Deconstruction of Narrative Realities: Memory *in The Sense of an Ending* and *House of Leaves*

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ABSTRACT:

House of Leaves (2000) by Mark Z. Danielewski and The Sense of an Ending (2011) by Julian Barnes challenge the structure of the traditional narrative and go deeply into a complicated realm of memory. This results in the deconstruction of the understood actualities manifesting a complex overlap between memory, narration, and the construction of realities within the narratives. The problem being addressed is how the complexity of memory subverts conventional structures and ideas of reality. This will help to illustrate the different forms in which narratives are shaped by memory. Thus, the present study examines how complex the narrative realities through analyzing memories in these two novels. However, the study contrasts narrative techniques, characters' memories, and the theme of frequent memories in these two novels. This concludes that memory serves as a transforming power in creating narratives.

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Introduction:

While exploring Julian Barnes's The Sense of an Ending and Mark Z. Danielewski's House of Leaves it might not initially seem related in text, their close examination reveals that both are inexorably linked by the presence of memories conflicting with the present. When combined with the innovation seen within

Danielewski's novel, the unique deconstruction of the narrative in the text reverberates with a different kind of time-warping resonance. These memories, structure, style, and overall narrative in each text critically challenge traditional conception. The combination of memories with narrative techniques provides a way to interpret both texts - and their impact on experience. Accordingly, Memory is a powerful and dynamic force that plays a significant role in shaping one's understanding of the past. It reconstructs past events using one's knowledge, beliefs, and emotions, influencing narratives about humanity and the world. This process can lead to a reconsideration of previously held truths, such as a person's traumatic experience, and create new connections between events. However, while memory's transformative power can lead to new insights and understandings, it can also have negative consequences by distorting or fabricating events and leading to decisions based on incorrect information. Ultimately, memory can be both a positive and negative force, allowing one to learn from his/her mistakes and create a more meaningful narrative. The relationship between narrative and memory has only gained attention in the last few decades. Though psychoanalysis has been associated with intense narrative attention, its relationship to memory was largely under-investigated until very recently. With advancements in technology, cognitive science offered a new light on this ambiguous point, thereby further holding invaluable keys to solve questions that all human disciplines had both dismissed as inexplicable and unnecessary. It is interesting to discover how contemporary literature approaches this highly relevant perspective of importance for literary, philosophical, psychological, and sociological studies from a literary perspective (Mar et al., 2021).

1. Discussion

1.1. Memory as a Deconstructive Technique in The Sense of an Ending

The Sense of an Ending is a concise narrative that prompts Tony, a narrator of sixty years, to reassess his life and self-identity. The story commences with a group of companions engaged in various discussions; however, Tony's recollections are patchy and incomplete. Subsequently, he attends Bristol University, where he encounters Veronica, who becomes involved with Adrian, his closest friend. Tony initially views Veronica as manipulative and self-centered, but later learns of Adrian's suicide. Despite Tony's semblance of a well-ordered life, with few unresolved mysteries from his past, he is compelled to reexamine events involving individuals he was once connected to, upon discovering that his former college girlfriend's deceased mother bequeathed him £500 and two documents. The paradoxical unreliability of Tony as a narrator is a central theme of the novel, as it delves into the notion of imperfect memory and its relevance to the present. The narrative revolves around Tony, a young man in the 1960s, during a period of significant cultural upheaval that included the fall of the Berlin Wall. The novel deals with the main character's attempt to learn how to overcome not very pleasant behavioral/even moral characteristics, and changes in the society during the period of the setting, as well as reflects upon the nature of memory as well as the idea of identity. Tony's worries and musings in the story underline how memory distorts people's perception of themselves and the world. The first-person narration allows Barnes to describe personal memories and cross-section the processes of recalling the past, which cannot be linear and objective but shapes our understanding of the events and reality.

Analyzing how Barnes employs the first-person narrator who fictionalizes the circumstances of his friend's suicide and gets Tony's diary shows the readers in what way defensive operations shape personal interactions and life administration. According to Freud's theory, one can presume that distortion may result from the occurrence of some psychological processes originating from the unconscious and coming to consciousness, in form of events (McLeod, 2018). In the 1990s, false memory syndrome was discovered whereby people remember incidents that never occurred in their childhood, especially abuses, and this shows

why memory and defense mechanism of the people within a story are crucial to understanding. Barnes and Danielewski both employ unique narrative structures to explore memory, perception, and truth in their works.

Moreover, Barnes delves into the conflict between narrative traditions and the protagonist's endeavor to reconstruct the series of occurrences that preceded the suicide of his childhood friend Adrian. In addition, Diachronic narratives offer a coherent sequence to follow a character's development over time, while synchronic stories propose a reliable theory regarding the nature of humans or the course of history that aims to forecast future outcomes (Kulvete, 2014, p.6). Tony Webster is caught in the conflict between these two narrative modes as he attempts to verify individual events in his life as true while also striving to develop a cohesive discussion about broader life themes.

Tony remembers various memories that no longer follow a chronological order, but he tries to piece together the gaps by organizing what he can remember in a linear timeline. This arrangement helps address the question of "what happened?" which White argues is the central element of a closed plot. Tony constructs stories using processional or diachronic approaches, using dependable memories as key events in the sequence of the narrative:

> I'm not very interested in my school days, and I don't feel any nostalgia for
>
> them. But school is where it all began, so I need to return briefly to a few
>
> incidents that have turned into anecdotes, to some approximate memories that
>
> time has deformed into certainty. (p.4)

Tony uses all two narrative modes, each with its own specific objective. The key aspect to consider is the influence or intention that each narrative mode has on Tony's life and the lives of others. Tony's narrative commences with a catalog of six vivid recollections and the assertion that time "holds and molds us." The terms "hold" and "mould" suggest a contained or closed, diachronic procession, while the metaphor of the "mould" implies a structural pattern for how time impacts individuals. This paradox enables the reader to explore the tensions between White's chronological, structural, and impressionistic narrative theories.

The phrase "where it all began" used by Tony indicates a clear starting point for the story, but it also denotes a deeper structural significance. Barnes' novel reveals the complexity of distinguishing between these distinct storytelling methods. Tony acknowledges the conflicting nature of these narrative approaches and the inherent paradoxes they entail. He frequently presents thematic observations about youth, old age, and women, strategically separating them into paragraphs with an additional line break.

Another instance of the conflict between diachronic and synchronic can be seen in Tony's recollections of his time in the classroom, particularly the idea of a "chain of individual responsibilities" that occurs after the assassination of Franz Ferdinand. The metaphor of a "chain" suggests a sequence of events, aligning with White's diachronic narrative framework. However, the notion of a "chain of responsibilities" is paradoxically both diachronic and synchronic, blurring the distinction between diachronic and synchronic.

Adrian Finn, a youthful character in the novel, examines the unstable nature of narrative modes within the novel. He challenges the quest for precise origins and assigns accountability

to individuals or historical processes for their actions. Adrian contends that assigning blame aligns with the diachronic, processional narrative paradigm, which necessitates a confirmed event or plot point. On the other hand, Tony's peers invoke White's impressionistic narrative, suggesting that blame may not exist, but rather chaotic disorder. Colin, another acquaintance, asserts that humans impose order on the world, blending processional and structural perspectives. The novel delves into the intricacies of narrative modes and their impact on human behavior (Kulvete, p.9).

The main character, Tony Webster, grapples with the lack of reliability in memory as he looks back on his past and tries to comprehend a series of events that have haunted him for many years. Barnes uses a fragmented and non-linear narrative structure to mirror Tony's own muddled memories and flawed perceptions. The narrative is divided into two parts: one focused on Tony's early life and another on early adulthood as he endeavors to unravel the mysteries of his past. The fragmented structure allows Barnes to play with the order of events, presenting them in a non-sequential manner and leaving the readers to interpret and fill in the gaps. This reflects Tony's struggle to reconstruct his memories and grasp the truth of what actually transpired in the past.

While discussing the events in The Sense of an Ending, they refer to the events in the story as well as to historical events. In one of the key passages, the protagonist labels cosmology as a straightforward subject where scientific ideas are debated through simulations and on paper, but describes the concept of history as much more demanding and complex. It is a fact that memory is the primary player and at the same time a convenient liar that transforms history into an endless script rewritten daily in our heads, to correspond to momentary opinions. The story strives to deconstruct and analyze the memories of the protagonist. Frequently, numerous events are mentioned, but as it is revealed near the end, it is obvious that the protagonist has developed a particular way of distorting his own attitudes and the attitudes of others (Wei, 2023).

1.2 Memory as a Deconstructive Technique in Mark Z. Danielewski's: House of Leaves

Mark Z. Danielewski's literary style can be identified with the extraordinary metafictional innovation, technically adding visually exhilarating typographic experimentation to the plot and vying with the conventional narrative. He used fragments of dicographic and holographic post-modern metafictional texts to develop a series of recurring characters, original plots, multiple collective interconnected dimensions, and provocative visual-syntactic hybrid novel representations. His definition of the novel can be drawn accordingly: topographic, wetwork, and the currency of the novel. Overall, Danielewski's extraordinary art and widely recognized poetic institutions in his work's challenging forms found various influences. The use of various textual products has been influential in his feature-rich thesis in language issues. (Joemon, 2023).

In House of Leaves, the protagonist is an unreliable narrator. The story of Johnny and his mother relies upon Johnny's recollection of events. His nature of living day by day and obsession with physical satisfaction contribute to the unreliability of the narrator. During the story, it becomes apparent that Johnny has an absolute disregard for the attitudes of others. Relations are either manipulative or abandoned when social needs are satiated. Reminiscing about these days seems to suggest an altered version of life than the version that other participants in his life might have. The question of questioning memory is transferred to the

son's relations with the deceased, or the "monster," which ultimately influenced the very marriage of his parents and ultimately the son's destiny (Wall, 2022).

The novel House of Leaves opens with the tale of Johnny Truant, a resident of Los Angeles who works at a tattoo parlor. He is portrayed as a regular at bars, unapologetically involved in drugs, and leading a promiscuous lifestyle. In search of a new place to live, a friend informs him about an available apartment in his building previously inhabited by an elderly blind man named Zampano, who has since passed away. Upon moving in, Truant discovers texts and notes referred to as the Navidson Record, composed by Zampano. These writings consist of notes, transcripts, and other details regarding a documentary film of the same name directed by Will Navidson. Despite his efforts, Truant is unable to locate any concrete proof of the documentary's existence or that of its characters. The manuscript details Zampano's account of the documentary, primarily centered around the Navidson family (Demaree, 2020).

House of Leaves examines the blending of fact and fiction through various of narrative methods. By deconstructing its unreliable narration and engaging in multiple remediation activities, the novel's narrative hierarchy is revealed, highlighting the subjectivity of the reader-text relationship. Furthermore, the novel delves into traumatic memory, a type of memory that forms in response to highly stressful, life-threatening, or overwhelming events such as natural disasters, violence, abuse, or neglect, and the process of overcoming them. It does so by manipulating traditional literary forms and creating new ones through parody, pastiche, and a mix of established tropes and techniques.

Danielewski's work avoids the restrictions of conventional portrayals and techniques like flashbacks and exposition, instead utilizing unconventional narrative structure, internal contradiction, self-reflection, paratext, intertextuality, multimedia critical analysis, and concrete typographical arrangements. These experimental methods aim to recreate the dislocation of traumatic memory and materialize the disorienting experience of trauma. The text's "networked" structure contributes significantly to this disorientation, generating a similar sense of confusion as hypertext fiction presented in a printed format.

According to McCaffery and Gregory (2003), memory is a process of interpretation and reduction that compresses information rather than providing direct access to it. Danielewski's words seem to justify Truant's actions, as Truant's flawed interpretation represents the fallibility of human memory. Danielewski highlights the significance of the reader's interpretive role (p.121).

In House of Leaves, the complex and interwoven story uses multiple perspectives, documents, notes, and extra materials to create a confusing and detailed reading experience. The book follows a family who discovers their home is bigger on the inside than the outside, leading them to uncover dark secrets within. Danielewski uses different narrators, conflicting documents, and complicated notes to challenge the reader's understanding of reality and fiction. This creates a disorienting and unsettling feeling as the accuracy of the information is called into question. Additionally, the deconstruction of the story's structure shows that House of Leaves is structured through four layers of storytelling.

The first layer is a documentary film produced by Will Navidson, focusing on the Navidson family's new life in Virginia. The second layer is an elderly man named Zampanò who dedicates his life to analyzing The Navidson Record. The third layer involves Johnny Truant, a tattoo shop assistant, who edits Zampanò's writings and provides his own commentary. The

fourth layer consists of annotations from "The Editors," who provide insights on both Johnny's and Zampanò's texts. The narrative layers intersect and are accompanied by supplementary materials in appendices, such as poems, letters, collages, polaroids, interviews, and film scripts. In the "Introduction" of the book, Truant discovers the secret of Zampanò: he is "blind as a bat." This raises interpretive inquiries about how a blind man can describe something he has never seen, making him an implausible or unnatural narrator:

> Zampanò's entire project is about a film which doesn't even exist. You can look, I have, but no matter how long you search you will never find The Navidson Record in theaters or video stores. Furthermore, most of what's said by famous people has been made up. I tried contacting all of them. Those that took the time to respond told me they had never heard of Will Navidson let alone Zampanò. (Pramérez, p.13)

The fervent scholarly interest of Danielewski's father and the unattainable role of Zampanò as a commentator are linked. Johnny Truant acknowledges that the true existence of the house is not as important as the impact of the plot on the reader, nonetheless of its origin. Truant's unreliable interpretation presents a challenge to the idea of narration, creating difficulty in establishing a reliable hierarchy of storytellers or trusting in embedded narratives:

> Let us say there is no sacred text here. That notion of authenticity or originality is constantly refuted. The novel doesn't allow the reader to ever say, "Oh, I see: this is the authentic, original text, exactly how it looked, what it always had to say." [. . .] Pretty soon you begin to notice that at every level in the novel some act of interpretation is going on. (McCaffery and Gregory, p.121)

The similarity between these words and the novel House of Leaves is in their focus on interpretation. Danielewski suggests that remembering past events involves interpreting them, and that this interpretation is what keeps us connected to those events.

2- Narrative Techniques and Memory

Both The Sense of an Ending by Julian Barnes and House of Leaves utilize complex narrative techniques to delve into the impact of memory on the structure of the plot. In The Sense of an Ending, the main character, Tony Webster, struggles with his memories and their influence on his self-perception The book delves into Tony's thoughts and memories of a particular incident during his school days involving his friends and a new student named Adrian. Now, during the recall of this event, Tony starts to understand that his assumptions might have been slightly off and the measures he took contributed to the emergence of consequences worse than the ones he expected. They just stay with Tony as he grows older and complicates his perception of reality along with the guilt and regret that he feels. One of the major themes of the novel is the problematic issue of how memory functions, where people's distorted perception of events that occur in one's life might lead to doubt in oneself and the actions taken.

Still, in the given novel by Danielewski, people undergo memories rather in a particular way. It is possible to state that this work is realized in the form of the multi-layered narrative with the complicated structure and based on the true story that contains as many fictions. As the characters explore an enigmatic house that defies logic and spatial dimensions, they are forced to confront their memories and perspectives in increasingly bizarre ways. The characters' recollections in House of Leaves influence their understanding of reality by challenging their comprehension of space, time, and existence. The disjointed nature of memory in the novel mirrors the fragmented structure of the story itself, causing a feeling of confusion for both characters and readers.

The lack of a reliable narrator has seen Barnes' The Sense of an Ending placed in that category of mysteries where the reader is left to pick up the pieces and construct possible explanations based on the hints that are left behind. The dominating air of ambiguity and distrust leaves the reader unwilling to compromise, feeling that there is some deeper illegibility lurking somewhere - the meaning is there for the taking, but rather than placing the reader into a position of a voyeur, the depiction of history is presented as a part of the process of reconstructing the past in fictional works.

The greater number of points destroyed and dismantled in fiction, the better we come to notice the act of the past itself getting written, and the authors here make use of the reader's eventual conclusions, reflecting the dissatisfaction with the voice that tells instead of the event symbolizing as well as carrying the uncertain significance of the past. For while the events, memories, and words in and of themselves tell a story and carry original meaning, it is through representations and narratives that we envisage these considerations and in that is sown decisive grounds for questioning and contestation. For if we understand all those history writings to construct narratives out of events, then how they have written these narratives is equally crucial because it is via this construction that we engage past events and additionally, how we are subsequently authorized or dismissed and how we contribute to the unforeseen consequences of these narratives.

The deployment of memory in these novels is a focal concern, where not only the stories told are a factor but the mechanisms themselves through which we remember and how our experience of memory aids or hinders this process are of equal or greater importance. Indeed, House of Leaves caters for the essential gaps in the narrative and captures something substantial without the need for traditional representation.

Conclusion

Memory is simultaneously crucial and suspect in both novels. In House of Leaves, unreliable memories from the descent into the darkness, as the house contains more than the empty space that appears to be enclosed. In The Sense of an Ending, memory unearths the reasons for the guilt and the tragedy that is caused. In both cases, memory is both essential and irrelevant; essential in that it is the key to truth and irrelevant because it does not change anything but gives an understanding.

In The Sense of an Ending (2011) by Julian Barnes and House of Leaves (2000) by Mark Z. Danielewski, the authors explore alternative deconstructions of narrative and describe how characters not only come to understand that their memories of events may be false, but they may have been suppressed to the extent that they are forgotten. In finding the truth, characters must actively search to recover these memories and, through talking to others who experienced

the same event, piece together a collective narrative that provides an answer to a greater question.

in House of Leaves, it is what is the nature of the darkness that surrounds them, and in The Sense of an Ending, what part a character played in the tragedy of another's life. The analysis of memory in The Sense of an Ending and House of Leaves demonstrates that memory disrupts traditional narrative structures and encourages readers to question the truth and flexibility of memory in storytelling. Memory challenges conventional narrative frameworks, encourages readers to reconsider the truth in storytelling, and prompts characters to reevaluate their own realities and truths.

These novels emphasize the intricate connection between memory, storytelling, and the formation of truth, showing how memory can unexpectedly shape narratives. Comparing these two works provides insight into the complicated relationship between memory and narrative construction. Ultimately, both novels examine the impact of memories on our understanding of reality and behavior. While The Sense of an Ending emphasizes personal contemplation and self-examination, House of Leaves delves into the surreal.

تفكيك الحقائق السردية: الذاكرة في 'إحساس بالنهاية' و 'بيت الأوراق'

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ملخص البحث:

رواية "إحساس بالنهاية" (2011) لجوليان بارنز و"بيت الأوراق" (2000) لمارك دانليفسكي تتحديان هيكل السرد التقليدي وتغوصان بعمق في مجال معقد للذاكرة. مما يؤدي إلى تفكيك الحقائق المفهومة، مظهرة تداخلاً معقدًا بين الذاكرة والسرد وبناء الحقائق داخل الروايات. ومع ذلك، تبحث الدراسة الحالية في كيفية تعقيد الحقائق السردية من خلال تحليل الذكريات في هاتين الروايتين. تتمثل المشكلة التي تعالج في كيفية تقويض تعقيد الذاكرة للهياكل والأفكار التقليدية للواقع. يهدف الغرض من الدراسة الحالية إلى توضيح الرابط الغامض بين الذاكرة والسرد وبناء الحقيقة من خلال دراسة التباين بين هاتين الروايتين. سيساعد ذلك في توضيح الأشكال المختلفة التي تتشكل بها السرديات بواسطة الذاكرة. ومع ذلك، فإن الدراسة تتناول مقارنة التقنيات السردية ودراسة ذكريات الشخصيات وموضوع الذكريات المتكررة في هاتين الروايتين. سيؤدي ذلك إلى استنتاج أن الذاكرة تعمل كقوة تحويلية في إنشاء السرديات. سيكون هذا سببا في البحث عن الحقائق والوقائع الموجودة مسبقًا.