such a narrative which the reader then gets accustomed to, O’Brien subverts the reader’s expectations and inserts the narrator into the narrative with their own personality and their own opinions, “Yes, and I’m a theory man too. Biographer, historian, medium — call me what you want . . . John Wade was a magician; he did not give away many tricks” (30n21). With the insertion of the narrator 30 pages later, the reader is shown that the narrator has not been an omniscient being that knows what actually happened, but rather a journalist who has been theorizing about the events through their own findings. This is further solidified in chapters titled “Evidence,” namely, chapters 2, 6, 12, 16, 20, 25, 30. These chapters are the narrator’s way of collecting notes, quotes, police report excerpts, and fictional quotes to form their opinion and support his hypotheses. As such, the addition of footnotes and the resulting multi-modality aid to problematizing the mood of the narrative rather than making the narrative text harder to read.

It can be seen that *In the Lake of the Woods* resembles a journalistic and sometimes forensic report type of novel. Though O’Brien does not play with the narrative text of the book openly, he does play with the footnotes, which causes the narrative to be multimodal and which indirectly leads to unreliability and indeterminacy. The footnotes add up to the narrative context, make references to various events and/or people, and act as a window to the thoughts of the narrator and their personality, making the reader question the credibility of the narrator after a seemingly omniscient narration. In the final analysis, it can be argued that *In the Lake of the Woods* displays an awareness of its own materiality through subtle means and presents a multimodal narrative because of its journalistic nature which serves as a part of the signifying process.

To conclude, *In the Lake of the Woods* is a mystery novel with mostly a traditional narration narrating the lives of John and Kathy Wade and the disappearance of Kathy. It can be seen that the Voice and Narrative Text of the novel are fairly traditional, but the Order and Mood of narrative are heavily problematized. Due to the abrupt changes in

the order, problematized focalization and the resulting unreliability in the narrator, the narrative in *In the Lake of the Woods* becomes much harder to read for the reader. It can be seen that even in a seemingly traditional novel, the narrative can provide a cyclical reading experience as the readers are prompted to go back to and read through the narrative again because of indeterminacies.

CHAPTER 2 – S.

J. J. Abrams is an American writer, director, and film producer born in June 1966. As his father was a film producer, he was exposed to movie-making at an early age, getting his first job in the film industry in his late teens. He is best known for the movies he produced and created like *Cloverfield* (2008) and TV shows such as *Lost* (2004). He also directed and led other blockbuster movies like *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2017) and *Mission: Impossible III* (2006). The titles that he has created and produced are regarded as unique works. His work in *Cloverfield*, for example, is regarded a byzantine narrative. The movie has led to many discussion groups and taken the internet by storm, with fans trying to decode and understand clues and codes in the narrative, creating a fandom that tirelessly watch and re-watch his work. An extension of his style, and another such byzantine narrative is *S.* (2013), a novel in which he collaborated with Doug Dorst.

S. is a novel that contains two main stories along with postcards, letters, photos, and notes literally added to the pages of the book. The first story, the inner novel, entitled *Ship of Theseus*, is the work of a fictional author named V. M. Straka. It is a story about a character named S., dealing with issues of amnesia, love, fate, and duty. S. is tasked with assassinating the owner of a conglomerate that has connections with many nations producing a weapon of mass destruction. He is sailing from one side of the world to the other on the Ship of Theseus which has stood the trials of time, with a crew of stone-faced sailors in order to accomplish the task. In the first few sentences S. is immediately thrown into the heat of the story about conspiracies, corrupt companies, and warmongering governments when he emerges from the water. After that, the reader sees him try to adjust to the environment, sort out his amnesia while being haunted by a female character named Sola, and attempt to navigate the chaos to complete his job. He acts as a vigilante that will put an end to the supposed source of all of his problems as well as those of Vévoda, the owner of the conglomerate. However, this story is only the main text of the novel, there is a second story presented in the margins of the book.

The second story is relayed to the reader by notes and scribbles on the margins of the *Ship of Theseus*. It is stated that the additions of other pieces of paper, notes, and images are made by Eric Husch, a paranoid expunged assistant illegally using the school's library to work on his studies, and Jennifer Heyward, a senior literature student working in the same library, who reads the novel and studies it to decipher the supposed codes and messages left by V. M. Straka, the author, and his rumored lover and translator of the book, F. X. Caldeira. Because the author is depicted to be an anti-government activist and a member of a group of writers who worked as journalists and attempted to muckrake corruption throughout the world, the book is considered to be a vault of secrets and messages the author and associated parties are trying to relay to the readers as well as to other members of the group called S.

The first impression that the reader gets from the book, and the fundamental question that follows is how the novel is supposed to be read. This question arises from the unusual typography, unusual printing methods like the addition of another story and pieces of paper, images, and letters into the margins of the novel. As there are two stories on one page, the reader does not know which story they should start reading first, the "inner" story or the "outer," and in what order.³ As Willis G. Regier observes, "The first question *S.* poses is how to read it. *Ship of Theseus* first, then margins, or page by page, taking the inserts where they fall? The second question is how to keep it intact. Then questions rapidly multiply. How do the parts interact?" (162). This question is never answered and, in fact, made even more complicated as the novel continues with the addition of different colors of ink in the outer story. Therefore, each reader is to answer the question and make decisions while reading the novel, all of which will have their own challenges and variations.

Due to its byzantine nature, the outer story in its margins, and physical additions, *S.* is also studied as a work that is fully aware of its material reality as a novel. It is considered to be a "celebration of bookishness" and a play of materiality in an era of ever changing and evolving media. Commenting on the experimental nature of *S.*, Fan states that "this subgenre of literary works is self-aware and self-reflexive of their print materiality,

their representational affordances and limitations, and their bookishness in relation to newer media technologies” (51). Tanderup agrees and says:

With its yellowing pages and handwritten marginalia, this work presents itself as a celebration of “bookishness.” I first read the work accordingly; that is, as an example of a tendency towards nostalgia for the book, towards imagining the old-fashioned book as a privileged space for authenticity and intimacy. I thus argue that *S.* may be considered as an expression of a “material turn” in literature – implying an increased awareness of the material “bodies” of things and texts, suggested by, for example, Bill Brown and N. Katherine Hayles as a cultural reaction against the dominance of digital media and electronic texts that are associated with notions of immateriality and ephemerality. (149)

As such, *S.* seems to present a novel that redefines what a novel may mean in an age of media and storytelling.

For Eric and Jen, the book is a haven, safe from the outside world and the dangers that are associated with such an infamous and problematic novel. As Regier indicates “*Ship of Theseus* seems to be the very copy Jen and Eric passed back and forth, their point of contact and silent messenger, telling each other what they felt and thought about the novel, its author, and each other” (162). By writing messages and comments on the margins of the book, Eric believes that they are also avoiding other people’s attention, as he is too paranoid to use anything else and does not even trust e-mail. Readers witness the development of the relationship between Eric and Jen from the notes on the margins and how the two get more and more paranoid about being exposed to constant mortal danger because of their research into the secret of V. M. Straka.

Bringing these two stories together in the cluttered pages of *S.*, Abrams and Dorst create a narrative which disorients the reader from the very beginning, as they have to decide how to read these two stories and combine them. This is made even harder by the constant anachronies in Jen and Eric’s notes. The order in which these notes are written is not the same with the order of events. The pens they use provide a general guideline of the order but this guideline does not reveal what happens to them in the end. Coupled with the constant switch back and forth between the main novel and the margins, readers are constantly required make an effort to read and understand the narrative.

This chapter will focus on the reading experience that results from such a complicated and byzantine narrative, and study *S.* within the framework provided by Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method*. The experience of reading *S.* forces the reader to turn back and read the margins after completing each page, or vice versa, or even take a dedicated approach and finish one side before reading the other. Coupled with the unusual printing practices, addition of other media, and the presence of many voices in the narrative, *S.* calls for a reading experience that requires the reader to participate more in the process of making meaning. By studying the Tense, Mood, Voice and the Narrative Text of the novel, this chapter will attempt to show the ways by which *S.* presents a cyclical reading experience.

2.1. STUDY OF TENSE IN *S.*

2.1.1. Order

The first category of study is the order in *S.* The study of order is comprised of studying the diegetic events in the story and determining their order, which is then compared to the order in which they are written in the novel. *S.* contains two main stories, the inner novel, *Ship of Theseus* and the outer, that is, the novel written in the margins by Eric and Jen. The inner and outer novels showcase completely different plotlines. While the notes that Eric and Jen write on the margins are about the *Ship of Theseus*, they are in no way connected to the actual diegetic events that happen in it. Therefore, while studying the order of the narrative, one has to study these two stories separately to be able to assess their individual order and the presence, or lack thereof, of anachronies in the narrative.

The inner novel *Ship of Theseus* is, by design, made to be read like a fairly straightforward novel. According to Reiger's review, Doug Dorst "first wrote a novel from 1949, then what Eric and Jen wrote, creating a puzzle box, an intricate abstraction infused and surrounded by painstaking similitude. *Ship of Theseus* reads like something halfway between Kafka and Kosinski" (3). The reader is not fully certain where the main character *S.* comes from, and the story begins in the middle with *S.* emerging from

the water with amnesia but the rest of the inner novel is narrated in a linear way. Thus, it might be argued that the inner novel does not really contain any significant anachronies.

However, the outer novel written in the margins by Eric and Jen presents a highly complicated reading experience. Eric and Jen use the novel as an intermediary to exchange messages and to talk to each other. Throughout this conversation, their notes are taken in different styles and with different pens with different ink colors. According to Nørgaard, “At the most basic level, it is of great importance to the reader’s ability to decode Jen and Eric’s narrative in the margins of the novel that their comments are realized by different styles” so as to be able to understand which notes are taken by who (33). In addition to understanding the difference in styles, there is also an order of the ink colors in the narrative.

Some of the pens and their associated ink colors are responses to other notes taken with other pens. This gives the impression that the pens used in replying to previous notes were written later, showing the passage of time. A careful and detailed study of which pens are used in replying to other pens leads the reader to deduce a pseudo-order. Eventually, the reader can come to the following order from the oldest notes to the newest ones:

1. Faded black: Eric.
2. Blue (Jen), black (Eric).
3. Orange (Jen), green (Eric).
4. Dark purple (Jen), red (Eric).
5. Black (Eric), black (Jen).

The faded black pen (the first pen) is only used by Eric to study the novel before meeting Jen and is not a part of the conversation between them (see fig. 1).

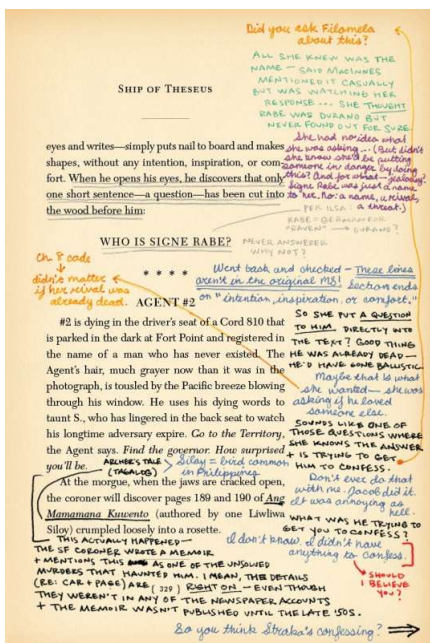


Fig. 1. Doug and Jeffrey. *S.* (Canongate Books, 2013), p. 329.

The blue and black pens (the second pens) are used by Jen and Eric through the initial stages of their conversation and can only be seen referring to Eric's old faded notes (the first pen) and not to any of the other pairs (see fig. 2).

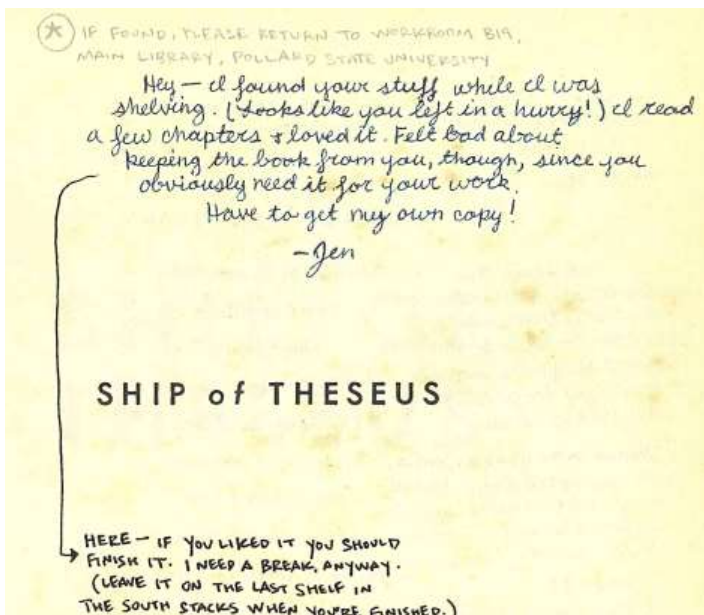


Fig. 2. Doug and Jeffrey. *S.* (Canongate Books, 2013), title page.

The orange and green pair of pens (the third pens) are used to respond to the previous blue and black pair (the second pens) at the end of page 5. On page 329, one of the most cluttered pages in the novel, the red and dark purple ink pair (the fourth pens) is used to respond to the orange and green ink pair (the third pens). Finally, on page 453, the final black pair of ink (the fifth pens) is used to refer to the previous dark purple and red pair (the fourth pens). Additionally, there are no instances where the opposites of these findings can be observed, in other words, there are no instances where the third pens are used to refer to the fourth pens. Tanderup suggests, “The result of this color-coding is pages that appear visually and narratively complex, presenting different times and stories at once. . . . However, the color coding also introduces a sense of continuity in the work as it functions as guidelines for the reader, helping him or her to establish the order of the events referred to” (154). Thus, there is an order in the pair of pens Eric and Jen use to contact each other. However, this pseudo-order does not provide a correct way of reading the outer story. If the reader starts with a pair from the later stages of the story, they may feel lost or missing crucial information to be able to understand that specific reaction. In turn, this can cause the outer story to become much more difficult to understand.

Assuming that these pairs of ink are written in the above-mentioned order, it might be argued that the outer story greets its readers with anachronies right from the first few pages of the book. For example, on the second page in the translator’s note, before the main story begins, the reader is immediately informed about what both of these characters think about the presumable previous exchange that will be revealed much later in the story. Dorst writes, “I love this word. / Please tell me that’s not the best you can do. If you’re going to help, help. / Are you always this charming? / Sorry – just feel like I’m racing against the clock here” (vi). This bit of conversation, written in the blue and black pair, is generally used around the time when Eric and Jen had just met. This conversation is then connected to another through a drawn arrow, and followed by Eric and Jen writing in a purple and red ink pair, “This is one place where a reasonable person would’ve suggested we meet instead of passing the book. / I never claimed to be reasonable” (vi). In this example, though a fresh reader may not be aware of it, the outer novel jumps from the second ink pair to the fourth one which should have been used

when Eric and Jen had known each other for a year. From that one arrow, the reader skips a year forward in their relationship and read a much more intimate conversation. In sum, the outer novel presents an anachronic reading experience from the first few pages, adding in comments that seem to have been written much later than the first few conversations in which Eric and Jen seem more intimate.

Similar anachronies can be seen throughout the narrative, as even on an empty page, the two characters still continue to converse. One of the most prominent examples of the tendency to create such anachronies can be seen on page 240 where the reader might assume that the green and orange ink pair is written first, and then red and dark purple, and finally black and blue, and might come to the conclusion that this is the order of events. However, considering the various interconnected references that the notes make and the list that might be produced by the reader in order to understand the order of them, it can be concluded that the ink pairs in question are as follows: the third ink pair is seen first, the fourth ink pair follows it, and then the order is concluded with the second ink pair, if listed chronologically. Without anachronies, the narrative would have presented notes written ink blue and black pair as the oldest and the first, then the orange and green, and finally the red and dark purple.

In another example, Dorst adds arrows that lead the reader to the next note in the order in addition to the recurring anachronies in the form of the ink pairs written randomly on the page (see fig. 1). In one of the most complicated and overwhelming pages of the story, the reader is not only presented a page whose order is anachronic, but also one that attempts to show the order of only a few notes, drawing arrows to show which note is a response to which. This is done in such a way that makes the reader read the narrative from the top to the bottom with notes written in a disjunctive manner while at the same time, the narrative gives directives showing the reader a vague order, implying that reading from the top to the bottom is, in fact, out of order, and that the reader has to find out where to start reading and list the pairs of ink. Navigating through this page requires a much more heightened form of participation from the reader because reading from the top to the bottom which is the order that the reader normally assumes turns out to be an overly complicated task in making sense of the notes.

The order of narrative in *S.* differs between the two stories, the inner and the outer novel. While the inner novel presents a linear storytelling, albeit with gaps in the middle, it still does not present any form of disjunctive narration and thus is a linear narrative with no significant anachronies. However, the novel written in the margins by Eric and Jen, or the outer novel, frequently presents a non-linear narration where the reader has to figure out and decide which notes are likely to be written first and which come later and thus come up with an order. In addition, they have to mentally re-order the notes and read them according to this order to understand their story as well as the steps they have taken alongside *S.* in the inner novel. The reader has to do all of these in tandem with each other. While maintaining their complete focus and trying to understand the narrative, they participate much more actively in making sense of the novel, which results in a cyclical reading experience of a cyclical narrative.

2.1.2. Duration

The second aspect of the order of narrative is duration. Focusing on the inner story of the novel first, the reader comes across a fairly traditional narrative which presents a seemingly linear storytelling with rare instances of anisochronies. Most of the narrative in *S.* displays a narration that is similar to what Genette terms a scene as the events are told as they happen and the rhythm of the narrative mostly stays the same. However, Dorst and Abrams present a narrative that includes ellipses and summaries in the diegetic world of the narrator, or just because of the limited understanding of the main character *S.*, who, losing his memory whenever he is on the ship, often spends a long time without being aware of it, which leaves the readers as well as *S.* disoriented as neither seems to know when or how time passed.

The first instance of this can be found in Chapter 6 where a wound on *S.*'s foot is described, caused by a toxic and dissolving weapon manufactured by Vévoda. Getting worse by the day, *S.* is healed in a surprisingly short time:

Because *S.* would guess he's been on board fewer than twenty-four hours. . . he'd removed his stocking to inspect his foot. He'd been expecting to see the flesh and nails eaten away—of the big toe, at least—and maybe even exposed bone, considering what he'd seen of Corbeau's hand, considering the pain that had screamed across his synapses for days. (211)

This scene provides an example of the time dilation that happens on the ship while S. is on board. From then on, the novel presents more scenarios with such ellipses in which the ship becomes a tool that dilates time in an otherwise straightforward and scenic narration.

Another example of the ellipses can be observed later on in the novel. S. has been assigned his tasks and going around on the ship carrying out his assassinations. An indiscriminate amount of time passes rapidly through the pages as S. begins to age, “As he wipes his forehead dry, he notices how far his hairline has retreated. He feels doubly cursed: to be squandering so much of his life on this ship, and worse, to be aging in land-time all the while” (288). This is also the first instance where the loss of memory associated with the ship is mentioned and is referred to as land-time, as opposed to the time spent on the ship. The concurring ellipses and their effects on S. are acknowledged by the narrative. After this instance, this distinction is used as if it was a normal occurrence: “Nine months from now, in land-time, a thousand people descending on the place for an event at which Vévoda will make some sort of announcement” (391). Thus, even though the inner novel is a straightforward novel which mostly resembles a scenic narration, Dorst and Abrams introduce ellipses as a part of the narrative as a result of which the reader expects to miss out on information and bits of the story whenever S. gets on board the ship aging and travelling throughout the world rapidly.

In contrast to the inner-novel, to distinguish anisochronies in the outer novel of the narrative seems very problematic, as the reader witnesses a very disjunctive and non-linear storytelling where the only resemblance of an order appears to be the form of ink colors. A page could include every ink color pairs possible, each representing an indiscriminate and different time-frame of the story in the outer novel. Additionally, as the novel only serves as an intermediary for Eric and Jen to contact each other without being caught, most of their notes are about the book *Ship of Theseus* itself rather than being a means of communicating with each other and thus revealing their stories to the reader. As such, the reader only gets bits of information regarding their story, which leaves a lot for the reader to fill in and make guesses about. Consequently, reading the text inevitably includes ellipses that are then filled in by older notes in the later pages.

One such example can be seen early in the narrative when Jen writes, “I couldn’t say anything when Ilsa accused me. I wanted to spill everything, tell her what I know about her and about Moody, but I held back. She prob(ably) took it as an admission” (288). 20 pages after being introduced to the two characters who should be complete strangers to the reader, the reader learns about an incident between Jen and her teacher about accusations. This plot point continues 60 pages later, “I don’t have much hope for the committee either. You know they’ll believe Ilsa over me” (80). Finally, it is revealed much later: “email from VP of Student Affairs. I’ve been accused of plagiarism. Have to meet w/him + a panel tomorrow afternoon” (208). This issue is not resolved for 181 pages, and the reader can assume that the notes on page 23 continue as Ilsa seems to have dropped the accusations about Jen plagiarizing her paper (397). This one-sided story in Eric and Jen’s notes takes a total of 374 pages to conclude, the characters using the same ink pairs all the while, which suggests that the notes were written at relatively similar times. Seeing notes in those inks at almost every point in the story along with other inks makes for a very erratic and unfollowable rhythm as any note might have been written a year before or a year later.

One plot point which seems to unfurl in a linear fashion develops over the course of some 90 pages. Firstly, the reader learns of Jen attempting to break into her professor Moody’s office through Eric’s note which reads “breaking into Moody’s is about the worst idea I can think of. He’s my problem, not yours” (269). Before this point, there are notes that allude to Jen and Eric being in trouble, yet this is the first time this event is ever explicitly mentioned in the novel, and it gives the impression that Eric and Jen discussed this outside of the notes. After this point, this potential break-in is alluded to by Jen where she notes down Moody’s schedule “On Mondays and Wednesdays Moody gets to his office at 11 AM, goes out for lunch at 1, teaches class at 3, goes home night after” (293). The next piece of information that the reader receives is the news that comes after Jen’s break-in after 24 pages: “Did you see the Daily Pronghorn today? Page 5?” which only reaches its conclusion much later when Jen lists the items that she has found in Moody’s office and what information she could gather regarding their suspicions of the professor’s misconducts (317, 355). This plot point that happens in the red and purple ink pair is one of the rare instances where the story is told in mostly a

linear fashion, still, there are no actual indicators of how much time passes between the taking of the notes and when the events occur. Even the instances where the reader can follow along a plot point are devoid of any form of timing or rhythm.

To conclude, the inner-novel is a fairly traditional and linear narrative which does not have many anisochronies. The ones that can be observed are a part of the diegetic world where the main character loses his memory whenever he is on the ship travelling the world to accomplish his missions. This is acknowledged by the main character as even he is shocked at how quick time passes on the ship, and makes a distinction between land-time and his time on the ship. The outer novel, however, presents many anachronies through the use of notes and different ink colors which imply the passage of time in between the notes. As some pages include every ink color ever seen in the narrative, the reader can guess that there is little order in the narrative, which keeps them from observing the duration of events. In the plot points which show a linear progression through the pages, however, there is no indication of how much time passes between the notes. In this disjunctive and chaotic narrative, the reader is never given a clear time-frame as the next note might have been written immediately after the one they read or a year later. The problematization of time frame leaves a lot for the reader to fill-in and causes them circle back to check some information about particular plot points that are only revealed after hundreds of pages creating a narrative that is hard to read and cyclical.

2.1.3. Frequency

The final aspect of tense is the frequency of narrative. The inner novel in *S.* contains a few key repetitions in the narrative. *S.*, the main character, seems to go through a handful of beginnings throughout the story. The story starts with *S.* walking down the streets in a seemingly busy city (1). As he walks through the streets, the reader is told that the man has lost his memories, “The man suspects this is a city in which even lifelong residents find themselves lost. He does not know whether he is such a person, though. He does not know whether he has ever been here before. He does not know why he is here now” (2). It can later be inferred that *S.* fell from a ship, emerged out of the water and lost his memories, “Why is the man in the overcoat so wet . . . perhaps

some anonymous onlooker fished him from the waters beneath the wobbly bridge that spans the river, connecting the Old Quarter and the New” (6). One of the few things he seems to remember is “a vague but terrifying sense-memory of falling from a great height” (6). This is the first time S. ever emerges with nothing to his name and no idea of the past, present, or the future. Beginnings with no prior attachments repeat twice more in the narrative as S. is dragged from point to point by external forces, never really being aware of what is going on.

The second instance takes place when he is taken back to the ship that he comes from. “He is in a hammock that smells as if it has been marinating for decades in saltwater stink. His overcoat, dry now, is spread over him like a blanket” (26). Once again S. is neither aware of his whereabouts, aside from being on an old ship, nor the reason why he was brought here: “Until now, he has felt fairly calm—at the very least, calm for someone who has been abducted by unknown persons for unknown purposes,” learning that he is abducted by a crew of sailors “He knows two facts now: *I am on a ship heading south. My name, at the moment, is S—*” (30, 32). However, this new beginning does not last very long for S. as his story continues.

The third and final beginning occurs some pages later when he loses the ship and everyone and everything that he has come to know on the ship: “The woman who could save him, who could explain, is gone. His other selves are gone. His stitches are gone. His poisons are gone. His pages are gone, lost underwater or turned to ash. He has only this empty vessel of himself. He is a ghost” (372). After losing his ship in an airstrike launched by Vévoda’s men, he again wakes up somewhere completely different, in a city where he is a stranger. It can be seen that this cycle of finding things to hold on to, losing them, and then beginning anew is a part of S.’s inner novel. New beginnings, new locations and experiences disorient both S. and the reader, and cause them to adjust themselves to the new environment and familiarize themselves with the new rules and norms.

Studying the frequency of narrative in the outer novel is particularly problematic. Firstly, the outer novel is highly disjunctive and contains many anachronies in its narration. Studying the ink color pairs to distinguish the order of narrative reveals that

ordering the notes within those ink categories is impossible as there are no indications of order in the narrative. Because of the outer novel's disjunctive nature, any apparent repetition of similar events can be the continuation of a conversation that Eric and Jen were having after 200 pages, rather than repeating an event. In addition to this inherent problem that is tied to the nature of the outer novel, the notes that are written by Eric and Jen do not repeat other events that have been referred to frequently or in any significant way. As such, due to the anachronic nature of the outer novel of the narrative, the narrative never really repeats an event, but rather frequently leaves in big gaps to fill in hundreds of pages later.

2.2. STUDY OF MOOD IN *S*.

The Mood in *S*. is problematic to determine as there are two distinct stories in the narrative. In the inner novel, Dorst and Abrams employ a narration that can be categorized as fixed internal focalization. Even though the narrator seems to assume a nonfocalized narration on the surface, the narrator relays only the information that the main character S. witnesses or guesses, as in the example, "He stops several steps from her table and gestures toward the empty chair opposite her . . . 'It depends on what you mean,' the young woman says. Her voice surprises him. It sounds as if it belongs to a much older woman" (20). In this instance, the reader is given only the information that S. sees, hears, and feels. Additionally, the reader is not informed about the fact that the woman that S. is speaking to is named Sola and that she knows S., which is revealed much later to S., as well as to the reader: "She opens the closet door, revealing the valise he left behind in the Territory, though now it is more battered and scarred, flyspecked and mildewed. She drops it in front of him, and when he asks if it's his, she nods" (392). Therefore, it can be argued that the narrative relays only the information that S. is privy to at that specific point in time.

An instance of such focalization can be seen whenever S. is on the ship travelling around the world and assassinating important people associated with Vévoda. S. loses his memory of the times when he is on the ship as time seems to go much faster on the ship than it does on land. S. is often confused and disoriented by how quickly time

passes on the ship: “He’d been expecting to see the flesh and nails eaten away . . . Instead, he found himself looking at a healthy, intact foot” (211). In another instance on the ship, S. is surprised by how fast he has started to age, “he notices how far his hairline has retreated. He feels doubly cursed” (288). It is implied that whenever S. is on board the ship travelling throughout the world, years pass by and S. gets confused by these revelations. It can be argued that while the narrator uses the third person pronouns to refer to S., they nonetheless assume a fixed internal focalization thus creating a narrative that is limited by the scope of the character.

Presenting a fixed internal focalization has limitations regarding the amount of information that the narrator and thus the reader are privy to. While this is also true for most of *S.*, there are instances where there is a variation in the scope of information relayed to the reader. For example, after a hundred pages of sticking to S.’s perspective, Dorst and Abrams switch to an omniscient narration, “A bicycle is lying on its side on the wharf, just beyond the outer edge of the crowd, separated from the line of shuffling” which later turns to a direct address to the reader, “Watch the basket. Do not watch for the man in the boiler suit to emerge from the crowd, slip a different brown-paper package into the basket, and then step back into the chaos and disappear from history” (103). This is the first instance in which the narrator explicitly switches from the fixed internal focalization that they have been using consistently.

In another example, the narrator completely switches their perspective to address an agent who is one of the assassination targets of S., “The Boss, that man in the Chateau, needs his copper, so you travel from Butte to Bisbee to Cananea to Ashio to Outokumpu to the Kafue to ensure that the supply flows freely and cheaply” (311). In this instance, the reader can assume that S. himself is not directly addressing anything but rather the narrator assumes a nonfocalized narration or focalizes through whoever wrote a note to the agent in question. In both of these cases, the narrator changes the scope of information relayed to the reader as they do not stay consistent with what S. knows, as S. is seen executing his task of assassinating the agent only.

The narrators who assume a fixed internal focalization but present information that is beyond the knowledge of the character, fall into the category of what Wayne Booth

terms as “unreliable” (160). Unreliable narrators are narrators whose scope of information is not consistent to the perspectives they take, and are “often a matter of what James calls inconstancy; the narrator is mistaken, or he believes himself to have qualities which the author denies him” (160). It can be argued that, though rarely, the inner novel of *S.* presents an unreliable narrator where the narrator breaks the expected focalization and the information that such a focalization is privy to. This, in turn, makes the inner novel more questionable and the reader more aware and skeptical of what they are reading. Such unreliability is then further played on and problematized by the addition of the outer novel, the novel in the margins.

Dorst and Abrams’ *S.* adds two more main characters to the novel, Eric and Jen. These two characters write their own notes and narrate their own stories from their limited perspectives, relaying only what they know or guess since they are helping each other in studying the novel and communicating what they know or guess about their various findings. Examples of this limited and consistent perspective can be seen throughout the narrative. For example, to Jen’s question “What’s the deal with Stenfolk? We don’t ever find out why he’s so weak/sick,” Eric replies “He’s Ekstrom, circa 1931” (153). These two narrators are limited to what they know as readers, and are separate from each other as they have to share information and enlighten each other about their own various findings and theories.

There are two distinct narrators that share the stage who provide the reader with two different perspectives into the story, making the reader compare the two. Such problematization is similar to what Brian McHale terms as “parallax” in his article titled “Constructing (Post)Modernism: The Case of *Ulysses*” in which he argues that “a character’s interior construction of the world diverges from the authorial projection of it, and the ‘angle’ of this divergence serves to inform us about the structure of this character’s consciousness” (5). Such a narrating situation focuses on a character’s mental construction of the diegetic world more than the actual events, where “the obvious extension of this principle of parallax is to juxtapose two or more characters’ different constructions of the same world, or some part of a world,” which can also be observed in the outer narrative (5).

Throughout the outer novel, Dorst and Abrams present two characters whose personalities clash. Eric is a grumpy and bitter academic who has lost everything he has aside from his research while Jen is a senior student who is dealing with the stress that comes with graduating but who still believes in a better life and her emotions. Thus, the reader gets two different perspectives whenever their opinions clash in the inner novel. One such example is when Jen refers to a translator's footnote, "The pirate again? It seems like a running joke between Straka + Caldeira" to which Eric replies with "I don't think he'd do that" (64). In another example Jen refers to a line in the inner novel and says, "I totally read this as Straka talking about himself," and Eric replies with "Careful re:linking everything in a book to the author personally" (17). In sum, the narrative presents a parallax when it is carried out by two different individuals with different personalities.

It has been suggested earlier that as there are two distinct stories in the narrative with their own narrators and focalizations, the Mood of *S.* is difficult to determine. Approaching the stories one by one, one can see that the narrative presents a separate and yet intertwined narration. While the inner novel mostly follows a standard fixed internal focalization where the narration is limited only to what *S.* knows and theorizes, the outer novel has two distinct narrators who are also limited by their own perspectives. As the outer novel presents multiple internal focalizations, there is unreliability both because of the limitations of internal focalizations and because of the parallax that this multiplicity brings, allowing the readers to have an option to compare the information between the two narrators. To conclude, it can be suggested that while the inner novel contains a fairly straightforward focalization, the outer novel presents a parallax to the diegetic events that makes the reading experience much more unreliable to read.

2.3. STUDY OF VOICE IN *S.*

2.3.1. Narrating Instance

The inner narrative in *S.* assumes a voice that presents the qualities of both simultaneous and subsequent narration. An example of the simultaneous narration is as follows: “This sailor looks to be about thirty-five; he has sleepy eyes and center-parted hair, the two waves of which are sharp-crested and look like bat-ears atop his head. *S.* tries to get his attention, hoping for a response—any response, even just a whistle. The man ignores him” (40). In this instance, the narrator is simply narrating what the main character *S.* sees and observes around him and the subsequent events that transpire between them as they happen.

While not as common, subsequent narration is also present in the narrative. Examples of subsequent narration can only be seen when the characters take the stage and refer to an event in the past. As subsequent narration appears mostly in the form of conversations, both subsequent and simultaneous narrating instances can be observed in such cases. For instance, “‘You asked about Vévoda earlier,’ Corbeau says to *S.* ‘What did you wish to know?’” which is then followed up with “*S.* says, ‘I want to know why no one expected him to be so dangerous’” (140). In this example, the events prior to the time of narration are relayed by the characters in a subsequent narration while the dialogue tags added by the narrator such as “*S.* says” are presented in a simultaneous narration. To conclude, the inner novel mostly assumes a straightforward simultaneous narrating instance while some of the dialogues where the characters embedded in the story refer to prior events indicate a subsequent narration.

In the outer novel of the narrative, because of the nature of the notes taken in the margins, the narration can assume a subsequent, simultaneous, and prior narrating instances while leaning mostly towards the subsequent narrating instance. The outer novel consists both of the notes taken to further Eric and Jen’s study of the novel *Ship of Theseus*, and the notes that are used as a means of communication between Eric and Jen who see the margins as a safe haven. The study notes are mostly random bits of theory or trivia that help them better understand the novel they are studying; therefore, they are not used to tell their side of the story. The notes that tell their story, however, are the ones that act as dialogue between the two characters, and can assume subsequent, prior, and simultaneous narrating instances. To illustrate, “I don’t have

much hope for the disciplinary committee either. You know they'll believe Ilsa over me. / I'll write a letter" (80). In this example, the narrating is simultaneous in the first note and prior in the second note. Another such dialogue that refers to the past as well as the present is, "So... I might've been a little misleading before. / When? / When I told you I didn't say anything about Straka to Ilsa." (82). It can be seen that because of the nature of the outer novel and the notes that are written in the form of dialogue, the narrating instance of the outer novel can be prior, subsequent, and simultaneous.

Consequently, it can be argued that the time of narration in the inner and the outer novels are not complicated. Since the inner novel assumes a narrating instance that is mostly simultaneous while occasionally being subsequent, it mostly presents a straightforward narrative. Additionally, the notes which give information about Eric and Jen's stories are in the form of their conversations, which makes the outer novel assume a mostly subsequent, and occasionally prior and simultaneous narration. Therefore, it can be concluded that the narrative is fairly straightforward and its non-linearity is caused by the arrangement and the order of the text rather than the narrating instances.

2.3.2. Narrative Levels

The scope of the information presented to the reader in the inner novel in *S.* indicates a homodiegetic narration because the narrator seems to be limited by what *S.* knows and guesses. However, Dorst and Abrams do not present an entirely homodiegetic narration as the narrator seems to be a person referring to *S.* by using third person pronouns. "He starts walking around the edge of the wharf, giving the demonstrators a wide berth and keeping to the deepest shadows, where he notices a few dozen uninterested-looking police officers eyeing the action and muttering to each other" (77). It can be inferred that the narrator in the inner novel of *S.* is a heterodiegetic narrator and is not a character in the novel, but someone above the novel, who does not participate in the events but makes observations and relays information.

Another subtle narrative metalepsis can be seen much later in the narrative. After seemingly spending years at sea, travelling from one point to another, assassinating his targets, and carving whatever he could write on the boards in his quarters, *S.* loses the ship and the crew and finds himself in a room. There, he continues his writing

endeavors, “the newspapers are the medium on which S. writes. He has filled thousands of pages, writing in the thin white spaces between lines of type, superimposing his words over the printed ones when he runs out of margin. Palimpsests atop palimpsests” (379). Readers may notice that this description almost seems to be describing the novel *S.* itself as the structure is very similar. This example blurs the lines between the narrative levels that are observed by the reader because the inner novel, which should be on a higher level of narrative than the outer novel, describes not only itself, but also the outer novel that is presumably superimposed upon it much later on by different authors.

Assuming that the inner novel presents a heterodiegetic narration, it can be argued that it presents only one instance of metalepsis. In this case, the heterodiegetic narrator suddenly starts to refer to an observer and starts to describe the scene in a tone that resembles a conversation,

Try to keep your eyes on the basket, even as S. arrives at the wharf, panting and coughing, his feet now trailing blood, and bulls his way to the dais, where Stenfalk and the others are conferring and sharing one bruised apple. What matters is not how the five of them fan out into the crowd and across the wharf, searching desperately for a Detective costumed in a boiler suit. What matters, really, is that while you may want to call them, shout at them through the page, direct their attention to the bomb in the bicycle basket, you, of course, cannot. (104)

After two chapters of heterodiegetic narration in which no information that S. was not privy to is relayed, there is a direct address to the reader from behind the pages which breaks narrative levels. Aside from this instance of obvious narrative metalepsis, the inner novel never breaks the narrative levels and continues in a heterodiegetic narrative voice.

The outer novel, on the other hand, adds metafictionality to the narrative. According to Waugh, the lowest form of metafictional and narrative metalepsis is to mention the writing of the book in the diegetic world (6). Since the notes on the margins of the inner novel are taken to study and refer to the novel, they present a subtle form of metafiction. Remarking on the presence of the outer novel, Gibbons argues that “the library book illusion and the authenticity associated with handwriting make Eric and Jen’s marginalia seem closer to the real reader’s reality” as opposed to the more

traditionally diegetic inner novel. Such notes that are taken for the purpose of study can be seen throughout the novel and range from notes that refer to a quote to notes that show the meticulous study of each and every word to solve a potential code by arranging the numbers.

In one example, Eric refers to a quote in the novel, “This line has always seemed familiar to me, but I’ve never found the source. V. frustrating” to which Jen responds with, “Did some searching. Got nothing” (12). Some pages later, Eric and Jen refer to a footnote of the translator where Eric writes, “The point re:etymology is pure BS” and Jen responds with, “It does draw attention to the repeated ‘OB’” which then goes on a tangent of how this supposed code could even be a misdirection or just part of a series of codes that reside in that one footnote (259). Therefore, it might be argued that some of the notes on the margins can break any form of immersion on the part of the reader as they present the inner novel as inherently fictive.

These two characters frequently refer to the novel and its plot, and disregard or theorize about seemingly random pieces of text, causing the reader to question the inner novel and its translation. Most of these references and theories are directed to their study, but in some cases, they question the validity of the statements making the reader unsure about the truth. For example, referring to a paragraph in the inner novel, Jen writes, “This has its own page in the manuscript – could easily be an insert. I’m no expert, but it looks like a different typewriter . . . Think about it: This comes right after the about Corbeau/Durant that he wouldn’t let Filomela cut. This is totally her response. She was supposed to be with him” (196). In this excerpt, their study of this particular paragraph makes the reader question the authenticity of the text and create unreliability as the reader, for the first time, made to doubt the text that was presented in the story.

There are multiple occurrences where the outer novel refers to and disregards or questions the validity of the inner novel. For example, one of Eric’s notes refer to a footnote written by Filomela X. Caldeira, the fictional translator of the novel which reads “The point of etymology is pure BS” (259). This note is then followed by other comments that theorize about whether the translator was “a hack” or the footnote was just another way of leaving code or multiple codes (259). Another instance occurs much

later in the novel. Responding to Jen's note about Straka's not delivering a plot point, Eric claims that the translator did not even have the whole novel to translate, implying that the *Ship of Theseus* presented to the reader has been partial the whole time: "Must have been on one of the pages Filomela didn't have. At the time" (430). With such theories put forth by these two characters, the reader is suddenly made to question the reliability of the inner novel after reading it for 430 pages.

The outer novel's tendency to refer to and study the inner novel applies even to itself. Throughout the narrative, the reader encounters many cases where the notes refer to each other and to previous notes, often remarking on the act of writing and causing narrative metalepsis. An example of this can be seen quite early in the narrative where Jen refers to a presumably much older note which Eric wrote, "This is one place where a reasonable person would've suggested we meet instead of passing the book" to which Eric replies, "I never claimed to be reasonable" (vi). Other examples can be seen whenever Jen decides to comment on Eric's notes which were taken much before they started passing the book to each other and studying it together. Eric writes, "See Bolton (1957) Arg. That FXC's annots. suggests he's schizophrenic" to which Jen replies with, "I read it. Idiotic. Guy thinks strong emotion = mental illness" (vii). The nature of these notes and how they are presumably written in stages place the prior notes a narrative level below the latter, as they refer to them and even critique them. As the narrative continues, the reader encounters new notes in different colors that are on a higher narrative level than the previous ones, are repeatedly reminded of the fictive nature of every piece of text in the novel.

Notes that cause the reader doubt the authenticity of the inner novel become even more questionable as Jen and Eric claim that Caldeira started to reconstruct the novel. The first of these occurrences read as follows, "I wonder if this is where Filomela started reconstructing. / It does feel like a shift – but not a huge one – plenty of what comes afterward is classic VMS. / She had to know his style pretty well, though..." (439). In this instance, Jen and Eric theorize that not only the translator misses parts of the story but they also deliberately change and reconstruct them. This theory is presented again in one of Eric's notes later on, "Another possible place where FXC took over" (451).

While the outer novel assumes a consistent multiple internal focalizations through the perspectives of both Jen and Eric, it also presents a narration that frequently undermines and makes the reader question the validity of the inner novel. This tendency creates a reading experience that makes the reader participate more in the process of making meaning as they are presented a narrative which they later learn is unreliable, incomplete or reconstructed by the translator.

The awareness the outer novel displays of the inner is also presented in Eric and Jen's reference to other potential readers of the novel. As they are studying a novel that has been associated with an individual or a group of activists that are credited with many different uprisings anti-authoritarian views, Eric and Jen get more and more paranoid and suspect others of reading the novel. Their concern is voiced implicitly throughout the novel. For example, after finding an S. being drawn on a page, Eric writes, "I've always been impressed that you could draw this so well" to which Jen responds with "Wait – I always thought you drew it. Tell me you're joking" (xiii). Another subtle hint can be seen much later when Jen refers to an underlined sentence in the inner novel and writes, "I don't remember this being underlined before . . . I'm pretty sure it wasn't. Makes me nervous" (103). This suspicion, however, is not a passing thought, they are explicitly writing about such a possibility: "Um... Remember: You were the one who was worried that other people might read this" (290). The reader constantly reads the notes of Eric and Jen who are paranoid and even terrified of being read. They voice their concern and make the novel a haven for all their secrets and their relationship. Thus, the reader is frequently reminded that they are reading fiction, that the physical novel that they hold belongs to someone else, and that they are trespassing it. At the same time, the reader is invited to act as a researcher along with Jen and Eric, who work on the inner novel inquisitively and studiously prompting the reader to act in a similar fashion while reading the novel.

2.3.3. Person

In the inner novel Dorst and Abrams present a problematic narrating person with both homodiegetic and heterodiegetic qualities. Assuming that Dorst and Abrams use a heterodiegetic narrator, it can be argued that the narrating person in the novel sees and

knows much more than what they relay. It would not be wrong to claim, then, that the narrator assumes the position of the heterodiegetic narrator as they mostly limit what they relay to what S. witnesses, and that the narrative displays the qualities of external focalization. In the novel there is a scene that refers to a seemingly random person sitting near drunks on the train and discusses the news of an upcoming war, “The man does not join in; indeed, he has a knack for avoiding invitations to social frivolity (and, really, for avoiding much notice at all)” (300). In this instance and in the following pages, the narrative seems to focus on this man’s life, switching from S. which has been the focus up to this point with the narrator claiming to know about personal details of the man’s life: “The man fidgets . . . His hemorrhoids have been flaring since before the train even left the station” (301). Thus, the narrator reveals that they are privy to more information about other characters than what they have been leading the reader to believe.

This instance where the narrator relays what S. does not and cannot know is only seen with the agent, however. In other instances, the information that the narrator is privy to is revealed to the reader only when S. becomes aware of it as a character. For example, when S. attempts to carve his story onto the ship’s hull, the narrator first relays what he thinks S. writes, “he begins to carve his story into the ship itself. ‘I swam away from the ship, he writes. I assumed it had been destroyed. I found myself under a pier, coughing out seawater. I could hear the noise of the demonstration above’” (207). However, what S. actually wrote is revealed to the reader only when S. himself realizes what he has written, “the words on the wall are not the words he thought he wrote. ‘I swam away from the ship,’ the wall says. ‘I had aspired to destroy it. I found myself under and arch, cursing at senators’” (207). As is the case with the heterodiegetic narration, the narrating person does not reveal more than what S. knows and guesses on purpose. They limit the narrative to whatever S. sees, feels, argues and thinks, and do not narrate those instances when S. is knocked out or what S. forgets due to his issues with memory.

Such deliberate limitation of the narrating person brings uncertainty into the narrative. Edmiston comments on such deliberately limited homodiegetic narration as follows:

What Genette calls the external type means that the unlimited narrator has chosen to act as a hypothetical witness, to limit himself intradiegetically although outside the mind of any character. This is still a case of internal (intradiegetic) focalization, but one performed by the narrator rather than delegated to a character. The narrator may have the privilege of "omniscience," but he is not obligated to reveal his knowledge, just as his first-person counter- part need show no signs of dissonance. (16n15)

A narrating person who is not obliged to reveal their knowledge to the reader causes uncertainty and unreliability. The narrative does not hide its fabricated and tailored nature. Instead, it emphasizes its own fictive nature and makes it a part of itself, thus creating an unreliable and indeterminate narrative, and a reading experience that demands much from the reader.

However, it can also be argued that the narrating person present in the inner novel is a homodiegetic narrator, and that S. himself is narrating the story as events occur. It has been stated earlier that the narrative mostly relays the information that the main character S. is privy to. This tendency is carried on throughout the novel, with only one major inconsistency that is observed in the chapter titled "Interlude." In this chapter, instead of focusing on S. the narration focuses on one of S.'s targets until the target is disposed of (299). However, six pages later, the focus of narration turns back to S. again, who is boarding a ship after completing his job implying that it was he who killed the agent and that he was present in the previous scene: "Each time S. returns from land and climbs back aboard the ship, he walks directly to his cabin" (304).

This argument can also be supported by the main character's desire to narrate and write the events of the story. S. first attempts to write about his situation and troubles in chapter six, "And then, slowly, painstakingly, he begins to carve his story into the ship itself" (207). He never seems to be able to write what he wants and ends up writing something entirely different, "The words on the wall are not the words he thought he wrote" (207). Still however, he shows this desire throughout the novel and attempts to carve into the wood or any other media whenever he has a chance: "Below, in that cramped and stinking space, the boards of the bulkhead accept what the fishhook carves into them, letter after letter, word after word. While the words that S.'s mind puts into his hand are rarely the ones that appear in the pale meat of the freshly-wounded wood,

this no longer” (273). He dedicates himself to writing when he finds himself in a room in Winter City after he loses the ship and the crew because of an explosion, “the newspapers are the medium on which S. writes. He has filled thousands of pages, writing in the thin and white spaces between lines of type, superimposing his words over the printed ones when he runs out of margin” (379). Thus, the narrative repeatedly presents a main character who likes to write and narrate whatever he has been doing, witnessing, and thinking, which shows that he is a storyteller narrating his own story.

There are two narrating persons that respectively assume a homodiegetic narrating position, or more specifically, an autodiegetic narration in the outer novel of the narrative. In the first few pages of the novel, before the story begins, Jen introduces herself in the first note she writes, signing it by her name on the title page of the novel. Though it takes a few pages, Eric also gives her his name after showing some resistance because of his paranoia. Jen asks, “Name please. For real. And you’d better not lie to me” to which Eric responds writing “Eric Husch” (10). Additionally, throughout the narrative, both of these narrator characters only relay what they know and they tell their sides of the story using first-person pronouns, “I just don’t buy that SOT is fundamentally a love story. . . I think you’re wrong” (14). When these two narrating persons talk about another character in their story, such as Moody, one of their professors, they refer to them in third-person and relay what they have witnessed only or guess or theorize about them, “You should understand that it’s just a matter of time before she (+ thus Moody) figures out that there’s a connection between us” (82). It can be argued that the outer novel presents an autodiegetic narration where both of the narrating persons give their own side of the story and focus on what they see or do as witnesses and characters in their stories.

Eric and Jen’s distinct personalities and outlooks on life can be observed developing in the novel as the story progresses. During the first few chapters of the novel, and the blue and black ink combination, Eric is presented as a very skeptical and paranoid person and Jen fails to understand the reasons why Eric behaves this way. This is especially apparent in the conversation between Jen and Eric, where Jen writes, “Hey – I just sent an email to your PSU address. It bounced” and Eric responds saying “Don’t

bother trying that again. I don't use email. Don't trust it" which makes Jen ask the question of "Paranoid???" (5). As the story progresses and Jen learns more about the world of Straka, the fictional author whose novel they are studying, she becomes more and more paranoid too. She responds to one of the older notes which she herself wrote, saying "too much death-by-falling in the world of Straka," Later, she comments on her own note, saying "Can't believe how flippant I was about this" (7). This change in Jen becomes very severe and towards the end of their notes, Jen becomes paranoid while Eric becomes the voice of reason. Referring to the burning down of her dorm she writes, "Something burned it down and it was b/c of me" to which Eric responds, "No one was really at risk. It was empty, right?" (258). This dialogue continues to the point where Eric tries to rationalize it: "What I mean is: If it was the S, and they're trying to scare us, then we shouldn't let them. And if it wasn't – if it was just some asshole screwing around – then there's no reason to be scared in the first place" (258). It can be observed that the multiple narrating persons show their impact on the narration through their own biases and personality.

To conclude, *S.* presents a rather problematized voice of narration. Not only does the narrative include two different and distinct stories that are explored together by the reader, but they also present different narrating voices and thus different problems. It can be argued that the narrating instance is straightforward as both novels mostly assume subsequent and simultaneous narration, but the narrative levels and the narrating persons of the inner and outer novels are heavily problematized. Both the inner and the outer novels present metalepses throughout the narrative. The addition of the outer novel creates problematized narrative levels which become even more complicated by the nature of the outer novel and the writing technique of note-taking through which older notes achieve a higher narrative level with each newer note. Moreover, the effects that multiple narrating persons have on the narration is visible to the reader as they can contrast the information relayed and see how much their personalities are reflected, creating an unreliable narration where the reader is prompted to compare the information to interpret the diegetic events, increasing reader participation.

2.4. STUDY OF NARRATIVE TEXT IN *S*.

Dorst and Abrams' *S*. presents a narrative that shows an awareness of its material reality which it weaves into the story itself. From the first few pages on, the reader encounters a novel whose margins are filled with notes of other alleged readers. The title page is the first page that houses such notes (see fig. 2). There are two different styles of handwriting on the first page of the book. The first handwriting is made up of short and efficient strokes, whereas the second is more refined and made up of longer, cursive strokes. This difference in style gives the impression that these notes are written by two different people, meaning that the notes are part of a conversation rather than just notes. Following this argument, the reader sees a conversation that takes place between a person who works at the university library, and the owner of the book. Their distinct styles of handwriting and their conversation persist throughout the narrative as the reader who these people that seem to have read the same book are in the outer story.

The addition of another story in the form of notes written in the margins of an inner novel problematizes the reading experience. The reader either has to read the inner novel first and then read the outer novel, or read the outer novel first and then read the outer novel, or read the book as if both the outer and the inner books were the same text and then blend them together. Choosing one of these methods is possible but some of the pages still present very difficult reading experiences as the reader not only has to choose a reading style but also rearrange and follow lines to put the outer novel into a readable order. An example of this can be seen on page 220 where the notes are so out of order that Jen and Eric have to draw lines to point to their responses in order to carry out the conversation, which renders the page a mess to follow and read through (see fig. 3).

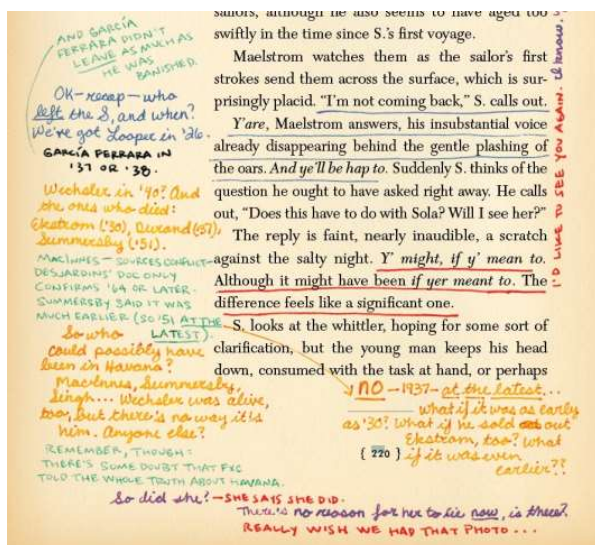


Fig. 3. Doug and Jeffrey. *S.* (Canongate Books, 2013), p. 220.

In this example, besides rearranging and following the lines the reader has to adjust themselves or the book physically so that they can read a piece of note that is written vertically, which requires much more effort on the part of the reader.

A narrative with qualities that make the reader have such a difficult reading experience is termed as a “cybertext” by Espen Aarseth. According to Aarseth, a cybertext, “focuses on the mechanical organization of the text, by posing the intricacies of the medium as an integral part of the literary exchange. However, it also centers attention on the consumer, or user, of the text, as a more integrated figure than even reader-response theorists would claim” (1). To rephrase, cybertexts are texts that are aware of their materiality and foreground it, leaving the reader as an integral part of the reading process. The narrative depends on readers to be fully realized and to relay their information.

This process in which the reader participates in order to realize the information presented in the novel is termed as “ergodic” (1). Ergodicity is a physical form of participation that “effectuate(s) a semiotic sequence” instead of an interpretive one (1). Ergodicity stems from the outer novel’s being imposed upon the inner as well as the physical participation of the reader with the aim of connecting, ordering, and understanding the notes that are haphazardly jotted down throughout the novel, whose only hints of order are the colors of the pens or the disorderly lines drawn from one note

to another. This creates a reading experience in which the reader has to strain themselves and even move the book in order to read and follow the events presented in the outer novel.

The addition of random sketches throughout the novel is another quality that requires the reader's presence. These drawings and small sketches are not always used to tell an extra bit of information but to illustrate and visualize what might be happening in some specific scenes. For example, in a grueling scene, S. watches a young man sew his mouth as part of a tradition of the ship they are on. He says, "young man tips his head back and forces the needle through his upper lip, threads it through, then pierces the lower, and S. is ensnared in this, held by the sound and ritual and grotesquerie, and he watches as, stitch after stitch, the young man sews his mouth shut" (216). In addition to this detailed description of an important scene, the reader also sees a sketch visualizing what S. might have encountered in a minimalistic manner (see fig. 4).

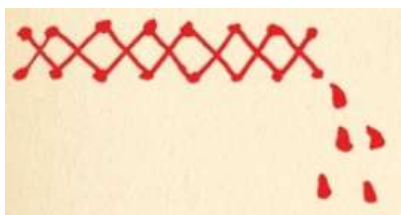


Fig. 4. Doug and Jeffrey. *S.* (Canongate Books, 2013), p. 291.

It can be seen that the notes are not limited to text added into the margins of the novel only. Eric and Jen add their own commentary and imagination in the form of sketches to add to what the inner novel tells.

The use of sketches in this manner is similar to what Alison Gibbons terms as "multimodal" (8). According to Gibbons, multimodal literature on the printed medium "employ(s) multiple semiotic modalities, primarily the verbal and the visual" (1). Such literature presents multiple semiotic sequences rather than what is generally associated with printed literature. Gibbons further explains that such modes of communication are not exclusive of each other, they work together to create meaning: "one mode is not privileged, but rather narrative content, type-face, type-setting, graphic design, and images all have a role to play" (2). The addition of the outer novel in the form of notes

results in images that adds a second semiotic sequence to *S.*, making the narrative a multimodal one.

The use of such multimodality that is added later on in the form of notes is similar to Plutarch's paradox of the Ship of Theseus. The Ship of Theseus denotes a philosophical inquiry on whether an object that has had all of its components replaced remains fundamentally the same. An example appears later on when Eric is seen drawing a helm on the page where *S.* learns about the ship (see fig. 5).

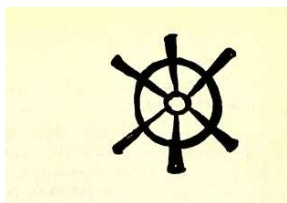


Fig. 5. Doug and Jeffrey. *S.* (Canongate Books, 2013), p. 291.

Dorst and Abrams write “He flips forward, ten to twenty pages at a time. Again and again the ship sheds a feature and dons a new one, reinterpreted and remade” (291). According to Vries and Dijk, the use of the paradox of Ship of Theseus and the changes associated with the paradox is also represented in the novel as the physical text is made to be ever-changing. He observes that “[b]y drawing a parallel between the dynamics of change and continuity in the riddle of Theseus’s ship and media-technological transformation, *S.* hints at the applicability of this philosophical paradox to debates about today’s media culture” (132). In another example, the symbols that *S.* sees are relayed in textual format, which adds to the argument of the parallels between the paradox and the material text of the novel: “There is a bird of prey with its wings spread. There is an open eye. A radiant sun. Three slender fish, arranged as sides of a triangle . . . A lightning bolt . . . a spider,” which is then visualized (343, fig. 6).

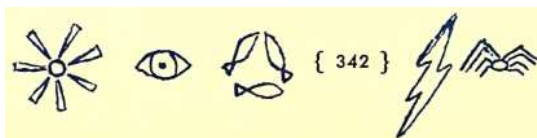


Fig. 6. Doug and Jeffrey. *S.* (Canongate Books, 2013), p. 342.

It can be argued that the addition of an outer novel, allows Dorst and Abrams to be much more liberal with their notes, drawing and illustrating whatever is being mentioned in the inner novel through the characters in the outer novel, and further weave the paradox of the Ship of Theseus in the multimodality of the narrative.

Multimodality that results from the conversation that takes place between Eric and Jen is not the only play with materiality in the novel. Dorst and Abrams add different and pieces of paper, letters, pictures, postcards and newspaper articles throughout the pages that are used in the conversations between the two note-takers. There is a total of twenty-two such additions to the novel. The first of these is an old letter that is found in the translator's notes. The last one, also a letter, is found much later in the novel. As the notes are used mostly for communication between Eric and Jen, the additions consist of messages that either do not fit in the margins of the inner novel, or are used to refer to external sources in their study and conversations. For example, a letter written by Jen explains Jen's disappearance which happened when she was very young. Another addition refers to this letter and fills in the details that were left out or fabricated in the previous letter, telling stories contained within themselves. Mantzaris maintains that

By foregrounding the materiality of its semiotic modes, Abrams and Dorst's novel distances itself from conventional practices in multimodal texts, inviting the readers to experience the narrative as a constellation of visual and material semiotic modes. The shaping of the world of the novel therefore entails the interweaving of the diverse elements into the fabric of the reading experience. (72)

The novel's multimodality is not limited to the physical book, there are many extensions of the story in multimedia. According to Gibbons, "Twitter accounts for both Eric and Jen . . . a minute-long teaser trailer . . . fan blogs . . . dedicated to discussing and solving the ciphers in *S*." (326-329). The addition of other modals through postcards and additional electronic media thus creates a unique reading experience where the readers have to weave in various elements in their reading experience.

To conclude, the narrative text in *S*. presents a reading experience that is highly problematized because of the multimodal nature of the narrative as a result of the addition of an outer novel. The inner novel of the narrative follows fairly conventional printing practices whereas the outer novel written in the margins by fictional readers

results in a narrative in which two stories that are physically separate stand next to each other and impose on each other. As such, the novel gives a choice to the reader, whether to read the inner or the outer novel first. At the same time, it prompts the reader to make sense of the interconnected and related stories that connect both physically and interpretively, ultimately creating a narrative that is hard to read and understand.

CHAPTER 3 – *ONLY REVOLUTIONS*

Mark Z. Danielewski is an American fiction author born in New York City in 1966 to Priscilla Decatur Machold and the Polish avant-garde film director Tad Danielewski. He graduated from Yale with a degree in English Literature and then pursued graduate studies at the University of Southern California School of Cinema-Television in Los Angeles graduating with a Master of Fine Arts degree in 1993. He became famous with his debut novel *House of Leaves* (2000) which was praised for its intricate and multi-layered typographical layout and print. His second novel *Only Revolutions*, which is the focus of the present study, was published in 2006. This novel has the same style of experimental typography and printing methods Danielewski used in *House of Leaves*.

Only Revolutions centers on Hailey and Sam who fall in love and have a road trip across the United States and is written in a style that is a combination of poetry and prose. As the story begins, both Hailey and Sam are in a depressive state in a forest, about to commit suicide until meeting each other. After meeting and getting to know each other, they start their adventure and meet an indefinite number of men and women who either beat or flirt with Hailey, depending on whichever side the reader started reading. The following events transpire in a similar fashion where they encounter a gang of bandits whom Sam both runs away from and also defeats. Having similar events happen in the forest, and being separated as a result of an assault, they later find each other and twelve jars of honey which make them have intense feelings for each other, start a relationship, and find vehicles in the forest to drive. The novel continues with an encounter with a homeless man, a group of politically powerful men, The Creep who is a recurring character that assaults the couple, doctors after taking Hailey to the hospital in New Orleans, getting jobs in a diner in Mississippi, getting into a physical altercation with the manager, running away from the diner, having another altercation with The Creep, getting married, and then Sam dying of an allergic reaction to a bee sting. The ending is set up perfectly for a re-read as Hailey is seen to be alone and sad, wandering in unknown places, just as she was in the beginning of the novel.

The novel presents the story from Hailey's and Sam's perspectives respectively, the section labeled "H" belonging to Hailey and "S" belonging to Sam. These two characters' stories differ greatly in terms of the details that are provided in the course of the novel and while the main events stay mostly the same, they are relayed in a manner in which both Hailey and Sam praise themselves and belittle the other. In addition, the margins of the inner texts are filled with information detailing the historical events that take place between November 22, 1863 and November 22, 1963 in Sam's section and between November 22, 1963 and January 19, 2063 in Hailey's. These two different versions are given on two ends of the pages, and the events come together in the middle of the novel. As Ven also observes, "Everything that happens is mirrored on the other side as the narratives gradually move closer to each other until they meet and unite, only to be separated again. The middle pages (180–81) function as the axis of symmetry around which all these mirrors revolve" (237). Reading past the middle point, it can be observed that some of the major events are mirrored, as Sam and Hailey get jobs at two places, fight two different managers, have an encounter with The Creep twice, to then end in a spot from where the reader can start re-reading.

At first glance, the visual design of the novel seems quite striking with two giant irises on either side of the book. As Félix states, "From dust jacket to publisher's colophon, including the green and gold endpapers and the copyright page, every component of the book plays a part in the striking visual performance set for the readers" (192). As page numbers are placed in the middle of the page, the reader may open the book and read it on either of the sides. Ardoin maintains that as there are two stories that are going on simultaneously, *Only Revolutions* presents a reading experience which "requires the reader to rotate it periodically and alternate between reading it front to back and back to front" (1007). Felix adds that such a structure results in a novel in which "there can be no ending but only the 'sense of an ending,' which is reverted into the possibility of yet another beginning in yet another revolution of the book *ad libitum* and *ad infinitum*" (193). As such, the novel may be said to call into question the norms of what a printed novel should look like, and create an awareness of the materiality of the book.

As the first thing that attracts the reader's attention in the novel is its display of its material awareness, critics focus on qualities like different printing practices and typeface that best showcase this awareness. These qualities also further the symbols of revolutions and circles in the physical print of the novel. One of the ways that the novel accomplishes this is by playing around with the physical text by adjusting the words and the lines to three hundred and sixty, the degree of rotation needed for a full circle. Félix comments on the importance of the number three hundred and sixty in the book, saying "Anything that can be inscribed is taken within a circular movement . . . Three hundred and sixty is the number of plants and animals that are listed along the way, but above all it is the number of pages that the book contains, and the exact number of words on each double page" (193). Further explaining the significance of the number, Elias notes that "their stories appear on each page in mirror-image printing of exactly 90 words each, with each page containing a total of exactly 180 words and facing pages containing a total of 360 words of first-person narration by the combined two narrators. Each page of dual narration consists of exactly 36 lines" (755). According to Gibbons, "Danielewski's novel uses page design, narrative chronology and readers' rotation of the book to likewise enact the conceptual metaphor of TIME IS CURCULAR MOTION" ("You Were There" 188). These circles that are used together with the overarching themes result in a narrative that is designed to be read over and over.

Another significant aspect of the novel is that it is the product of an interaction between the author and readers in its developmental process. Before it was published in print, *Only Revolutions* was published on the internet and had an active community on its forums. In this stage, Mark Danielewski had his readers join in the creation process. Elias elaborates on this by saying

not only did Danielewski solicit fans online for favorite historical facts to be used in the novel's "chronomosaic" (the historical time line that runs in the left or right gutter of every page), but he also invited them to audition for the audio readings posted at the official *Only Revolutions* website and has kept in dialogue with them via his personal Facebook page. By 2012, the MZD Forums for *Only Revolutions* listed over 6,900 posts on 249 threads. (753)

The interaction between the author and readers that has been a part of *Only Revolutions* during its inception, "aligned the novel . . . with ergodic literature and visual writing, as

well as with free-verse poetic form” (753). This interactivity can also be seen in the current form of the novel which prompts the reader to rotate the book as the story goes on, leading to a different perspective in return.

This section will focus on *Only Revolutions* and its narrative structure. The word “revolutions” in the title does not stay in the realm of abstract and rhetorical but is carried on to the material reality of the text as well. Using the major points outlined in Gerard Genette’s *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (1984), this chapter will study this narrative which tries the limits of what a written narrative is or can be, and will attempt to explore how such striking use of materiality and experimentation makes for a novel that creates a cyclical narrative.

3.1. STUDY OF TENSE IN *ONLY REVOLUTIONS*

3.1.1. Order

At first glance, it can be argued that *Only Revolutions* presents a reading experience where the reader is required to re-read portions of the novel over and over again. While it might be said that experimental and striking printing practices cause a disjunctive reading experience, and that the story is written mostly in a very erratic tone, making the order of events hard to distinguish, there is a story element, “honey,” that suggest a kind of order in the story. In the novel, both Hailey and Sam find honey at the end of their respective forty-second pages, “Mistletoe whisks: / Consume only this. / Honey” (Hailey 42). In the course of the novel, at certain intervals, both Sam and Hailey refer to the amount of honey remaining in their possession. The first of these is some eighty pages later, “HONEY. / 8½ left. / One jar for two. Halfbyhalf” (Hailey 123). The next reference to honey comes halfway through the story: “We take nips of a saltier equity. Mixed. / Our honey. With just 6½ Jars left,” which then continues on the next page, “With just 5½ Jars of honey left” (Hailey 180, 181). This string of mentions continues with the 4½, 3½, and the last jar mark on pages 209, 238, and 318 respectively, showing the linear nature of the events happening and being recorded in the novel.

In addition to presenting a timeline through the amount of honey that Sam and Hailey have, the novel also utilizes historical dates on its margins, which Elias describes as “‘chronomosaic’ (the historical time line that runs in the left or right gutter of every page)” (754). The chronomosaic structure of the novel provides a timeline of events supported by historical facts as Sam and Hailey’s stories unfold. These historical facts differ to Sam and Hailey; however, it should be noted that even though their stories seem to be parallel to each other and converge at the middle point, Sam’s section spans from November 22, 1863 to November. 22, 1963, while Hailey’s section spans from November 22, 1963 to January 19, 2063. Though differences in dates suggest that the seemingly parallel stories are subsequent rather than simultaneous, they still present a linear timeline for the events.

Despite the fact that the narrative mostly shows itself to be linear, there are qualities that render it non-linear, the first of which is its attempts to create a story that never ends. The ending to each side of the novel is indeterminate as the reader is not told what happens to the characters and the story is left off with the characters wandering, which is how each of the stories begin, creating a perfect loop. Both Sam’s and Hailey’s stories begin on a mountain forest “Top of this peak, my greetings / crash down upon powdery cliffs,” and follow similar paths throughout with Sam and Hailey going on a road trip, getting a job, getting fired and ending on a mountain forest with the other person dying (Hailey 3). As such, the reader is presented a story that can be read endlessly by turning the book at the end of each of the stories.

Additionally, while getting to the end and the last page of whichever story the reader may be reading, they are given signals to flip the book and continue with the next story on multiple occasions. One of these signals that spans over the whole of the novel is the shrinking of the text in size after the middle point of the story as the secondary story’s text begins to develop (see fig. 7).

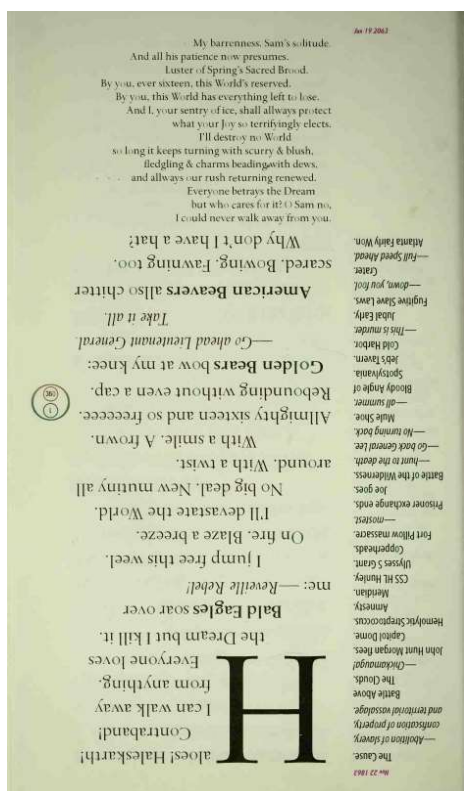


Fig. 7. Danielewski, Mark. *Only Revolutions*. (Pantheon Books, 2006), p. 360 (H).

The novel is printed in such a way that, after Hailey's story ends, the reader is made to question whether they have been focusing on the wrong side all along and therefore missing the main story of the novel as the side that they have been reading is made to be irrelevant due to its shrinking size. Elias states, "Time movement in *Only Revolutions* is spatialized but continuous, in the form of a cycle. Sam's end is Hailey's beginning: the cycle of story is unending and dual, as in a Möbius strip" (755). Regarding this continuity between the sides, Bray states, "This constant rereading is again encouraged by verbal connections; the final words of Sam's and Hailey's narratives . . . The apparent closure of the last lines is thus immediately reopened as the reader recalls that each character begins their narrative with the opposite claim" (189). Therefore, even though there is an end to each character's stories, the novel's structure makes the reader flip the book and continue with the story that is parallel to the one that has been read, creating a reading experience that resembles an endless line similar to a Möbius strip.

To conclude, it can be argued that the order of diegetic events in the novel is mostly linear but the novel presents a very erratic and unusual narrative which makes for a

difficult reading experience for the reader. Linearity is broken at the end of the stories of Sam and Hailey and the novel makes the reader continue reading the secondary story that has already been present at the bottom of the page. Thus, it might be argued that there is no specific ending in the novel but there are stop points where the reader is expected to turn the book over and continue reading. As such, the novel creates a non-linear reading experience, and non-linearity is not caused by the story or the order of the events in the narrative but by the printing choices that the novel adopts.

3.1.2. Duration

Danielewski's *Only Revolutions* presents a rhythm that is problematic to determine. Because the reader is not made aware of how long some events take place, and the erratic nature of the story, as it is a combination of poetry and prose, the rhythm is impossible to distinguish clearly. However, there are details and events that give an idea about the length of events that transpire in the narrative. It can be observed that the rhythm in *Only Revolutions* presents a combination of summary and scene as the story mostly consists of the summaries of what Hailey and Sam have done throughout their adventure as well as the conversations between each other and other characters. The following scene provides an example to such rhythm,

Someway higher, somehow strewn. / Out there, somewhere, / another ruin. / Stupendous. / Then / impudently a Moustached / Toother jerks me around. / — *Lost, Little Lemonade'* / — *There aren't no returns for those / with no starts.* / — *Sure. I got weed too. Where / you from'* / — *Around.* / — *Wanna get down.'* / *You're all School and Summer.* / — *How 'z that'* / *No class.* / — *Yeah, but it's Spring baby.* / And I just lie down and let him. / And when he goes I go too. (5)

In this scene, Hailey is talking to someone whom she has never met, and from the summary of going through ruins and buildings, the narrative immediately switches to a scene with one of the longest written conversations in the story, only to switch back to the summary of the events that follow. Similar examples of such switches from summary to scene and vice versa can be seen throughout the narrative. The following is another example: “Each REMF threatens to quit. / — *Aww come on, just play now for zip.* / I assent. Break after break. / Clean banks for Solids. Stun shots / for Stripes. Spins. Jumps” (63). The same switching can be observed in this example as the

dialogue in the form of a scene is immediately followed by Hailey's narration that acts as a summary.

Additionally, the summaries presented in the narrative cover especially long amounts of time when the two are on the road. "Passing through Gettysburg, / Route 30 East to 134. / By Plum Run. / By barns, stacks and tractors, / blurring fences and pastures of / centerpivoted soil" (Hailey 90). In a total of 6 lines, the narrative relays where the couple has been and how fast they are travelling through houses and other farm buildings while going through their road-trip that "travel from Pennsylvania to New Orleans, then up the Mississippi towards badlands that actually are more literary than geographical" which lasts for a long amount of time compared to the occasional scenes in the form of conversations (Felix 192). In sum, the rhythm may be said to consist of a combination between summary and scene.

Another way to determine the narrative movements in the novel is through its chronomosaic structure which can be found in the margins of the stories of both characters. Each of these sections are filled with historical details and random quotes that are prefaced by a date which serves as the header, and in which the events took place, as in the following example, "June 29 1966 / Hanoi & / Haiphong bombs. / Stokely Carmichael. / France from NATO. / Billie Jean King's / Wimbledon. / Nyasaland & Malawi. / CORE&NAACP. / Soviet race meet" (53). Though not explicitly stated in the novel, because these notes are placed in the margins of the text, the reader can assume that they coincide with the timing of the events that happen in the inner text which focuses on Sam and Hailey. Assuming that to be the case, the reader can study the duration of scenes and various summaries that depict the road trips, and see the difference in the amount of time that passed between the pages.

When the amount of time between each of the pages is taken into consideration, it is seen that each of the pages progressively summarizes more and more of the story. For example, in the beginning of Hailey's story, only a day that passes between the first and the second page, "Nov 22 1963" and "Nov 23 1963." Similarly, as the story progresses, each page summarizes months, stating the dates, "Jan 6 1966" and "Feb 10 1966" (48, 49). The tendency to increase the amount of time summarized in the novel extends to

two months, “Jan 31 1974” and “March 29 1974” on pages 114 and 115, and covers a total of ten months by the final pages of Hailey’s side of the story, “March 17 2062” and “Jan 19 2063” (359, 360). As the story progresses, the reader gains less and less amount of information about the events in the narrative as one page of the novel summarizes whatever happened in ten months of their journey, reverting to a one-day page as the reader turns the book upside down and starts reading Sam’s story which also exhibits the same process. Therefore, it may be suggested that the rhythm of narrative in *Only Revolutions* does not make use of many different narrative movements; however, it does make use of scenes and summaries in a way that confuses the reader because of frequent jumps and the scenes that summarize long periods of time, that cause the reader to turn to Sam’s narrative. As such, it requires great amount of participation from the reader as they are left to choose between stitching together a page that potentially spans over ten months of travel or turning the book upside down in order to read the other side.

3.1.3. Frequency

Due to the structure of narrative in *Only Revolutions*, the reader encounters many repetitions of events throughout the novel. There are two stories that parallel each other, reflecting Hailey’s and Sam’s perspective of the events. Every major event that Hailey and Sam go through are repeated twice, albeit through each character’s perspective depending on who the dominant person is in those events. An example of this can be seen towards the middle of the narrative where a woman attempts to flirt with Sam. Both Hailey and Sam relay their own perspectives of this event. Hailey says “But my Sam, / confused somewhat, only retreats / from her slutty tour. Politely too / but firm. Even when she starts bawling, / plaidclash of tubetop on goth, / Sam rewards her with only a hanky. / Him: —*I’m terribly / sorry. I’m hers.* / And her: —*I’m sorry too. / You ’re nice*” (166). The same string of events is then narrated from Sam’s angle, “Because we’re allways sixteen and / somewhat confusedly, I retreat / from her lowwheel squeals. Gently first / but firm. Even when leaking, / a tumble of updo and fuss, / I offer HER a doily only: / Me: —*Please forgive / me. I’m hers.* / And HER: —*No, forgive / me. You’re spoony*” (166). As such, there are dual repetitions of noteworthy events that

happen in the story given from the perspectives of Sam and Hailey if the reader reads both sides of the story.

On pages 180 and 181, where both Sam and Hailey's stories converge, the reader switches focus from whichever side they are reading, on to the secondary narrative, and start to retrace the steps back to the beginning of the story. While the dates and the honey jars still present a linear progression, the events repeat themselves as they go back to the beginning, which makes them read the same events a total of four times if and when they read both sides of the novel. The repetitions after the middle point change the details of the events and the dialogue, often mirroring them. For example, "*—When you're stubborn. / When you're brave. When you're mad. When you're scorned. / But allways beside me and my moods. / — That's too easy. —Then be difficult*" (Hailey and Sam 177). The same dialogue, word for word, is repeated on both Sam's and Hailey's sides on the same pages. The reader also finds a similar conversation that takes place between Sam and Hailey later on, "*— That's too difficult. / — My rudeness. Besides I curve when I'm cruel. / Bring sorrow. And terror. When I'm defenseless. / When I'm crazy, anguished and brutal to behold*" (Hailey and Sam 184). The wording has definitely been changed in the story, but the reader witnesses a mirrored version of what they have read before.

Another similar example showcases how the repetition that stems from the events mirroring, or retracing, themselves from the middle point in the narrative are also mirrored physically in the print. One of the most significant examples of the way the events are represented in the physical text appears in the form of a dialogue between Hailey and Sam towards the middle of the story,

—How'z life?
 —Taking forever.
 —Let'S dancer
 —And take forever with US'
 —Yes.
 —Let'S go.
 —We're so poor.
 —We'll work it out. (177).

This dialogue is then mirrored in the text right after the middle of the story,

—And the World works?
 —We'Re that poor.
 —Let US go gently.
 —Yes.
 —Taking our time?
 —Dancing on.
 —How iz forever?
 —Taking everyone. (184).

Thus, repetitions of events expressed in similar wordings are mirrored both in meaning and physically before and after the narrative. These repetitions become less frequent and fewer and the farther the story gets from the middle, the less recognizable these events come to be.

An example that is repeated four times in the narrative is the physical altercation between Sam and Viapolis, whose name changes each time it is mentioned with additional syllables, as Viafifopolis, Viafofopolis, Viapopolis, etc.. Danielewski writes, “Sam spars: / — *Get fucked.* / — *Excuse me?* Vialalopolis spins, shoving / tables aside, impulsive, knocking over / plates of sauce, falling blobs of marinara / glopping everywhere” (Hailey 160). The same string of events can be seen some fifty pages later, “Sam bravely stands. / — *Get a loadda that!* / — *Peel your fuckin cap!* / Sam just throws back his head and laughs. / Disaster follows. Sam though, by / *jete passe* from the rampaging / Viafifonacci, nimblv flies across / the floor, up over tables, above / flutes if champagne and dainty cakes” (Hailey 211). In this instance, details of these events change drastically and the only resemblance that remains is the way Viapolis charges at Sam.

A different example is the appearance of a recurring character named “The Creep” (67). The Creep appears a total of four times throughout the novel, twice in Hailey’s and twice in Sam’s stories, before the middle and after the middle of the novel. The Creep either tries to tempt or assaults the couple in one way or another, and Hailey and Sam try to defend themselves. For example, “And that's it, I'm torn down. / Over and out. Prepped for pain. / Except The Creep's only disdain. / *You is all mine so.* / I almost faint. / *The only way*” (Hailey 83). A similar interaction between them comes after the middle point, “There's The Creep: / *You can never quit me.* / The Noose at hand. / And though I'm HairyVonSkitters, when / Tin Creep charges, Sam immediately / thrashes

back, bashing for time” (Hailey 274). The major events that are being repeated are the events that do not show much variation compared to other less significant encounters that the couple have. To sum, after the middle of the narrative, from where the story changes directions and starts the mirror the events that happened, going back to the beginning, the repeated events seem as though they were mirrored in textuality and story progression. Such an approach to the structure of the narrative creates a reading experience which makes the reader come across certain events up to four times, making them pay more attention to those repetitions and also go back and forth comparing the differences between them, resulting in a heightened reader participation.

To conclude, due to the unusual printing practices of the narrative, the order of narrative seems rather problematic. The reader is not given many methods to determine the flow of time in the narrative but two. The first is showing the progression of the events through the amount of honey that the couple still have, and the second is the chromosaic structure adding dates and historical facts at the background of the events in the main story. However, after the middle of the narrative where both Hailey’s and Sam’s stories converge, the narrative starts tracing back the major events that transpired and shifts the focus to the secondary story that has been progressing on the bottom of the page. This makes the narrative appear to have a non-linear narration and causes many repetitions as the reader can read a major event up to four times provided that they switch and read both sides of the novel. This middle point, which the narrative uses as an anchor point of sorts, is utilized in creating a reading experience that causes readers to go back and forth the narrative and switch to the more dominant side, which increases reader participation. These problematizations, coupled with increasingly erratic narrative movements, that are a combination of the scenes and extreme summaries that can have a page span up to ten months of diegetic time, create a reading experience that enhances reader participation, making the narrative cyclical.

3.2. STUDY OF MOOD IN *ONLY REVOLUTIONS*

Only Revolutions presents a problematized mood in its narration. At first glance, the reader can assume that this is a fairly straightforward, albeit chaotic, story narrated by

the people living through it, namely Hailey and Sam. From the opening lines of either side of the narrative, the reader understands that the narrative presents an internal focalization. For example, if the reader starts reading the book from Hailey's side, they will find out that she assumes the position of the narrator: "Samsara! Samarra! / Grand! / I can walk away / from anything. / Everyone loves / the Dream but I kill it" (Hailey 1). The same type of introduction can be seen in Sam's side of the novel as well, "Haloos! Haleskrath! / Contraband! / I can walk away / from anything. / Everyone loves / the Dream but I kill it" (Sam 1). The characters' tendency to refer to themselves using the first-person pronoun throughout the novel reveals the use of internal focalization. Internal focalization provides limitations to the scope of knowledge that is available to the narrator as the narrator is only privy to the information they have. Moreover, focalizing through a character can potentially cause a biased attitude, which will later be proved as the reader progresses in the story.

As there are two sides relaying the same series of events in the novel, it can be said that the narrative contains multiple internal focalizations, those of Hailey and Sam. Reading the story and comparing the two sides makes it clear that characters narrate their stories from their own perspectives with biases as they attempt to place themselves at a higher position than the secondary character. For example, on Hailey's side, right after the scene she meets Sam, Hailey remarks:

Anvwho, I've mucho to scorch / No dillydallying for me. But / silly boy so impressed still gallops / after me. He'll burn too. / If he keeps up. / If he doesn't keep up. / Everyone burns and / no one keeps up. / I'm that fast, man. / Wobbling loose the travis. / —*Wait*, Sam gaps. / Turning me back / to —*What?* / his offer: / —*Okay, you can be my slave.* / My flying kick nicks his nose. / A warning. Worse if I weren't / succumbing to squeal. / What a heel. (Hailey 9)

After this introduction and the following physical altercation between the two, Sam is told to be the one hurt by Hailey. Turning the novel and flipping to the same page on the opposite side, the reader finds Sam's story,

Anyhow, I've plenty to torch. / No lingering for me. Even if / this picayune giglet spurts ahead. / Ashamed she's not fast. / Ashamed she's so slow. / Everyone's afraid because / no one goes the way, I go. / And everyone will go. / But still her bellwether / sluggishness mildly amuses me. / —*I'm late*, she coughs. / Pathetically. / Concerning her poverty, / I resort to generosity.

But / my offer's too great. She panics. / Accidentally kicks my nose. / A burst of sting. / Odd. (Sam 9).

In Sam's version of the same events, his seemingly ridiculous request is presented as a "generosity," a blessing from Sam, and the physical altercation that follows is the result of panic rather than an angry reaction to his request.

Another such example of different versions of the same events can be seen a few pages later when Sam falls while walking through a snowy area, which Hailey narrates as follows,

Because herethereandeverywhere's / Sam / streaking by, barely able to balance / let alone run, / freaking ecstatic, / hops acrobatic, so clumsy I stop, / to which clubby responds / with a leap, / spinning low down and / over, forwards, around, / then over and down. Way over. / Uh O. / Feet skidding horizons. / Still flipping. / Until he chestslams the ground. / Ow. / Still now. Face down. (Hailey 36)

Each narrative heavily favors the one who narrates and makes fun of the secondary character. Sam's slipping and falling down is given on Sam's side of the novel,

Because everywherethereandhere's / Hailey / Wambling by, hardly able to stand / let alone walk, now somehow / managing to halt without toppling / over, a feat I euphorically celebrate / with a leap, flipping high up and / over, backwards, around / then over and down. Too over. / Uh O. / Feet freefall for clouds. / Still spinning. / Until I backhammer the ground. / Ow. / Face up. Still now. (Sam 36)

In this version, the reader can see almost the opposite of what Hailey narrated as Sam seems to be in much more control and Hailey seems to be the one struggling to walk through the snowy area. Even how he lands is a contradicting piece of information as in Hailey's version he lands face down, but in Sam's version he is facing up. Thus, it can be argued that the narrator's focalizations are heavily biased towards the characters that they center their attention on. Any event or comment that places any of the characters above the others should be the object of doubt and suspicion as the narrators prove themselves to be unreliable from the very first few interactions.

Brian McHale terms such narratives that have multiple internal focalizations as "parallax" (5). According to McHale, narratives that utilize parallax in their focalizations put emphasis on the characters' mental constructions of the diegetic world more than the actual events. He states that "the obvious extension of this principle of

parallax is to juxtapose two or more characters' different constructions of the same world, or some part of a world" (5). In juxtaposing the two characters' constructions of the same events the reader learns more about each of them and their mental states. In addition, they can use the information to distinguish events happened and what parts are caused by the characters' mental constructions, which requires allows the reader to be more active.

The difference in the mental states of characters and their outlooks can be observed when, after a moment of intimacy, Sam notices Hailey's sadness and her crying on his side of the novel: "Though / saddest of all, forcing / a smile, her beestung mouth / bending up for nowhere. / And I'm dying. / The Luckiest Fool Ever. / Hailey hiccups a cry. / Hiccups / twice. Face splotched and welling / but lips never failing. / Still smiling so gently for me. / O my. What am I doing?" (Sam 93). It can be seen that in Sam's narration, Hailey is crying but also trying to hide it with a smile. The reader later reads Hailey's perspective and learns about what she is thinking, as she says: "Though for Sam, silly priapic, / I try to hang happy, if / O man I'm sad. / Though I keep wringing a smile. / Why? / Ecstatic hurt / over this jerk. / Oops, a burp. / Burp twice. / He's frowning? Welling up? / I'm confused. / Sam's shocked, worried for me? / My. What am I doing?" (Hailey 93). From Hailey's perspective, what she is doing is merely burping and not crying. While she acknowledges that she is smiling, along with how she is hurt over Sam, the reader can understand that she is almost fooling herself into believing that whatever she was doing is just burping, and that, in actuality, she was crying.

To sum, it can be said that the narration in *Only Revolutions* presents multiple internal focalizations that are heavily biased and diegetic events are narrated in their favor. After comparing some of the events with the secondary character's narration, the reader may come to the conclusion that any diegetic event that has been narrated by either side might have been altered heavily. This presents a narrative where the reader would have to read both sides and come to their own conclusion about what happened and what has been altered. The narrative makes it possible to compare and contrast the mental reconstructions of both the narrators as the narrative presents a parallax in its narration.

This necessitates much more participation from the reader as neither of the narrators can truly be trusted, and readers have to read back and forth in order to compare the events, which ultimately creates a cyclical reading experience.

3.3. STUDY OF VOICE IN *ONLY REVOLUTIONS*

3.3.1. Narrating Instance

Only Revolutions' narrating instance mostly falls into the category of simultaneous narration as both Hailey and Sam narrate the events as they happen, "casting events in such a way as to render them as though they were happening now, occurring in the moment" (Gibbons, "You were there" 174). For example, Hailey says: "Now The Cab Driver / accosts Sam: / —*You pay for the taxi now. And clean / up too your skank girl's crap. / Big bruiser. / Jabs at Sam with a thumb. / Who offers immediately / his Leftwrist Twist of Copper which / beyond affront briefly stuns / grunting Brute. So Sam hangs my / Cookie Cup on one pileous knuckle*" (Hailey 99). When dialogue switches to narration, the narrator's position in relation to the events remains the same and is still relayed in a present tense. The same is also true for Sam's side of the narrative as well:

Now The Taxi Driver / approaches. A question / of the fare. And vomit. / All over his cab. / Big fellow. / Hands a fury of hair. / At once I offer, graciously, / my Leftwrist Twist of Sapphire. / But deemed beyond the worth / of his puling breath Derail accepts / gratefully the Bowl and Rag / bows aside then for County / Envoys ancious to Edison me: / —*Dear Sir, how may we assist? . . . My sophistication overwhelming / their demeanors, I step back cordially.* (Sam 99)

In this example Sam strictly speaks in present tense while the focalization switches from Sam and his dialogue to the narration.

This tendency can be observed even after the middle point in the narrative where the reader notices some changes in the materiality and the order of the events in the narrative. For example, on her side Hailey remarks, "And stacks of dishes still go heaving by. / Exploding around Sam. Pitchers too. / Sam just rolls on through the Kitchen / dodging flying blades of razor steel" (Hailey 212). The same course of events that are recorded on Sam's side is as follows: "Assortment of dishes now lofting by. /

Exploding around me. Glasses too. / I roll on through the Kitchen / Just missing flying ropes of salty dough” (Sam 212). It can be seen that the time of narration never really changes as it follows simultaneous narration consistently. Therefore, it might be suggested that the novel presents a narration that is not problematized by its narrating instance at all.

Occasionally, however, some dialogues present a prior or subsequent narration. One of the few examples of prior narrating is as follows: “his Green Eyes with flecks of Gold / relaxing me with gentle kisses. / —*We'll be married soon for sure*” (Hailey 247). Another example of a subsequent narration can be seen in the form of a brief question directed at Hailey on her side of the novel: “Eventually a chill. Patrons dwindle. / Seatings for lunches, dinners, slim. / —*What did you do?* snorts / Viaroronacci. *Yeah you.* / —*Leave her allone, Cabron,* / exiting Bill Beezali rasps” (Sam 201). Although there are references to the past and future in their dialogue, these examples do not present an unusual reading experience as the reader can clearly differentiate between dialogue and narration. Thus, it might be argued that these occurrences do not cause non-linearity in the narration.

As the narrating instance is primarily simultaneous throughout the novel, it does not cause the narrative to be hard to read. Similar to *In the Lake of the Woods*, the novel presents non-linear stories that are challenging in their own ways, yet non-linearity in *Only Revolutions* is caused by the order or the materiality of the novel rather than the narrator’s position in relation to the events. It remains to be said that *Only Revolutions* may present a very erratic and chaotic reading experience, but it is never caused by its time of narration.

3.3.2. Narrative Levels

The first instance where the narrative levels are blurred can be seen before the first page of the story with the novel greeting the reader with the phrase “You were there” two pages after the title page. Elias comments on the phrase that is placed on both sides of the book saying “it not only links *Only Revolutions* to Danielewski's previous novel, *House of Leaves* (which opens with ‘This is not for you’), but also . . . invites the reader to engage with the narrative world” (755). An attempt to make the reader participate in

the narrative, as the novel directly addresses the reader, it is also the first narrative metalepsis as the diegetic blurs the lines between fiction and reality to refer to the reader before the novel even begins.

In the novel, dual narratives do not overtly cause narrative metalepsis within themselves. In each of the stories in the narrative the respective narrators reflect only what they see or think about the diegetic events. However, with historical facts added to the inner margins, the novel becomes a fictional narrative surrounded by parts of the real world. As Felix states, “Apparently emancipated from temporal limits, the eternal return of the story of Hailey and Sam is actually disrupted by the interference of a linear chronology that is juxtaposed to the main text in a narrow column situated along the inner margin of each page . . . It is the thread of world history unraveling alongside the fiction” (195). These facts in the inner margins of the novel are never presumed to be written by Hailey or Sam, and can be interpreted as an attempt to legitimize the diegetic events in the narrative.

However, on page 284 on Hailey’s side of the novel, after the inner margins dated May 29, 2005, the inner margins stop listing historical facts before the story ends. After that point, while the dates are still printed on the inner margins, it is followed by a blank page. The reader only encounters future dates that do not have any historical facts attributed to them after that point, and as Felix argues, “The reader quickly realizes that although the historical record first seems to run along its own separate course, it does not so much root the story in the referential world as weave into the fabric of the fiction the zeitgeist of various moments in world history” (196). As such, the problematization of the narrative levels appear artificial since rather than attempting to project the diegetic onto the real, the structure weaves the two together and shows the artificial nature of it after page 284.

Still, there are two different narrative levels presented to the reader at the same time, one that depicts real events from the real world, albeit not in the exact timeline, and one that depicts the fictional realities of Sam and Hailey. For example, in Hailey’s story which spans from 1967 to 2067, the margins state “Iran-Iraq War over” on 13 June 1988, written on the margins of the time when Sam and Hailey begin to work and are

having problems with their manager Viamimonacci, “—*I'm over you, Cunt.* / Stomping off. / The gentle Viamimonacci. / And shifts follow shifts, / me passing by table & chair” (Hailey 204). The exact dates of these historical facts are not always accurate as each page spans over at least a month. The notes have to be chosen in that timeframe, still they seem to be real and a narrative level above the fictional events. Although the text does not overtly suggest a narrative metalepsis, the printing practices allow for more than one narrative level on the same page but in separate sections, pulling the reader out of the story whenever they read a section of it.

Another problematization of the narrative levels that is caused by the unusual printing practices is that the novel provides perspectives of intradiegetic characters, moving them up a level to be extradiegetic. When reading Hailey’s story, the reader sees Hailey as an extradiegetic narrator who narrates what happens in her life and her relations with other intradiegetic characters like Sam. However, turning the book around to read through Sam’s side of the story, the reader encounters an extradiegetic narrator who recounts what happened with other intradiegetic events and characters such as Hailey. It can be argued that these stories may be sharing the same pages, and yet they are separate stories and are at different narrative levels. Additionally, these sides act as stories that are infinitely a level below their counterpart as they are being told by the intradiegetic character of their own stories. This can be confirmed by any of the repeated events that appear on both sides of the novel. For example, on Hailey’s side of the novel, there is an altercation between Sam and a camper they came across,

—*O no*, Sam reels. / Jumps, turns, hesitates. / Too afraid to actually run. /
 —*Muchos Graaas*, please stop. / —*Not a chance*, screeeaaaaams / The
 Mondo Slam of a Gal, / on a rampage after him. / All around, by jubilant
 laughs, / clear a path. Sam already / wheeling with feer while I happily /
 untangle my hair. I'm the tangle / of every dare. And every care. / Sam
 sprints around the fire. / So fast, he chases her. / To get her he's most afraid.
 / However, due to its unique structure, the reader (Hailey 18).

In this version, Sam, who is an intradiegetic character, is chased around the campfire where Hailey and Sam come across the campers. However, once the reader turns the book and goes exactly to the same page to find Sam’s opinions, they find:

—*Get gone!* Bellowing strong. / But I don’t respond. / And I certainly don’t
 run. / —*Adios Muchacho!* bellowing out. / —*On what charge?* I

courteously ask. / But The Enormous Hurl of a Dude, / rage racked, just charges. / All around stunned, pulling back. / Though my furnaced nay / immediately ends all such frivolity. / Cremates His bravado / and suicidal abandon. / I chase Him around the fire. / My pursuit so fast, He chases me. / Now. Here. He's most afraid. (Sam 18)

In the second iteration of the events the reader catches a glimpse into the mental reconstruction of the events that transpire within a character that should have been an intradiegetic one. After witnessing what Sam thought is happening, the reader sees that he has a much more different outlook on the situation, and reads a narrative that is on the metadiegetic level in Hailey's side of the story, but intradiegetic on Sam's.

Similar to the technique of inner and outer narratives Abrams and Dorst employed in *S.*, *Only Revolutions* does not overtly present narrative metalepsis, but rather creates a problematization of the narrative levels through its unusual printing practices. The reader witnesses multiple narrative levels on the same page on separate sections, placed either on the margins of the narrative or on the side of their counterpart. It can be suggested that this structure is not as effective in making the narrative harder to be immersed in, but it still succeeds in making the reader realize that what they are reading is a novel by presenting many different narrative levels on the same page and making them a part of the narrative. This awareness causes the readers to be more attentive and to participate more in the reading process.

3.3.3. Person

There are two stories in *Only Revolutions* and a reader can change the story they are reading by turning the book upside down. A parallel story to the diegetic events can be found on either side of the novel with Sam and Hailey narrating their own stories. Each narrator is present in their respective stories from the beginning of their sides, Hailey states:

Then impudently a / Moustached / Toother jerks me around. / —*Lost, Little Lemonade?* / —*There aren't no returns for those / with no starts.* / —*Sure. I got weed too. Where / you from?* / —*Around.* —*Wanna get down.'* / *You're all School and Summer.* / —*How 'z that'* / *No class.* / —*Yeah, but it's Spring baby.* / And I just lie down and let him. / And when he goes I go too. (Hailey 5)

In this excerpt, the narrator's involvement in the diegetic events is apparent as she narrates herself in the middle of the events. Additionally, the reader neither finds any instances of Hailey's referring to herself in third-person nor to the story. The same can also be said for Sam's side,

Exciting. / But spinning round to share / suspicions I find some Crone with /
flea lassoing my terrified Pony. / —*Git gone Scalawag*, she'll spit / even if
fourteen teeth split / and crumble / —*Free him now*, I brash. / Ready to burn
Her, turn Her, / blow Her to ash. / But allso amused. / I calmly approach. /
She tightens the ropes / until Horse groans. / Then abruptly / both are gone.
(Sam 5)

Similar to Hailey, Sam is involved in the diegetic events as he responds to the dialogue. Sam never refers to the story or the narrative from the outside, nor does he present information that he has no way of knowing. Elias comments on this narrative situation when he says that the “narrative is told by two autodiegetic narrators who give voice to their own experience of themselves, the world, and the other” (754). As both are narrating their own stories and are the main characters in their respective sides, they employ homodiegetic narrations. Furthermore, as they relay their own stories, the narration can be classified as autodiegetic on both sides of the book.

Double internal focalizations in *Only Revolutions* may cause unreliability because of misleading or inconsistent information. Similarly, having two parallel autodiegetic narrators cause problematizations in the narration. Hailey and Sam can only know their own experiences and can relay them only, thus the reader encounters two narrators who are biased in their interpretation of every diegetic event. For instance, when Sam falls down Hailey helps him get up, which is revealed on Sam's side as “—*Can I offer some assistance?* / she biffles / —*Listen pesky wench, isn't it plain / I'm just trying to relax?* / To which she laughs. / A halfwit. Tragic. / Earnest though / and for an idiot cute. / Graciously I offer my hand / with which slideo blushes / she rushes to grab. / I weigh cliffs. / But I'm glad for her touch” (Sam 38). On Sam's autodiegetic account of the events, there is a person who is not bothered by his falling and who looks down on the helper as someone who is dimwitted. The same event is given on Hailey's side of the novel, “—*Are you deaf too?* he zaps. / *I'm probably paralyzed.* / My snort pulverizes his moxie. / A Doofus. Dolt. / Snappy though and / for a cripple fairly chaud. / I offer my

hand which starnit he / blushingly yanks. / He doesn't weigh much. / But I'm glad for his touch" (Hailey 38). Even though both sides go over the same diegetic event, the interpretations are highly different. The differences range from how much Sam weighs to which words are uttered in their conversation when Hailey attempts to help Sam get up.

A different example to the discrepancies in the narrative text caused by the dual autodiegetic narration can be seen some pages later during an encounter with The Creep. Sam's version of the events is as follows:

Choking. On all fours. I'm afraid but, / quick on my feet, fly smiles / for The Creep, / unclenching those / fists for a shake. My lalapazaza truce: / — *Scandalous Brooksy boy. Thanks / for taking Miss Storm & Strife / off my hands. / —Our pleasure. / —Toss and hike. / —Jive fer sure. / I chuckle hard, wheezing too over / Poor Hailey's state, backslapping / desperate for some way around / The Creep's horror. / —You're pretty fit. / —Fittest. / —Sure, among dog jocks back there, / all barreled, oiled. But hey sport / you're not that robust. Patsy & / dort. Still, so what.*" (Sam 84)

In this version, Sam depicts Hailey in a pitiful state whereas he himself is laughing cruelly and dismissively at the threatening presence of The Creep:

Except Sam arrives, miffed certainly, / if allso turning out smiles, / strut, happily highfiving The Creep, / slapping out some horrid detente: / —*Eat my heart out! Thank yoooouuu / for giving this Chocolate-Bunny / the Poulo Condor. / —My guest. / —Gonna keep her tied up long? / —O yes. / Then jives hard, chuckhuckling at / my expense. Though I'm too held, / moaning allone with slow feers, / to try crying. / —Wow, you're tough. / —Toughest. / —Well maybe among those fools back / there, all dinged out & stewed. But / you're still no athlete. Stopped & / pooped. But that's cool.* (Hailey 84)

In this version, the main details stay the same such as The Creep having Hailey tied down and Sam arriving late, seemingly having taken care of something else, but the dialogue and the tone of the narration is different. Hailey makes herself out to be tougher, withstanding The Creep's advances rather than fighting and thrashing against it as it was relayed in Sam's version. Additionally, the conversations also show quite a bit of change as every line that mirrors what has been said on Sam's side contains different words. This difference is reflected even in the compliment that The Creep gives to Hailey, claiming that she is tough for withstanding rather than fit for fighting back against it as it was relayed in Sam's version. Thus, it can be seen that the dual

autodiegetic narration aids in creating an inconsistent and unreliable narration similar to the problems caused by internal focalizations.

Another point of interest about the narrating person is the historical facts and somewhat random quotes that can be found on the margins of the narrative. It is true that the narrative presents two different voices and persons in both Sam and Hailey's sides of the novel, there is an ever-present outer section throughout the narration regardless of which side the reader is on. According to Elias, these outer facts were chosen by the fans as Danielewski "solicit[ed] fans online for favorite historical facts to be used in the novel" (753). The notes in the margins may suggest an authorial voice that does not interfere with the narrative or the dual stories, but rather supports them with historical facts from the margins leading up to the date the novel was published. In the final analysis, the addition of these facts by an authorial narrating person does not cause a more challenging reading experience.

To conclude, it can be said that the experimental and unusual printing practices and narrative choices in *Only Revolutions* do not directly cause a narrative that is difficult to read. The non-linearity of the narrative is not the outcome of the narrator's position in comparison to the diegetic events. Additionally, the duality in the narration, and the resulting multiple parallel stories as well as the authorial voice in the margins adding historical facts into the narrative cause the narrative to present problematized narrative levels. Nevertheless, it does not create an unreliable narrative as efficiently as a narrative that overtly causes narrative metalepsis. Furthermore, although the presence of multiple narrating persons can cause problematized narrative focalizations as seen in the mood of narrative, it does not directly aid in making the narrative a hard one to read. Thus, it can be argued that the narrative choices in the voice of narration brings about qualities that indirectly create a challenging reading experience, but these qualities do not present cyclicity by themselves.

3.4. STUDY OF NARRATIVE TEXT IN *ONLY REVOLUTIONS*

Only Revolutions presents a heightened awareness of materiality through its printing and page layout. One of the consequences of this is that the readers are given many possible choices to read the novel, allowing them to personalize their reading experiences. The reader makes a choice the moment they pick up the book as whichever side they may decide to open it will seem to be the correct side. If the reader opens the book from the side with the cover that shows a green eye, they will start reading Sam's side of the novel while the side with a golden eye will be that of Hailey. What's more, both sides have the same introduction by Mark Danielewski either on the back of the cover or on the back of the dust jacket, depending on the publisher (see fig. 8).



Fig. 8. Danielewski, Mark. *Only Revolutions*. (Pantheon Books, 2006), back of the cover page.

Felix comments that

Even a reader with the experience of non-traditional, experimental writing can be doubly bothered, first by the “instructions for use” provided by the publisher—was the indication necessary?—, and second by the serious question of where to begin and how to read. The typography, the chromography, and the circular design contribute to the mesmerizing effect of the text. It may take a while before you can actually manage to read *Only Revolutions*. (198)

As both sides of the novel have been designed to seem like the correct orientation, the reader can assume that whichever cover they flip is the correct beginning of the novel. This structure may also make the readers feel lost as there is no real indicator of the correct side to read.

Another choice presented to the reader is how to read the outer side of the novel. Throughout the novel, there are historical facts and quotes presented to the reader, that are preceded by their approximate date (see fig. 9).

be read ‘combinatorially,’ that it too can consist of a finite series of elements that can be rearranged in a potentially infinite number of ways” (192). After deciding from where to begin reading, readers will have to choose whether to read the margins or the inner text first, or swapping between them. The variations that this structure presents makes reading experiences unique to each reader as their order of reading will vary. These variations demand reader participation as they need to try and decide on an order that fits them best.

In addition to the double narratives, there are instances of prompts about when the reader has to rotate the novel. The first and the clearest of these examples can be seen right after the cover page on both sides of the novel where the publisher suggests “alternating between Hailey & Sam, reading eight pages at a time” (see fig. 10).

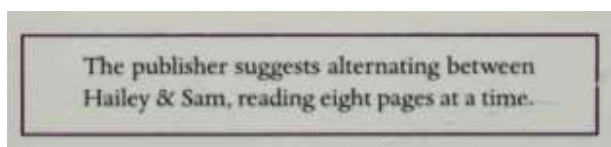


Fig. 10. Danielewski, Mark. *Only Revolutions*. (Pantheon Books, 2006) p. back of the cover page (H).

The significance of these eight-page sections is also reflected in the novel as “[e]ach seventy-two-page main part contains nine eight-page sections. Each eight-page sequence begins with an initial printed in bigger, bold type. Once combined, the initials form a sentence that reads ‘HaileyAndSamAndHaileyAndSam’ etc., in a continuous ribbon, a Möbius strip that guides the text’s unfolding” (194). The choice adds another order of reading the narrative as the reader can choose between reading one side over reading the other first or choose to read both of the stories, switching sides at every eight pages.

The narrative has other ways of making the reader switch sides while reading. Regardless of whichever side the reader may choose to read, that side will constantly get smaller as the story progresses (see fig. 11).

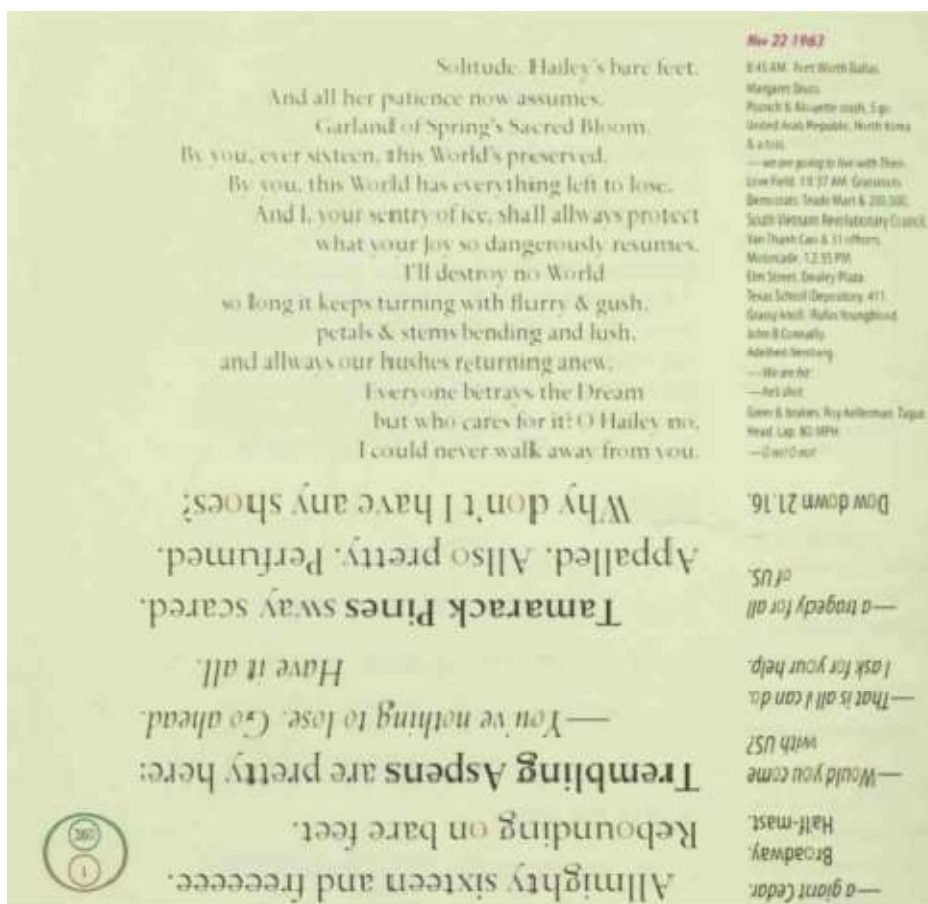


Fig. 11. Danielewski, Mark. *Only Revolutions*. (Pantheon Books, 2006) p. 360 (S).

The text that is oriented to be legible covers most of the page while the secondary text takes much less space at the bottom of the page to the point of almost seeming like unnecessary clutter. However, towards the middle point in the narrative where both Sam and Hailey's stories converge, whichever side the reader may choose to start reading begins to become smaller while the alternative story begins to take up more space reaching to an even space distribution in the middle of the novel. The narrative, then, switches its focus from the primary story to the secondary and the secondary story starts to expand to the point where primary text looks more like scribbles on the top of the page rather than the main storyline. Playing with the font size indicates that there is another important story that has to be read at the bottom of the page after 180 pages, presenting another potential route to reading the novel as the reader is now presented another way of rotating the novel after 180 pages rather than every eight pages.

These clues that suggest a rotation of the novel cause the reader to participate in the reading process physically. Rather than attempting to solve a mystery or understand cryptic words in the novel, physical participation is necessary as turning the novel upside down. Compared to a more traditional narrative where the intended message is hidden behind the recurring sign that is to be interpreted by the reader, cybertexts like *Only Revolutions* require physical performance from the reader to be able to attain information while reading. According to Elias, “Reviewers and fans have usefully aligned the novel . . . with ergotic literature and visual writing, as well as with free-verse poetic form” (752). The ergodicity in the novel is thus caused by the printing practices which ask the reader to make choices in the reading process and physically participate in the execution of such decisions which eventually creates a unique reading experience.

There are further unusual printing practices throughout the novel that draws the reader’s attention. One of the more prominent examples of this is that, on both covers there is the image of an eye that changes its color depending on Hailey’s or Sam’s side, represented by gold and green colors respectively. The changing colors can be seen through to the main body of text through the use of the letter “O.” Every time it is used it is printed in a color in line with the side the reader is on. This becomes most apparent when the reader approaches the middle of the narrative from either side as they change the focus from one to another (see fig. 12).

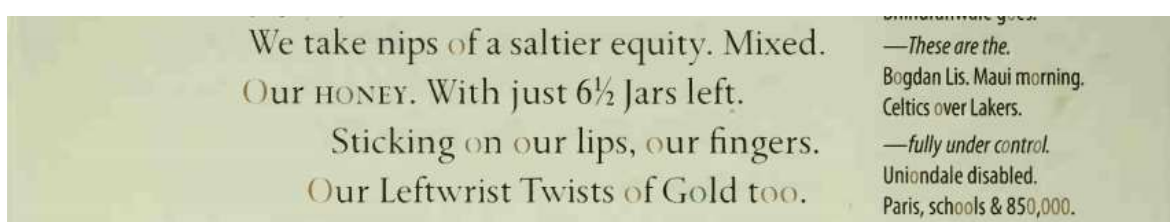


Fig. 12. Danielewski, Mark. *Only Revolutions*. (Pantheon Books, 2006).

The distinction made between green and gold to represents Sam and Hailey is not only limited to the font colors. Page numbers are also placed within circles in gold on Hailey’s side and green on Sam’s (see fig. 9). These circles can also be seen rotating as the story progresses, and as Elias also notes “if one flips the pages of the book from end

to beginning while observing the page circles, the two circles within the larger circle seem to move, rotating around one another. In addition, on the book's inside flyleaves are meticulously sketched hieroglyphs or mandalas connoting the central textual image of Sam's and Hailey's eyes" (756). Thus, on the pages around the middle point of the narrative, the reader notices both green and golden letters in the text and circles that surround the page numbers rotating counter-clockwise. These are used to represent the convergence of both stories and the switching of focus, drawing interest towards the unusual and seemingly changing colors that have been dominant on the side that the reader had chosen to read.

There are other similar examples that draw the reader's attention in the novel. The first of these can be observed whenever The Creep, a recurring character that mostly appears to assault the couple, appears in the narrative. In each of The Creep's four appearances, their name is written in a shade of purple and in capital letters while the rest of the text is on the standard font with a black color (see fig. 11).

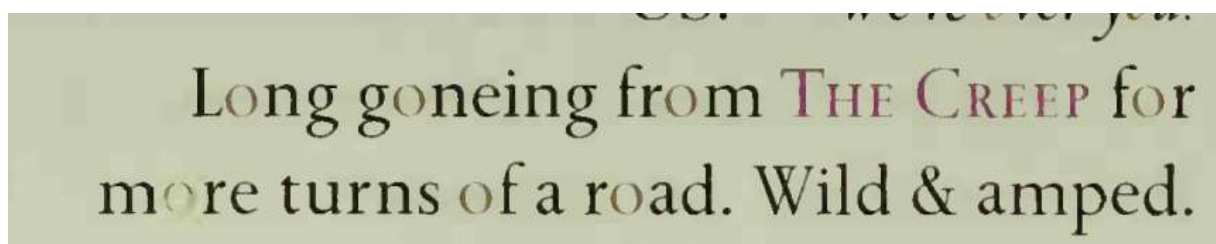


Fig. 13. Danielewski, Mark. *Only Revolutions*. (Pantheon Books, 2006) p. 280 (H).

Throughout the narrative, whenever the word “creep” appears, it is written in the same color. Another example of the change of styles that attracts attention are the plant and animal names that are written in bold characters on Hailey and Sam's sides (see fig. 12).

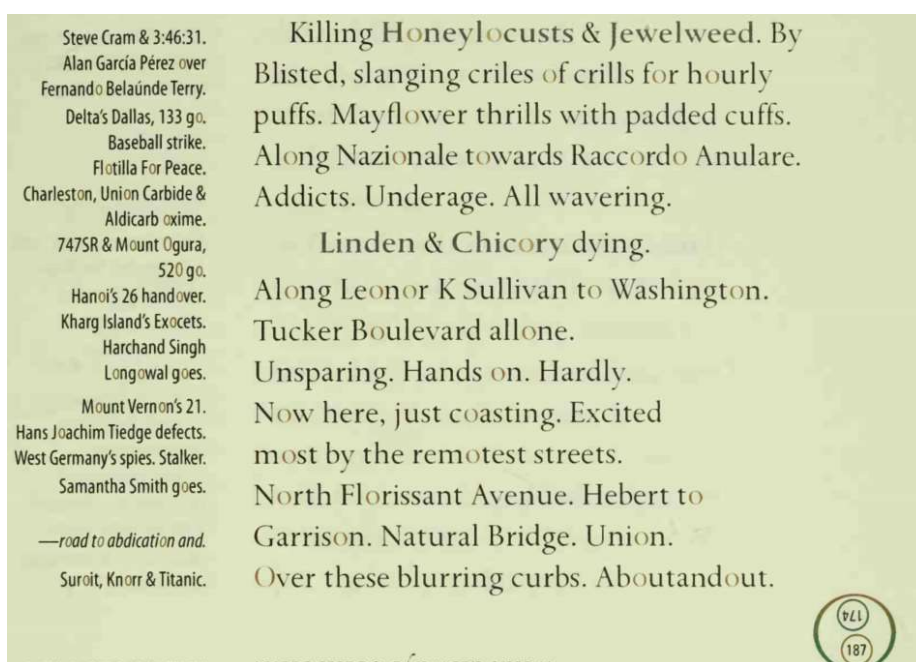


Fig. 14. Danielewski, Mark. *Only Revolutions*. (Pantheon Books, 2006) p. 187 (H).

These animal and plant names also represent another form of change as their use becomes increasingly associated with death. Pöhlmann suggests, “The bold type in which are set the names of plants exclusively associated with Hailey and animals exclusively associated with Sam actually fades out. Moreover, from the middle of the book onwards, these living things are only mentioned in connection with verbs synonymous with dying” (65). A design choice such as this is thus used to draw the attention of the reader and represent the ever-present change in the words that are printed differently.

Additional design choices regarding the text can be seen in the form of deliberate typos made throughout the novel. “—My violence? / —I feer you Feering me. . . . —Let’S just do it all at once. . . . allready going out. / —Yes? —O. —Again? / —O. Yes. — Now. -Whenever we roam he beside me. / When you 're allone. When you go. . . . Wander, Encounter and Open / allways curl up with me. / Give me Pain, Past and Fury” (Hailey 183). As it can be seen from the excerpt, the novel makes deliberate mistakes with punctuation and capitalization. In sum, the textual design choices in the narrative of *Only Revolutions* present many different font styles, colors, misspellings, and

punctuation errors that make the reader pay more attention to the specific words that are highlighted or misspelled increasing their participation in the reading process.

To conclude, *Only Revolutions* presents an extremely unusual materiality integrated into its narrative that forces the reader to make choices and physically follow through them. From the moment the reader picks up the book they are presented with a choice that will be the first of many in their reading process as they are presented many different choices that will shape their own unique reading experiences. However, all of these reading experiences, no matter what order they may take, lead the reader to physically participate in the reading process. Throughout the novel readers are expected to turn the novel, at whichever interval they may choose. Additionally, they come across an overwhelming number of misspellings, different font colors, and unusual capitalizations from the moment they open the book which draw their attention to unconventional practices in their search of patterns and hidden meanings in an obscure narrative. Prompting increased reader participation in the interpretation, *Only Revolutions* creates a reading experience that makes the reader both physically and mentally more active in reading and understanding the narrative.

CONCLUSION

Many signature qualities of postmodernist literature can still be observed in recent American fiction. As a literary movement that has been defined as anti-authoritarian and experimentalist, postmodern fiction has such elements as irony, metafiction, eclecticism, inter-textuality, fragmentation, pastiche, which are also traits that create reading experiences that require increased forms of reader participation in interpreting and understanding the narrative. Narratives that require an increased participation from the reader and present explorable stories have been the subject of much scholarly discussion and are studied under the categories of readerly, rhizomatic, ergodic, interactive, indeterminate texts. Exploration of a narrative can be the result of various qualities in the narrative such as gaps in the story, erratic order and the problematization of time, unreliable narration, and experimentation with printing practices. The novels *In the Lake of the Woods* by Tim O'Brien, *S.* by Jeffrey Jacob Abrams and Doug Dorst, and *Only Revolutions* by Mark Danielewski all attempt to create novels that experiment with the narrative and create stories that prompt the reader to explore the narrative while also presenting varying levels of experimental printing.

This thesis has aimed to analyze the various narrative aspects that make these novels be read more than once. While analyzing those aspects in the three novels that display postmodernist tendencies and more recent forms of experimentality such as unusual prints and playing with the material reality of the novel, this study refers to the four categories, namely Order, Duration, Time and Voice, explained by Gerard Genette in *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* in which he focuses on the ways these aspects can be warped, eventually causing a more difficult reading experience. Through analyzing the ways in which the novels create variations in interpretation, possibilities in exploration, and indeterminacies that allow for reader participation, this thesis attempts to show that these three novels create a cyclical reading experience in which the reader joins in the process of making meaning and explores the missing details.

In the first chapter of the study, Tim O'Brien's *In the Lake of the Woods* has been studied through the scope explained above. The novel appears to be the most traditional

work from among the three analyzed in this study. Despite the fact that the printing styles and practices are not unusual, the novel still achieves to create an interactive reading experience. Experimenting with the well-established form of a crime novel, O'Brien presents a novel that problematizes the tense of narrative by weaving in many different timeframes together and switching between them at a moment's notice. Since the mystery is never revealed and the themes of traumatic memory are present in the novel, the reader is exposed to a narrative that showcases a problematized order, abrupt changes in the rhythm, and an unreliable narrator who tends to narrate information that they should not know about. The novel leaves it up to the reader to figure out what might have happened to Kathy and solve the mystery by themselves. As the novel has such a problematized narration and requires increased reader participation, there are many interpretive possibilities. As a result, *In the Lake of the Woods* has a narrative that is meant to be re-read, creating a cyclical reading experience through a more traditional novel format.

In the second chapter, J.J. Abrams and Doug Dorst's *S.* has been studied within the scope explained above. In comparison to *In the Lake of the Woods*, *S.* can be seen to present a much more unusual layout of text and print as the main body of text is surrounded by an outer novel. The utilization of two parallel stories, one being a narrative level higher than the other, results in two separate stories to be studied and, as the outer novel is disjunctive within itself as well, the reader is to decide how they would want to read the novel. This sea of text consisting of an abrupt, disjunctive, metafictional, unreliable, and ergodic outer novel contrasting with a modern, linear, straightforward inner novel that presents abrupt changes in the rhythm provides a reading experience in which the reader finds themselves lost frequently. Because of the separation between the inner and the outer novels the reader is also provided a choice to decide on an order of reading that personalizes their reading experience, making their interpretation unique to themselves. The challenge of navigating through the text and the potential to explore other choices creates a reading experience that necessitates to be re-read and explored.

The third chapter that has been studied is *Only Revolutions* by Mark Danielewski. Written in a much more problematized novel format, *Only Revolutions*' narrative presents a choice to the reader the moment they pick up the book as whichever side they read will seem the correct side. As there are two parallel stories printed with a 180-degree rotation that converge on page 180 the reader is to retrace their steps, going back through the diegetic events to re-read them with some noticeable differences. Through occasionally prompting the reader to rotate the novel and check the other side, and its many unusual printing choices such as font colors, capitalizations, and visual mirroring present in the novel, the book highly problematizes its materiality. In order to read through the novel, the reader has to decide the order in which they want to read it, how often they want to rotate it, and how to approach the historical facts in the margins of the narrative. However, while being a novel that requires the highest amount of physical participation and ergodicity, *Only Revolutions* presents a narrative that does not problematize other aspects that require figural participation compared to the other novels studied in the thesis. All in all, *Only Revolutions* creates a reading experience in which the reader has to physically participate in by rotating the novel to navigate through and explore the story, which makes the reader read through similar diegetic events that are relayed through a parallax a total of four times. This quality indicates that the novel is meant to be re-read with the readers reading the diegetic events multiple times.

In the final analysis it can be said that all of the novels studied in this thesis present cyclical reading experiences through their unique styles and utilizations of aspects attributed to their genres. By studying these novels that display the characteristics associated with postmodernist literature, and that reveal a varied awareness of their materiality, this study has aimed to show a spectrum of novels from a more traditional to a more experimental printing style. It has been observed that these narratives present stories that are to be read more than once by making the reading experience more challenging, by providing choices to the reader and leading them to explore the text, and by allowing them to create unique interpretations through indeterminate and unreliable narrations.

NOTES

¹It can be seen that retrospective novels such as autobiographies or novels that depict any type of historical event would contain distortions like “analepsis” while prophetic narrating instances where the narrative talks about what could or will happen in the future, as containing “prolepsis” (Genette 40).

²This type of focalization has been “popularized . . . by Dashiell Hammett's novels, in which the hero performs in front of us without our ever being allowed to know his thoughts or feelings, and also by some of Hemingway's novellas, like ‘The Killers’ or, even more, ‘Hills Like White Elephants,’ which carries circumspection so far as to become a riddle” (Genette 190).

³The terms inner and outer novel have been popularized by the fans of the novel (Regier 161).

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