



Ca' Foscari
University
of Venice

Master's Degree Programme

in European, American and
Postcolonial Language and Literature
"Second Cycle (D.M. 270/2004)"

Final Thesis

The Familiar, the remediation of a TV series

How Danielewski attempts to
remediate a TV series

Supervisor

Ch. Prof. Pia Masiero

Assistant supervisor

Ch. Prof. Francesca Bisutti

Graduand

Giulia De Bortoli

Matriculation Number 838401

Academic Year

2015 / 2016

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
PART ONE	4
1.1 THE AUTHOR	4
1.2 THE FAMILIAR	6
PART TWO: THE BOOK	8
2.1 WHAT IS REMEDIATION?	8
2.2 WHY TV SERIES?	14
2.3 HOW DOES DANIELEWSKI ATTEMPT TO REMEDIATE A TV SERIES?	18
2.3.1 Theme and characters	18
2.3.2 Words and images: relationships and approaches	61
(a) Calligrams and visual writing	68
(b) Use of spaces and blank pages	78
(c) Pictures	83
CONCLUSIONS	88
WORKS CITED AND FURTHER READINGS	92

INTRODUCTION

Since the 17th century, serialization of novels has been an economically viable way to publish a book. But it is from the 19th century that serials gained a widespread resonance in the publishing industry. Authors like Charles Dickens and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in Great Britain, Alexandre Dumas and Gustave Flaubert in France, Harriett Beecher Stowe and Herman Melville in America had some of their most famous novels published in installments on weekly or monthly magazines. Serialization on magazines could reach a broader audience than books, the possibility to reach a wider public was very appealing for writers at that time, because it helped to create the following for published works. If serialization is not a novelty per se, neither is remediation. In fact, we can find examples of ‘refashioning’ of media since photography was invented and in paintings (Courbet’s *Interior of My Studio*), even though the term was coined in 1999 by Bolter and Grusin in the book *Remediation. Understanding New Media*. In this dissertation, I am going to present *The Familiar Volume 1: One Rainy Day in May* written by Mark Z. Danielewski which includes the concept of serialization and that of remediation. The interesting fact about this book is that the author explicitly refers to it as the first volume of a project in which he attempts to remediate a TV series. This dissertation is going to focus on his attempt of remediating TV series in a book series considering the reader’s perspective. Specifically, I will align with the point of view of a reader who has already read the book. I will try to underline differences and similarities between this book project and a TV series bearing in mind the main characteristics of a series in terms of theme, structure, characters and viewers. The first part of the dissertation presents a brief introduction to

the author, his life and his style which may be considered part of so called ergodic literature (according to Aarseth's definition in his book *Cybertext—Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*) or signiconic, according to Danielewski's own definition. Then I will present the project in the terms Danielewski himself has presented. In the second part of the dissertation, I will first explain what remediation is with the help of the previously mentioned book by Bolter and Grusin. I will then try to argue why Danielewski decided to remediate a TV series contextualizing the situation with the help of Mittell and Kirby's essays and books, considering how important TV series are in American television nowadays. I will then proceed with a close look into the book which is a book that must be shown and described to be understood, because the graphics and the written parts are equally important in the story telling and in the act of remediating a TV series. I will also argue that the paratext is the textual space that more explicitly gestures toward TV series and gives a better idea of the comparison between the two media. In particular, I will focus on the similarities between the paratext with a TV series theme. The paratext in this volume has a crucial role in helping the reader to immerse in a new world and it plays a crucial role in the book. The last part will focus on the relationships between words and images, that have an important visual impact on the telling of the story. These relationships will be explained with the help of the texts by Nöth, Kibédi Varga and Stöckl, then I will focus on the kind of graphic representations that are used in the main body of the book in order to convey the sense of watching a TV series. In particular, I will concentrate on calligrams, images and the use of spaces and blank pages, analyzing how these visuals work in this book to remediate a series.

PART ONE

1.1 THE AUTHOR

Mark Z. Danielewski is an American fiction writer. His most famous novels are *House of Leaves* (2000), his debut novel and a bestseller, and *Only Revolutions* (2006) for which he was nominated for the National Book Award. He was born in New York City in 1966; during his childhood, he moved with his family around the world due to his father's projects (his father was an avant-garde film director), before he was 10 he had lived in 6 different Countries. These continuous moving and changing places had the result of opening the young Danielewski's mind and making him appreciate creativity in all its forms; traveling showed him that "there was much to be learned out there" (Clark, np).

He got a degree in English literature from Yale then he enrolled for an intensive Latin course at the University of California, Berkeley and later pursued graduate studies at the USC School of Cinema-Television in Los Angeles.

Danielewski's writing is a mixture of visual and cognitive writing¹ which requires from the reader the same visual and cognitive efforts. These efforts have led critics to include Danielewski as a member of ergodic literature:

"In ergodic literature, nontrivial effort is required to allow the reader to traverse the text. If ergodic literature is to make sense as a concept, there must also be nonergodic literature,

¹ By the term 'cognitive' I imply a kind of writing, and then reading, that require an effort in thinking and reasoning.

where the effort to traverse the text is trivial, with no extranoematic responsibilities placed on the reader except (for example) eye movement and the periodic or arbitrary turning of pages” (Aarseth, 1).

The definition seems to correspond to Danielewski’s style, in fact, the reader has to struggle with a challenging layout to read his books. The effort lies not only in turning the pages to continue the reading as the definition suggests but, in some cases, in turning the entire book. Different fonts and graphics demand the reader a constant focus on the book, he/she has to be ready to follow the words and graphics which are uncommonly placed in the pages. However, Danielewski does not think to represent the ergodic literature and gives his personal definition of his writings:

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

According to Danielewski’s definition, he wants to create something new; he does not only want to transform the novel but also the way readers read the novel. The process of reading is not only a process in which the reader’s mind is totally involved to understand the story, but the novel is a tool to permit the reader’s mind to stretch and overcome its limits. Danielewski attempts with his writing and the aid of graphics to create a new kind of books; images and words are no more two different and separate tools used to narrate a story, but they blend and intermingle so as to create a new whole that leads the reader to reach ‘a third perception’ (*Does Danielewski draw write or both*).

1.2 THE FAMILIAR

The Familiar is Danielewski's most ambitious project, it is a series of 27 novels. It can be considered a project for three main reasons: 1) it is currently underway; 2) its accomplishment is not certain; 3) it is the result not only of the author's work, but of a team, called Atelier Z, which supports graphically the written parts with images, translates parts of the story in some of the threads and designs the books as if they were collection items. The series has in store 27 volumes, of which ten are going to be published for sure. It is not clear how long will the publication of these ten volumes take, and it is clearly impossible to foresee (if the other seventeen volumes will be published) how long the whole publication would take. Danielewski said in an interview

“[...] The *Familiar* is my remediation of a television series. You aren't guaranteed several seasons of a particular show when you pitch it to the network. Pantheon gave me the green light. So it's up to me now to create 10 volumes that prove compelling enough that readers will want to read more, and the publisher will want to release the rest. The burden here is on me. That's how television works” (Carpenter, np).

As Danielewski said in the interview, his project is his attempt at remediating a TV series, and exactly as a serial it will continue only if there is a positive response, that is if the readers read, otherwise the publications will be cancelled and the project will end. The first volume *One Rainy Day in May* was published in May 2015 in the United States and it was followed by *Into the Forest* in October of the same year, and by *Honeysuckle & Pain* in June 2016. The fourth volume, *Hades*, has just been released.

To understand these books is necessary to look at them, because they are not only written, but also beautifully drawn. As we have just said, the visual and the written are equally

important to create this project and to understand this new kind of publication. I will consider the first volume as an exemplification of how these books are constructed and how they appear. I will use the second and the third volume occasionally if there are differences or similarities worth highlighting.

PART TWO: THE BOOK

2.1 WHAT IS REMEDIATION?

First of all it is necessary to introduce the concept of remediation. Analyzing the word it is immediately clear its composition: re+mediation, to mediate here means that something existing/happening in reality, a blooming flower for example, has been represented through a medium, a painting, and is then appropriated with a new medium which ‘refashions’ the already represented, a photograph of the painting, for example. Remediation is the mediation of another mediation. This word is a neologism appeared for the first time in 1999 in Bolter and Grusin’s book *Remediation. Understanding New Media*. In this book, the authors first theorize the concept of remediation, which subsumes two different and opposite logics: immediacy and hypermediacy. They also trace a link between the “old” and the new media, underlying that the new ones are having success by because they are rivaling or paying homage to the old ones, that is to say that every new medium is the improvement of a previously existing medium. Without an older medium and a former act of mediation remediation would not exist. To underline the link between older and newer media, it is important to say that Bolter and Grusin specify that remediation is not only “a defining characteristic of the new digital media” (45) in fact, it can be identified within “a spectrum of different ways in which digital media remediate their predecessors, a spectrum depending on the degree of perceived competition or rivalry between the new media and the old” (45). This concept is not completely new, in fact, it has its roots in McLuhan’s *Understanding Media* (1964), the reference in Bolter

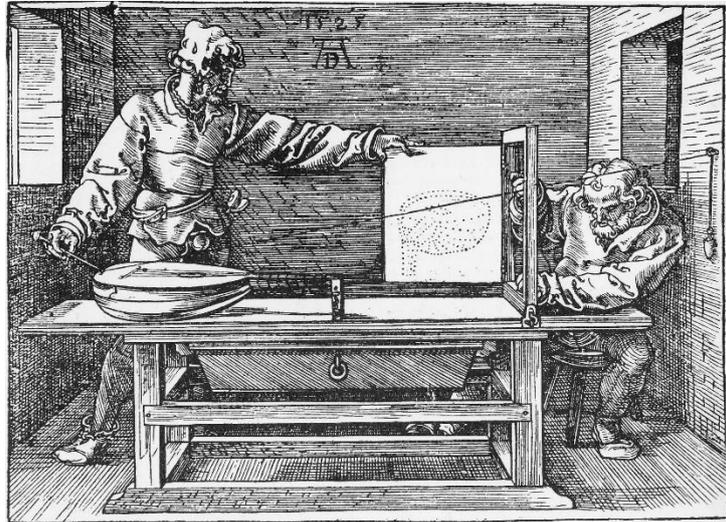
and Grusin's title is clear, but in particular, they decide to quote this passage from McLuhan's book: "the 'content' of any medium is another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph" (23-24). McLuhan here is not referring to a simple repurpose of the medium, but perhaps "to a more complex kind of borrowing in which one medium is itself incorporated or represented in another medium" (45).

Remediation tries to satisfy the human desire for immediacy, and the goal of new media and digital technologies, such as virtual reality, is to remediate representations of reality and achieve a transparent immediacy, it means that "the medium itself should disappear and leave us in the presence of the thing represented" (6). To achieve the perfect and transparent immediacy, engineers are working in order to create a medium that will not interfere with the experience, as Bolter and Grusin highlight "a transparent interface would be one that erases itself, so that the user is no longer aware of confronting a medium, but instead stands in an immediate relationship to the contents of that medium" (23-24).

Even if this concept of transparent immediacy could seem only applicable to recent technologies, whether a painting or a photograph or virtual reality "they are all attempts to achieve immediacy by ignoring or denying the presence of the medium and the act of mediation. All of them seek to put the viewer in the same space as the objects viewed" (11).

The most used techniques to achieve transparent immediacy in paintings is the linear perspective, which is well described by Leon Battista Alberti's window in his 1435 treatise *On Painting*:

“On the surface on which I am going to paint, I draw a rectangle of whatever size I want, which I regard as an open window through which the subject to be painted is seen” (55).



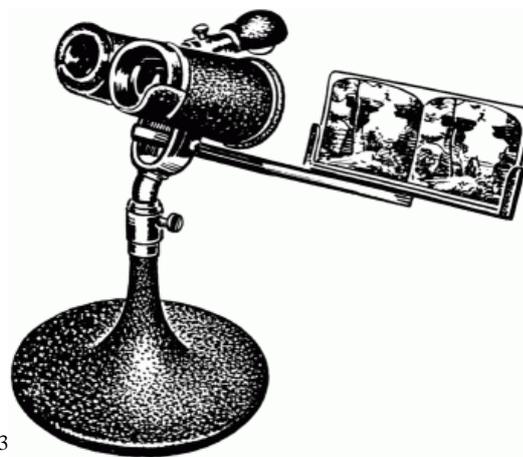
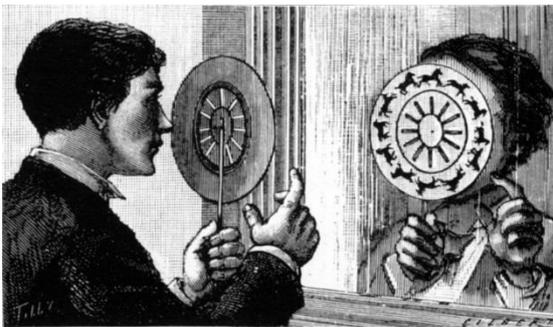
To achieve transparency, it is necessary for the painter to erase while painting his brush strokes in order to give the observer the feeling of being where the painted thing is. Photography was considered the perfect representation of the Albertian window because the automatic reproduction of reality put aside the human agent. The erasure of human intervention is even more effective in computers. They are human products but once the programmers load the necessary inputs, the system achieves autonomy and operates by itself creating mathematized images. It must be said that it is true that once the software is programmed it does not need programmers intervention anymore, but the user or the viewer needs first of all the computer to use the programmes, which is not perceived as an annoying medium, and secondly the user or viewer has to digit, press buttons and more in general give orders to the medium to do what he/she wants so that the erasure is far from perfect. Bolter and Grusin in their book argue that remediation is a significant

² Engraving by Albrecht Dürer, 1525

characteristic of new digital media, in fact “ the digital medium wants to erase itself, so that the viewer stands in the same relationship to the content as she would if she were confronting the original medium. Ideally, there should be no difference between the experience of seeing a painting in person and on a computer screen, but this is never so” (45). They argue that screens always affect the experience because of colors (different to the ones according to reality) or the resolution or the dimension of the image.

Talking about computers leads to the other logic of remediation: hypermediation. In hypermediacy the main aim is the exact opposite of transparent immediacy, that is not to erase the medium, but on the contrary to underline the use of a medium, in fact “if the logic of immediacy leads one either to erase or to render automatic the act of representation, the logic of hypermediacy acknowledges multiple acts of representation and makes them visible” (33-34). As Bolter and Grusin add “today as in the past, designers of hypermediated forms ask us to take pleasure in the act of mediation, and even our popular culture does take pleasure”(14), hypermediation makes users aware of a medium, “ especially in fantastic scenes that the viewer is not expected to agree with to take as real or possible” (34). New digital medium “can try to refashion the older medium or media entirely, while still marking the presence of the older media and therefore maintaining a sense of multiplicity or hypermediacy” (46), the older medium in fact, cannot be entirely erased because the new medium remains dependent on the older one in acknowledged or unacknowledged ways. For example, on the Internet, numerous websites borrow the monitoring function of broadcast television or the structure of newspapers. Other common examples of hypermediacy are concerts, theme parks, and arcades. Historically hypermediation has been used frequently, however, the main goal was to achieve immediacy, in fact, hypermediation was a sort of ‘side effect’ while trying

to reach transparent immediacy. Examples of hypermediation that should have achieved immediacy are illuminated medieval manuscripts in which the reader has to take pleasure in the writings and the image together, paintings like Courbet's *Interior of My Studio* where there are paintings in the painting, the phenakistoscope and the stereoscope in which the movement of images produced a kind of immediacy, but the device per se was unwieldy and could not be ignored. Courbet's painting is a refashioning that "do[es] not violate the presumed sanctity of the medium, a sanctity that was important to critics earlier in this century, although it is less so now" (49) because the original media are in a way maintained and celebrated in the remediation. There are also many examples of hypermediacy that do not want to satisfy the need for transparency, as previously said, like theme parks, nowadays pop and rock concerts, paintings like Magritte's *The Treachery of Images*, collages and photomontages.



³ An early Phenakistoscope design

⁴ Early form of stereoscope.



Even new media designers are not interested in creating objects that are as minimal as possible in term of transparency, they pay a lot of attention to their hypermediation in order to be identifiable and familiar; great examples are Apple's products because the design and the image are thought not only to be recognizable but also to be shown, as if they are designer items worth collecting. Even Danielewski's project combines the two logics of immediacy and hypermediacy. In fact, on the one hand the reader has the perception of immediacy while reading the story, but on the other hand the medium of the book, its constructedness, is not forgettable. The volumes have a certain weight and they are illustrated by Atelier Z in order to be aesthetically pleasing items. The story itself is often hypermediated, especially in the Orb and in Xanther's threads (in the second and third volumes), the reader has to accept as real and possible scenes usually considered as fantastic.

⁵ Gustave Courbet, *The Artist's Studio; A real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life*, 1854-55 oil, on canvas, 361 x 598 cm (Musée d'Orsay, Paris)

⁶ Rene Magritte, *The Treachery of Images*, 1948 oil, on canvas, 63.5 x 93.98 cm (Los Angeles County Museum of Art)

2.2 WHY TV SERIES?

Another important aspect of Danielewsky's decision to remediate a TV series find its explanation in its role in American television nowadays. David Foster Wallace in his essay *E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction* underlines the fact that television has an important role in the average American's life. Statistics says that Americans watch television six hours per day everyday, in fact, "for 360 minutes per diem, we receive unconscious reinforcement of the deep thesis that the most significant feature of truly alive persons is watchableness, and that genuine human worth is not just identical with but rooted in the phenomenon of watching" (155). He argues that watching TV, like reading a book, is often an antidote to loneliness for those people who cannot bear contacts with other people, it is a one-way watching, watch without being watched. Soap operas, sitcoms, crime dramas and other episodic programmes have always been very popular in television, what has changed in recent years is the complexity of the storytelling. "This model of television storytelling is distinct for its use of narrative complexity as an alternative to the conventional episodic or serial forms that had typified most American television since its inception" (29) argues Mittell in his article "Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television"; he also adds that this narrative complexity can be considered as a narrational⁷ mode, which is a historically distinct set of norms of narrational construction and comprehension, one that crosses genres, specific creators, and artistic movements to forge a coherent category of practices.⁸ Mittell agrees that cinema had some influences on some aspect concerning visual style in television, however he specifies that it is more productive to develop a specific vocabulary for

⁷ In his book, Bordwell refers to films as narratives; in fact, by the term 'narrational' he implies an 'acting to narrate' mode.

⁸ See David Bordwell, *Narration in the Fiction Film*. (155)

television because “television’s narrative complexity is predicated on specific facets of storytelling that seem uniquely suited to the series structure that sets television apart from film and distinguish it from conventional modes of episodic and serial forms” (29). Television complexity has developed starting from the 1990s and as Mittell said he believes that these past 20 years will be remembered as an era of narrative experimentation and innovation for television as a medium, but it must be said that there are still more episodic sitcoms and dramas than complex narratives. What made this change in narratives happen was the introduction of cable TV and VCR in the 1980s. Television networks always wanted to reach the broadest possible audience and its main logic was that “audiences lacked the weekly consistency to allow for serialized narratives, and the pressures of syndication favored interchangeable episodes of conventional sitcoms and procedural dramas” (31). But as the number of cable channels started to increase, automatically the audience scattered through different channels, and the initial logic changed; in fact, networks realized that a small but more demographically uniform and stable audience following a program was sufficient to make a show ‘economically viable’. Moreover the “proliferation of channels helped to routinize repeats, so that viewers can catch up on a program in chronologically aired reruns or view missed premium cable shows multiple times through the week” (31) with the increasing use of technologies like the VCR and digital video recorders that “enabled viewers to decide when they want to watch a program, but, more important for narrative construction, viewers can rewatch episodes or segments to parse out complex moments” (31). This success led to nowadays services like Netflix and Amazon to support complex and original content on their own because this shift to complex television made it a desirable business strategy and not a risky proposition.

Other technologies, especially the internet, contributed to another factor that leads to the rise of complex television: fans communities. This collective intelligence enabled fans to ask for and find information, interpretations, and discussion on narrative complexities of the series. Even creators can join discussions, blogs, and forums in order to test viewer comprehension of the show and to have a feedback. This kind of storytelling encourages audiences to participate actively and offers in this sense a wider variety of rewards and pleasures than most conventional programming. As Mittell says: “narrative complex programs invite temporary disorientation and confusion, allowing viewers to build up their comprehension skills through long-term viewing and active engagement” (37). Complex narrative, the possibility to rewatch episodes and the nonnecessity for plot closure allow the creators to cross different genres. An example of genres combination is *Twin Peaks*, which is a mixture of a mystery, soap opera, and art film. If some TV series use narrative complexity to ‘rebel’ against episodic conventionality, there are other series that use plot closure and episodic form to reestablish an equilibrium in some situation, for example in *The Simpsons* some story lines continue (Apu’s marriage), while other are never referred to again (damaged properties, losses of jobs). In complex narratives it is noticeable that a number of storytelling devices, which are not used exclusively in television narratives, have become more and more the norm than the exception. Various alterations in chronology are not at all uncommon and shows are constructed not paying attention to the temporary confusion of the audience. These ‘comprehension tests’ have the effect of “convert[ing] many viewers in amateur narratologists, noting usage and violation of convention, chronicling chronologies, and highlighting both inconsistencies and continuities across episodes and even series” (38). Mittell continued saying that the viewer is not supposed to watch these shows “as an unmediated window to a realistic

story world into which you might escape” (38); on the contrary, the viewer has to pay attention to what he/she is watching because he/she is asked to reflect on “how it provides a partial access to the diegesis and how the panes of glass distort your vision of the unfolding action” (38). He concluded that “a new paradigm of television storytelling has emerged in the past two decades, with a reconceptualization of the boundary between episodic and serial forms, a heightened degree of self-consciousness in storytelling mechanics, and demands for intensified viewer engagement focused on both diegetic pleasures and formal awareness” (38-39). The introduction of new technologies and new kinds of serialization have changed the nature of the author, the reader and the text and the relationship between them. In fact, there is a big shift in the meaning of the terms ‘author’ and ‘text’, for example in the world wide web context. Before the arrival of the internet, all the texts were physically existing in the world, whether anyone read them or not. Once written or typed the text existed. Nowadays a text can exist whether it is materially in the physical world or online in a virtual world. As Alan Kirby in his article *The Death of Postmodernism and Beyond* affirms “this is a far more intense engagement with the cultural process than anything literature can offer, and gives the undeniable sense (or illusion) of the individual controlling, managing, running, making up his/her involvement with the cultural product” (*Death*). Kirby refers to websites and webpages not properly authored in the sense that no one really knows who the author is, because these pages can be made up and written by everyone and often under the cover of nicknames. He calls this new form of textuality as digimodernism, which is “made up to a varying degree by the reader or the viewer or textual consumer. This figure becomes authorial in this sense: s/he makes text where none existed before. It isn’t that his/her reading is of a kind to suggest meanings; there is no metaphor here. In an act distinct from

their act of reading or viewing, such a reader or viewer gives to the world textual content or shapes the development and progress of a text in visible form” (*Digimodernism*, 276).

If we think about platforms, such as Wikipedia or blogs in general, the quality of the text is arguable. In fact, the digimodernist text is ongoing and, as in Wikipedia, every user can generate or modify contents, which is the exact opposite of what happens in a traditional text, which is complete and no one can alter it. This freedom in generating content gives birth to multiple or social authorships, which are scattered in different communities, and often their real names are not recognizable. Nicknames or fake names can be one of the main reasons why many people generate contents without paying too much attention, for example many users improvise themselves as literary, music, film critics and feel free to vent their opinions under cover of a ‘veryniceguy’, in this sense it can be said that users or viewers are not always reliable content generators. Authorial freedom generates a huge amount of different contents about the very same topic, this abundance of sources has another side effect that Kirby describes as follows: “digimodernism triggers a skyrocketing rise in quantitative reading as individuals spend hours interpreting written material on a screen; but it also reinforces a plunging decline in qualitative reading as they become ever less capable of engaging mentally with complex and sophisticated thought expressed in written form” (*Death*); however, he continues saying that internet reading is not only scanning to find information but “it accelerates and slows as interest flickers and dies, shifts sideways to follow links, loses its thread, picks up another” (*Death*). Danielewski’s project comes under the concept of multiple authorship, in fact, as I mentioned before Danielewski works together with the so called Atelier Z, which helps him with the graphic illustration of the volumes.

2.3 HOW DOES DANIELEWSKI ATTEMPT TO REMEDIATE A TV SERIES?

2.3.1 Theme and characters

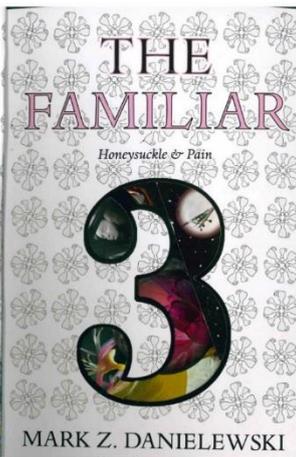
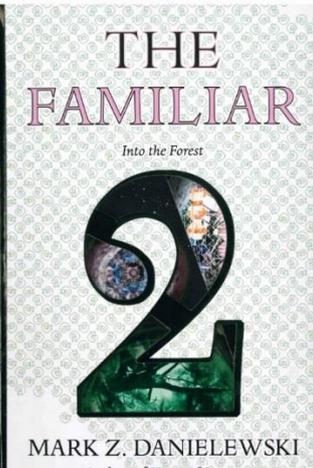
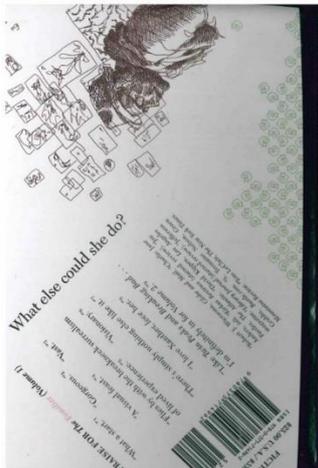
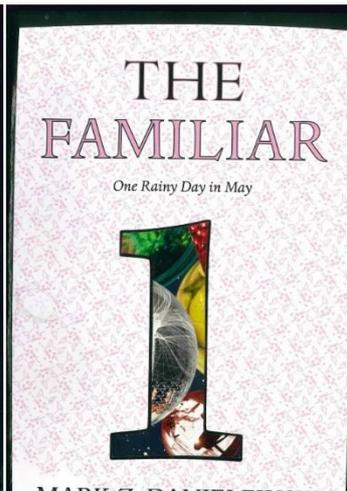
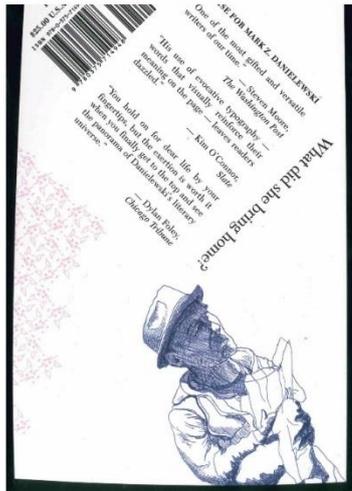
Now that we have explained the main principles of remediation, it is interesting to actually see where and how Danielewski tried to remediate a Television series in a book. A TV series is a connected sequence of episodes from a television program that maintains the same title, and possibly lasts many seasons. Exactly as other formats, a TV series has characterizing features, such as a theme, a structure (division in episodes and seasons) and a particular attention to the characters, by which I mean not only that there are certain characters around whom the story telling is constructed, but also that there is a special attention to their psychological and emotional sphere.

As I mentioned before while remediating a medium with a new one, the “old” is still present, in various ways, in the new one; I am going to argue to what extent the TV series format is present in this book and try to identify by which means Danielewski attempted to realize this project bearing in mind the previously mentioned categories that characterize a TV series. I think that the best way to start this comparison is reenacting the reading experience, starting from picking the book up, looking at it and opening it. The first part of the text we encounter is the paratext. The notion of paratext was coined by Gerard Genette in his book *Seuils*, released in 1981, later translated as *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. He wrote “the paratext is what enables a text to become a book and to be offered as such to its readers and, more generally, to the public” (2). He compares the paratext to a threshold, in which the reader can step inside or turn back. Genette moreover divides the paratext in peritext and epitext: the peritext is a spatial category in which all the paratextual elements present in the actual text such as titles,

names of the authors, covers, dedications and epigraphs are gathered: it presents the book in the world and assures its presence, its consumption and its 'reception'; the epitext is any paratextual element which is not materially present in the book, but related to it, an example could be an interview to the author, a review of the book that could be also included in the next edition of the book.

As far as *The Familiar* is concerned, the paratext is very important. I am going to present the first volume as representative of the three volumes published up to now. Generally the concept of paratext is applicable not only to books, but also to movies, TV series, television and radio programmes, software and so on because all of these formats are, in a sense, texts. In this case, it is possible to say that the first thing in the volume that makes the remediation of a TV series detectable is the paratext indeed, which can be compared to the theme that makes TV series recognizable. A TV theme is a short sequence consisting of images and graphics, almost always combined with a song, which introduces or closes a TV program (variety show, drama, news); it carries captions titles and credits (the names of those who contributed to the transmission with their role).⁹ The function of a theme is to isolate the TV program from the others in its individuality and to draw the public's attention to it. They usually bear a lot of information about the program and about the people who worked and contributed to it. Considering this definition, the comparison between TV theme and paratext is possible because until now the format of the book, by which I mean the size of pages and the thickness of the book, and the internal structure have been basically maintained in the three volumes already published.

⁹ Aldo Grasso, *Enciclopedia Garzanti della Televisione Le Garzantine*, Garzanti, 2002, (674)



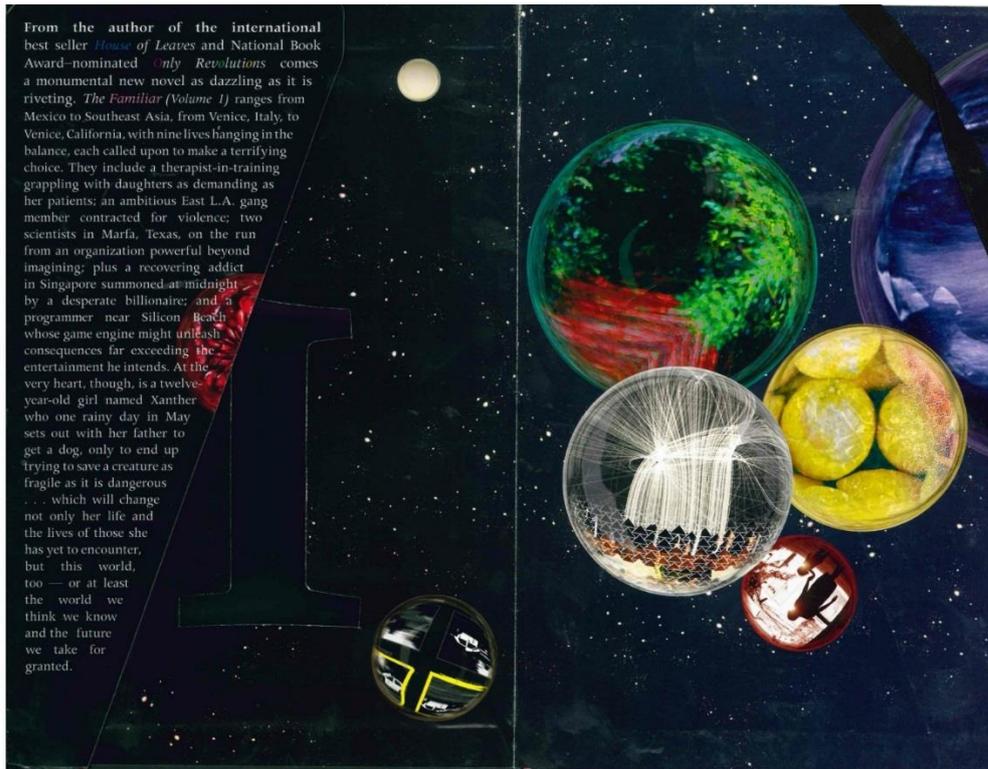
Looking at the three volumes the reader can notice a black framed cover. The cover is what attracts the attention of a potential reader, and usually these books have a captivating graphic presentation; it is obviously the first thing that the eye of a possible reader catches and even if one should not judge the book by its cover, it is true that an appealing cover is particularly appropriate for a book which is not only to be read but also looked at. In each volume the name of the serial stands in big letters, *THE FAMILIAR*, the title of the volume follows, and a big cutout number, which represents the number of the volume in the series. This 'hole' permits the reader to glimpse at the first drawing on the inside. The cover has a pink pattern on a white background. The pattern of the first volume represents the same pink cat face, from the front to the back cover. The author is a cat lover as a matter of common knowledge, but maybe the represented cat could be the kitten Xanther, the protagonist, finds in that rainy day in May. It is interesting to notice that there is just one cat that is not pink but pale gray, as the one found by Xanther. In the back cover when the pattern stops there is a question for the reader "what did she bring home?", the obvious answer for the reader, who has already read the book, is "a kitten" and the subject Xanther, but because this question is at the end of the book is he suggesting something 'bigger'? or is he testing the reader comprehension of the story? Probably both, trying to trigger the reader's imagination.

A drawing representing a reading Danielewski upside-down and some good reviews of his previous work is what can be seen in the back cover beside the question. In the first volume, there are praises for Danielewski; in the second volume praises for the first one "One Rainy Day in May" and in the third volume for the second one "Into the Forest". Probably this structure will continue, or maybe it will change, it is not possible to know yet. This part of the book can be easily recognized as the epitext mentioned before, in

fact, this information is not exclusively related to the volume the reader has in his/her hands, but on a wider scale they refer to Danielewski's work.

The second volume front and back covers maintain the same structure, only the pattern on the background changes, which is a rolled green cat. Even in this book there is only one pale grey cat between all the green ones. On the back cover the question to the reader changes: "what else could she do?" This question makes the reader rethink what he/she has just read in the book and helps to form his/her own opinion about it. After the book has ended the process that the story has started in the reader is not over.

In the third volume cats are still the main cover pattern, this time they are all pale grey and create a kind of flower, probably to remind the honeysuckle of the title. Again, a question to the reader: "what must she sacrifice?" All the three questions in the volumes have a female subject, even if the subject is not explicitly spelled out; it is immediate for a reader to think about Xanther, who appears to be the main protagonist of the series.



As soon as the reader opens the book the glimpse from the cutout number is transformed in a whole picture of a colorful new universe from which some spheres with anticipating drawings on the inside emerge. The drawings easier to identify are the police car, that refers to the grey thread of detective Oz; the father and daughter holding hands, that refers both to the pink thread, Xanther's, and to the green one, Anwar's. The other spheres contain lemons, wires or something similar and some green leaves. On the left, there is the inside flap where a brief introduction to the novel is written, in which the threads are described briefly and generally where the story takes place. All these pictures help the reader to identify these introductory parts of the peritext as a kind of theme that accompanies the beginning and the end of a TV series, and, in this case, of the book. Sequences of images taken from the story combined with a song or a jingle usually form the TV series theme, in this case, the only missing part is the audio but it is still recognizable as a sort of theme.

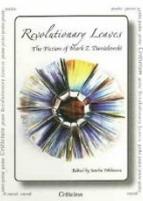
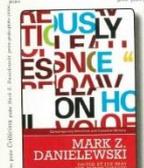
an intricate, erudite, and frightening book." — Elizabeth Bukowski, *Wall Street Journal*

"The cosmic showdown between the searing, destructive energies of violence and the reparative, connective power of stitching." — Hal Parker, *The American Reader*

"Ambitious, meticulous, and original. Danielewski continues to survey the frontiers of the novel... The book barrels you straight onto the road and into the splintered vortex of the folie à deux de its angle." — *Angeles City Beat*

"[A] thrilling and magnetic cat's cradle of a novel... sublimely of this digital moment, with all its interruptions and annotations, its intercessions and allusions, its strange and bewitchingly intuitive form... a boldly original, gorgeous, and suspenseful work of literature." — Laura Collins-Hughes, *The Boston Globe*

"This series at times is *Infinite Jest*, and *Closely* complexity, structure, parallel narratives—as this a delectable challenge literary work is strong, having boundary pool Danielewski." — Ryan Vlastakis, *A.V. Club*

"The most ambitious, careful, and cogently argued literary debut of the year. *House of Leaves* is no other novel you've read." — Malcolm Jones, *Nonesuch*

"Funny, moving, sexy, beautifully told, an elaborate engagement with the shape and meaning of narrative." — Robert Kelly, *The New York Times Book Review*

"... the fusion of art and language is exhilarating and even frightening." — Stuart Kelly, *The Guardian*

"Sweeping ambition and fierce intelligence... A quintessential novel of our time." — Deborah Vaska, *Los Angeles Times*

"[A] towering acerbic love in American my thoroughly dare." — Mark S., *San Francisco*




"elistic mosaic that meansy read like ramlike astrage like excursion into conscious." — Michiko Kakutani, *New York Times*

"A great novel... Thrillingly alive, sublimely creepy, distressingly scary, breathtakingly intelligent — it renders most other fiction meaningless." — Bret Easton Ellis, *House of Leaves*

"A rare treat for devoted book lovers." — Eric Liebetran, *The Boston Globe*

"Only *Revolution*... instills in the reader that indefinable longing and love for what is beyond history. It dares the grand emotions." — David Plante, National Book Award Finalist Citation

"Here is the road now imagined by John Ca... Truly revolutionary wants to overthrow it just how we read, but..." — John Freeman, *Newsday*




Turning the page the reader finds the names of the other novels written by Danielewski: *House of Leaves*, *Only Revolutions* and *The Fifty Year Sword*. Turning again the page some excerpts from reviews of these books, that are written in frames of words: the word “praise” and the name of the novel, so that the reader knows to which book the review is related. At the opposite corners of the pages, there are two pictures of tattoos in homage to Danielewski’s books, framed by the words: “praise”, “tattoos” and probably the name of the person who has that tattoo. In the second volume, instead of tattoos there are music albums’ names inspired by Danielewski’s work and in the third volume there are two critical books on Danielewski. This part as the previously mentioned back cover are part of the epitext, and they give a wider idea of the author’s work and what kind of resonance it has in the American culture nowadays. It is important to notice that this is very similar to what happens in a TV series, in fact usually the creators of a series want to create not only a product that is economically valuable, but they try to create something more popular and widespread with the help of the internet and the communities. As I mentioned earlier the fandom is a very important part of a TV series and makes it more profitable, an example are the forums and websites about *The Familiar*; I list here some examples:

-Discussion board for Mark Z. Danielewski's THE FAMILIAR, Volume 1
<https://thefamiliar.wordpress.com/>;

-The Familiar-MZD FORUMS <http://forums.markzdanielewski.com/forum/the-familiar/the-familiar-aa> (which is the official webpage of the series);

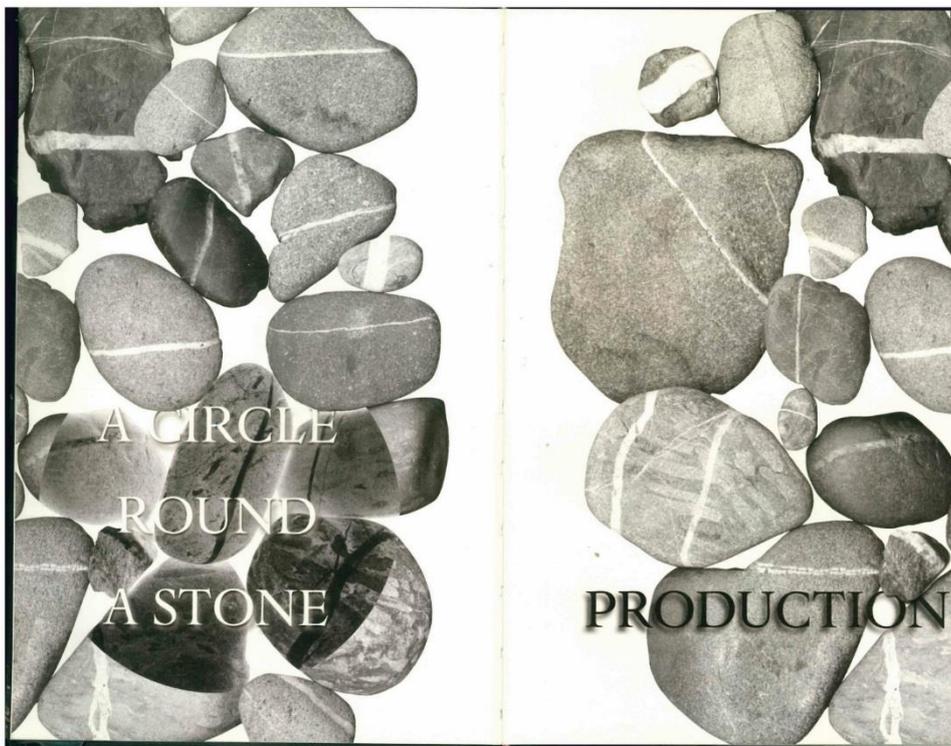
-FORUM the Familiar wikia <http://the-familiar.wikia.com/wiki/Special:Forum>.

Moreover, it is important to notice that Danielewski, well in keeping with other series, has launched a line of t-shirts, sweatshirts, scarves, accessories and even bikinis that have of

course a logo or a quote or an image from *The Familiar* or other books such as *House of Leaves* or *Only Revolutions*.

Here there is an example of the products sold online on the website I mentioned before:

The Familiar-MZD



Proceeding with the book the reader finds the logo of ‘a circle round a stone production’ as if it were a TV series, which precedes an epigraph, different for each volume. There is a bit controversial discussion in one of the previously mentioned forums about this: it is not clear if this ‘a circle round stone production’ is really a producer or if it was the previous editor before pantheon that decided to promote the Familiar project, or just an invented firm. Unfortunately, the only source I found that had at least mentioned this mysterious ‘producer’ was that forum, and the content was generated by a user like me that I cannot take too seriously or rely on because he/she did not mention his/her own sources.

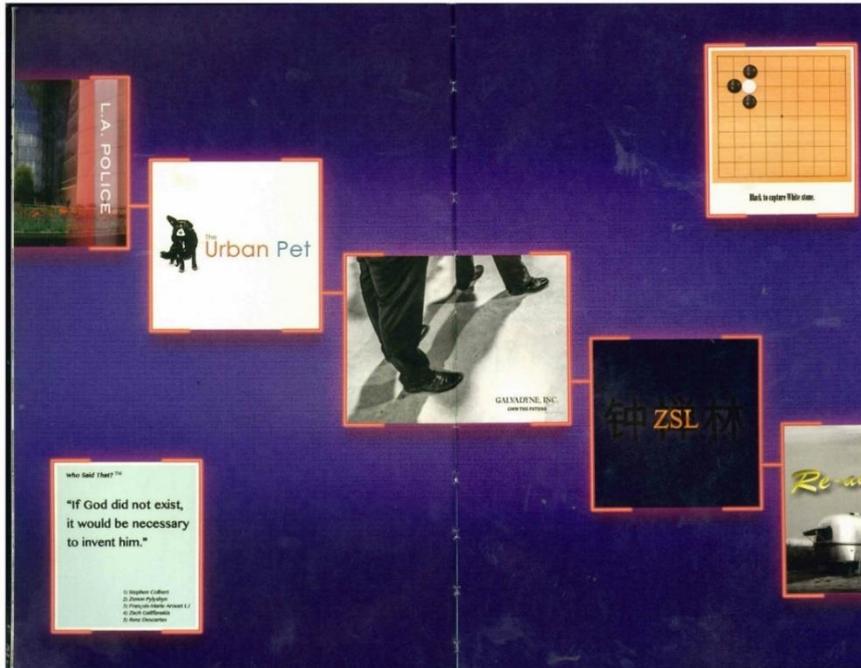
It can be said that epigraphs are also present in some episodes of a series or as an introductory part of videos or movies. They are usually used to contextualize the episode, to give some clue about what is going to happen or sometimes are apparently decontextualized to create confusion, in that case they often offer clues about what will happen later in the series or in the next season.

Kids, man. They never know when they are.

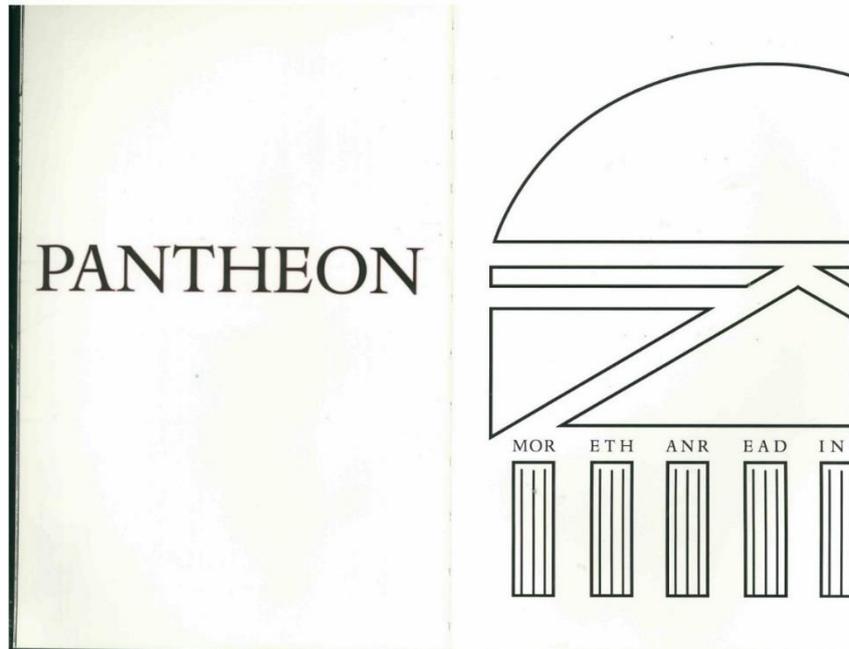
-Sheila Nightingale

The epigraph of the first volume is by Sheila Nightingale. It is difficult to contextualize this epigraph because there are not many pieces of information neither about the text nor about the writer. It was impossible to find the complete text and something specific about the author. The question about who Sheila Nightingale is still remains unanswered in blogs and forums. It is not clear to what this epigraph refers to in the book, but probably it is a general statement for all the protagonists, especially for Xanther who is a teenager,

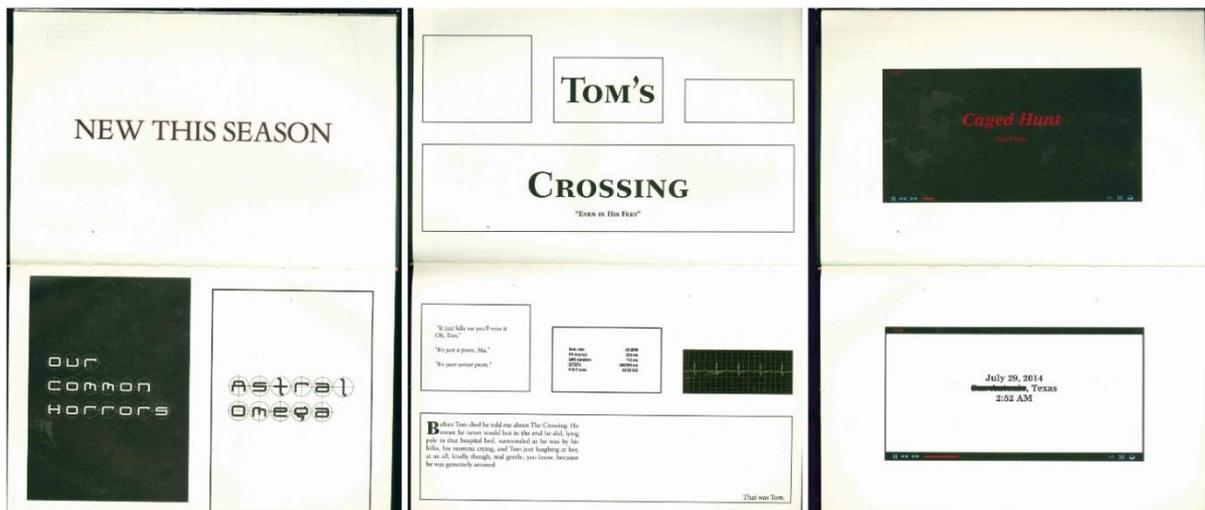
she is that age in between childhood and adulthood. Children and parents' relationship is one of the main themes in this first volume, because the main threads are about the little girl mentioned above and her parents. There is a lot of attention devoted to these three characters and their relationship, in fact, the reader has a lot of insight about their personality and about what they really think and perceive of each other. The quotation could also be about growing up, and for Xanther and her parents it is a transitional moment, they should reconsider their relationship and their routine. Moreover, the relationship between Xanther and her father Anwar, who is not her biological father, is a bit complicated, not because the child does not recognize Anwar as her father, but because there is always the fluttering memory of her biological father, Dov. Xanther is in that period in which she alternates moments in which she has a very childish personality and moments in which she talks and understands things like an adult. The epigraph in this case lets the reader know in advance about children who never know when they are, which is not only applicable to Xanther's family but also to other threads, like Luther who is very insecure about what he is doing or the young guy who wants to join Luther's gang and JingJing who still goes after his very old aunt and for the current moment does not seem to have his own life or the ill guy mentioned in the same blue thread who is the son of the Chinese businessman. The problem of this epigraph is that it is vague, we do not have any clue to what or whom it is referring to, we can just assume that there are at least two adults talking. If they are talking about childish adults or children is not possible to be clarified without knowing the context from which the quote has been excerpted.

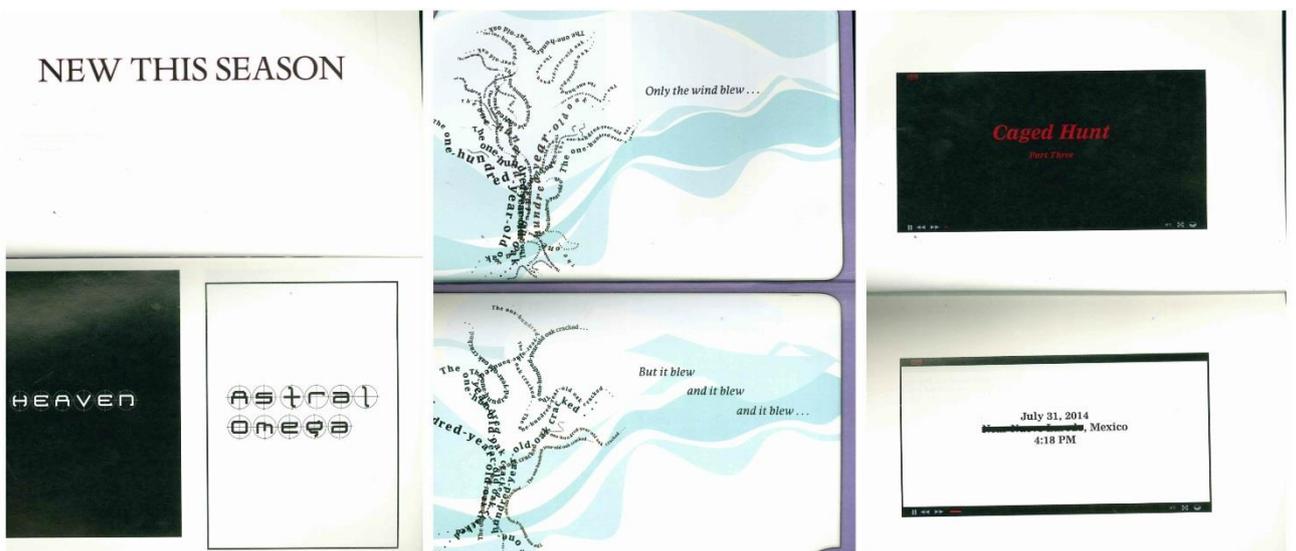
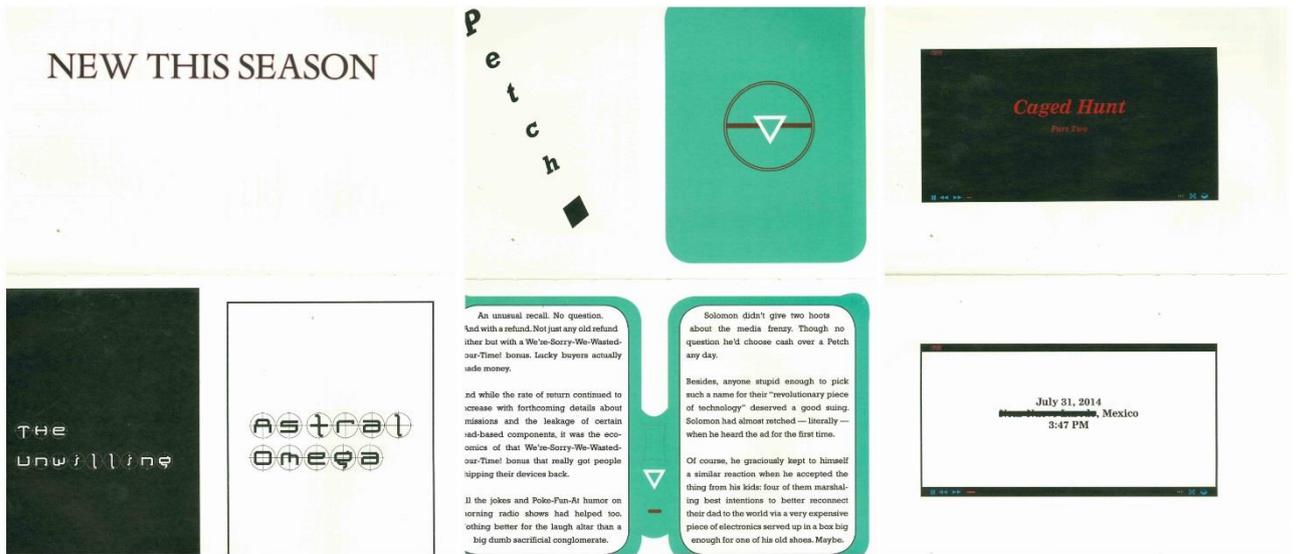


After the epigraph, there are some anticipations, not in words but in pictures. These pictures represent something important that will be mentioned in the book: the L.A. police, the store for pet supplies, Voltaire, the game, the Chinese company, and the American company. These pages seem even more part of a theme song of a TV series because they are anticipations of the story world and help the reader to enter the story gradually without even knowing it. It must be said that not all the images are real, the game, the quotation from Voltaire, the pet supplies' store and of course the L.A. Police department truly exist, but the two firms are invented for the story. The reader thinks that he/she is immersed in a real context until he/she looks for information about the companies here mentioned.



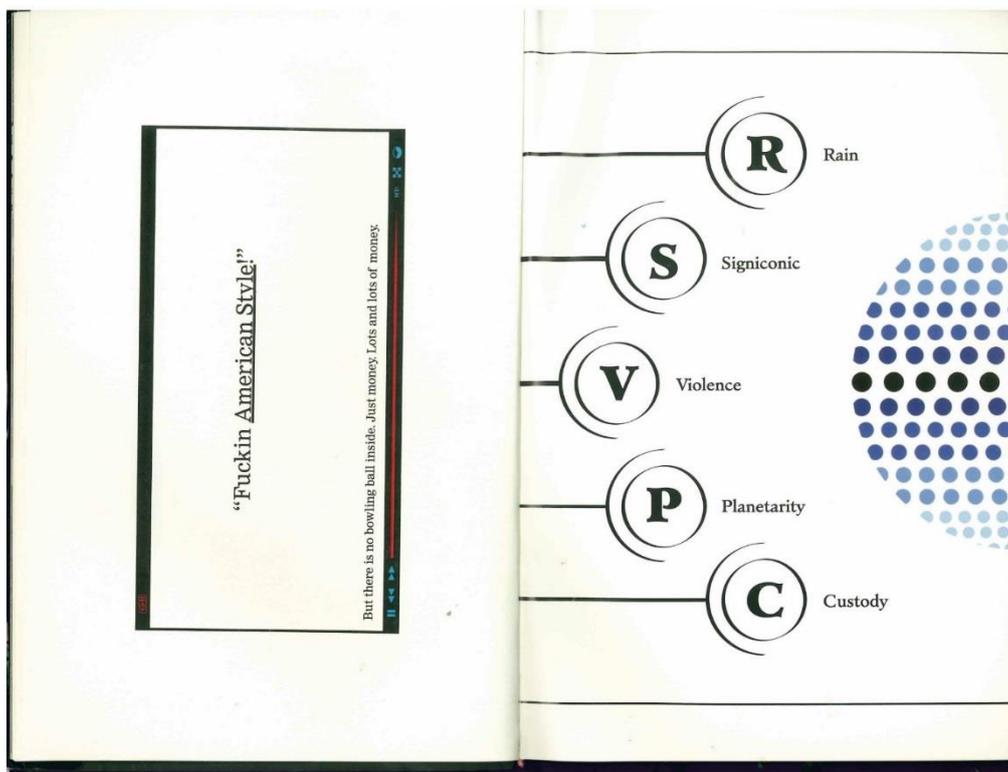
The name of the publisher follows these anticipating pictures and opens the 'New this season' part.





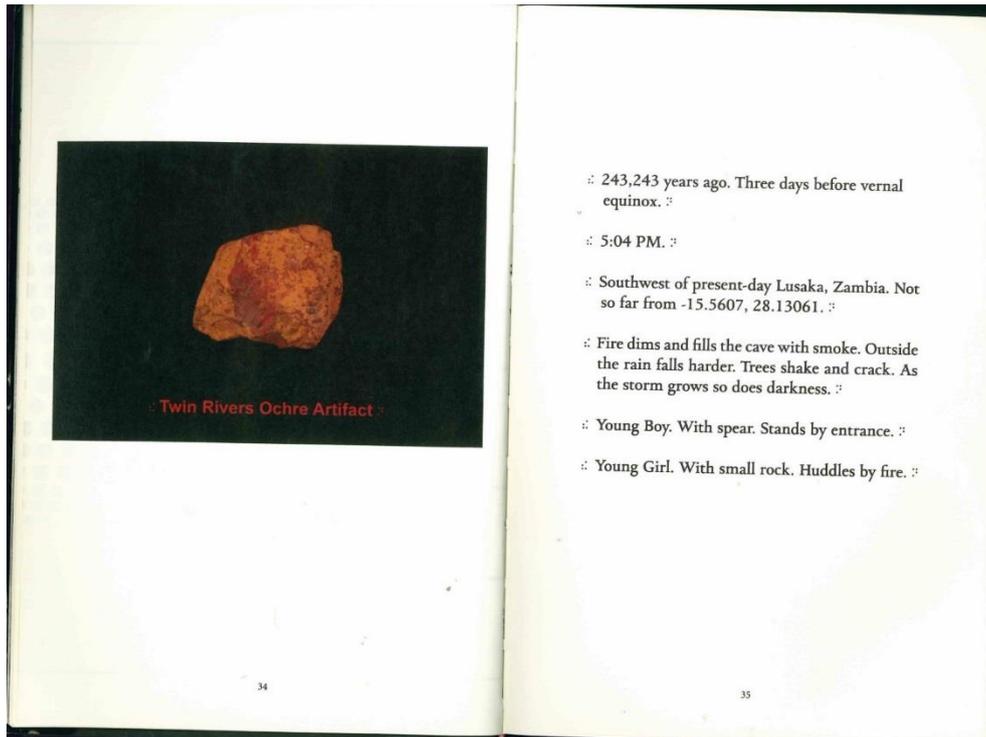
There are in fact three different previews, the first and the third are recurring also in the second and third volume; the second trailer changes for each volume. This part reminds us of the trailers during the projection of a movie or of TV advertisements of other programs during the breaks. In this part the remediation of the television and movie techniques comes up immediately and is clear and effective. It is like having brief, in medias res and incomplete stories and new worlds that force the reader to pause from the story world presented few pages before these ones. In this part, it is also important to

notice that the layout changes, these pages must be looked at turning the volume around and read it like that and not like we did before as a common (horizontal) book. This leads me to the definition of multimodal novel, which is a kind of novel that incorporates verbal and non-verbal elements that do not disturb or disrupt the reading process.¹⁰ Up to this moment the volume presented graphics or written texts, however what the reader sees in this part reflects the rest of the book and the other volumes. The combination between these two elements is what conveys the idea of television, as the average person perceives it not only as stories and programs but as a sequence of words and images. Using both graphics and words in a book is an attempt to remediate a TV series.

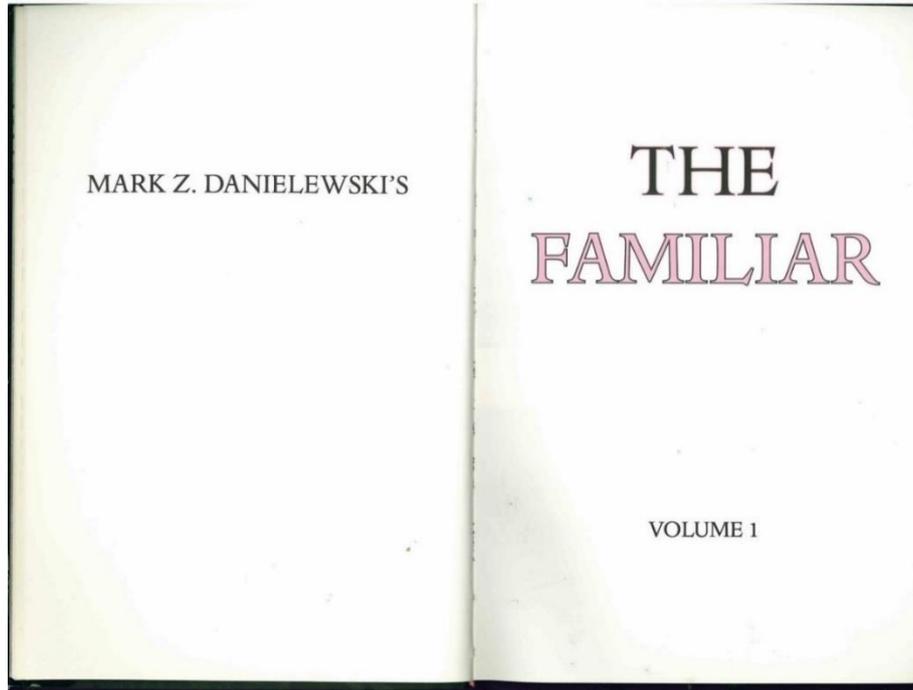


¹⁰ See Hallet, *The Multimodal novel. The Integration of Modes and Media in Novelistic Narration*. 2009

Proceeding further through the book, after the trailers, there are five capital letters that correspond to five key words in the story. Rain, Signiconic, Violence, Planetarity and Custody. Starting from the upper word: rain is also part of the title, opens and defines Xanther's thread, in fact while it rains the girl has a seizure and finds the kitten; as we have seen, Signiconic is the word Danielewski uses to describe his writing and implies the use of visual capabilities concerning written words and pictures; Violence characterizes some threads, for example Luther's, the black one; Planetarity, probably indicates the fact that all the threads are connected and turn around the young girl and the kitten or the strange thread of the Orb; and Custody, this term is not very clear, it can probably relate to Xanther and Anwar relationship, because he is not her biological father, who is dead and Anwar only has her in custody, or maybe refers to the secret Orb or to the kitten, it is not clear at all. These are clearly other anticipations of the novel however they are not explained: it is all left to the reader's imagination or capability to predict, to comprehend and to elaborate.



Then there is a strange section, which opens with a picture of an artifact, that changes in each volume, followed by a story from a very remote past, set in the moment when men lived still in caves. There are also ‘voices’ that talk about the story; as we will see in details later on they are parameters of Narcon. In fact, the dots that precede the sentences are the same used by Narcon when it talks, but what these dots mean is not understandable. Are they a sort of punctuation? Are they a new alphabet or an ancient and forgotten one? Nothing is yet explained and it is hard to connect this section to the rest. It must be said that thanks to the fact that this book is the remediation of a TV series it can probably be assumed that some of these inputs will be clarified later in the series. This point gives the reader a kind of reassurance that eventually even the murkiest things will be explained in a way or another.



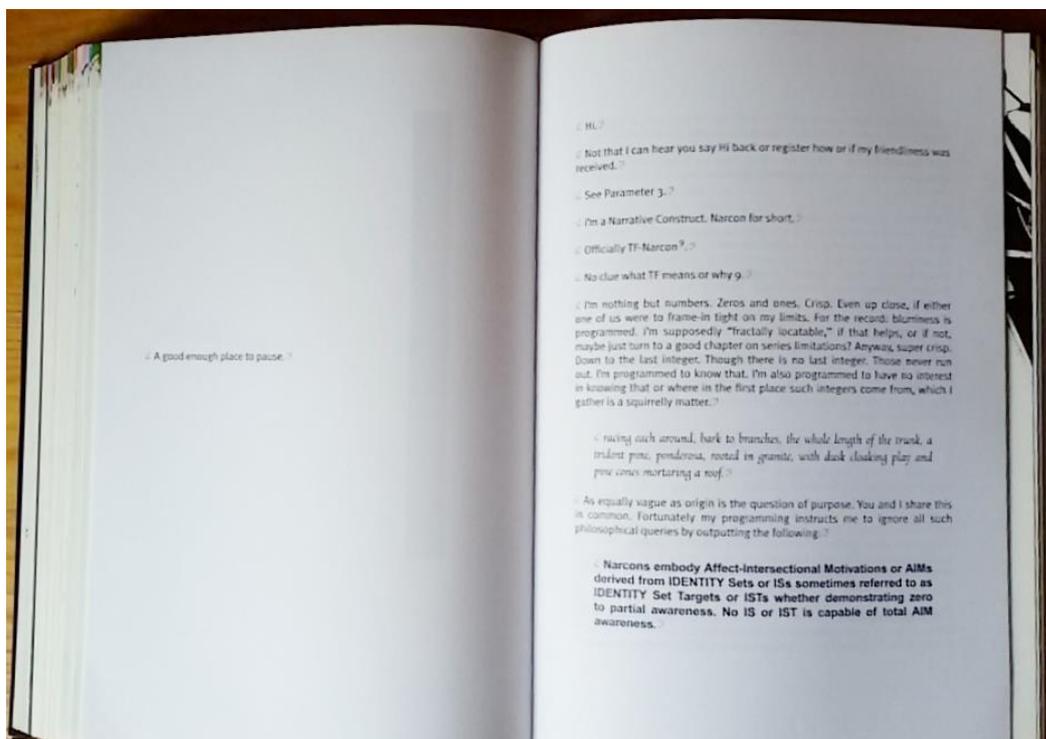
The name of the author, of the serial and the number of the volume precede a two pages' image on which the title of the volume is written. In this drawing the reader can identify an oriental building on the left, some wires, and a bridge, on the right there are some faded

old pictures and branches. These pages too seem to lead to some kind of anticipations or at least to some kind of contextualization of the spaces where the story takes places.



In between the chapters, there are 4 “intermezzos”, that work as pauses during the reading. They may be considered as ends of episodes, but it is not so straightforward. On one hand, the author never confirmed this ‘division’ of the book in episodes, on the other hand, in an interview he said that the first season will end (the series is then divided in seasons, exactly as a TV series) with the fifth volume, this would make 5 episodes per book which create a season of circa 25 episodes. Following this theory, this kind of division would make this attempt of remediation even more similar and recognizable by any TV series watcher. The division in episodes not only sets the rhythm and the time of the story, but also guarantees some pauses in between a book that apparently should be read in one go.

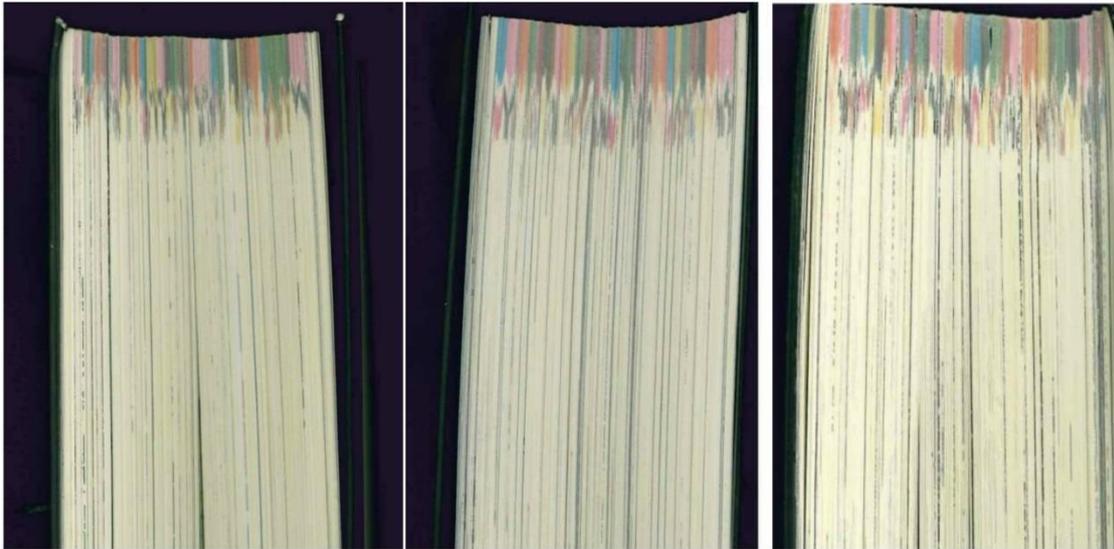
The division in episodes and in season is a characteristic that really defines a TV series, and it is what a reader expects to find in a book which claims to be a remediation of a TV series. The need for this kind of partition can be partly satisfied with these intermezzos, but the author never made it certain up to now that parting episodes is what the intermezzos are meant to do.



There is another 'pausing' section, that opens with the sentence "a good enough place to pause". This section is different from all the rest of the book, visually and narratively. First of all, the pages of this section are pure white while the rest of the book is less bright; each sentence and paragraph opens and closes with the same signs made by points, the same signs we find reading the book in the artifact section and throughout the threads'

chapters, for example when something needs to be specified, corrected or translated. The ‘narrator’ of this section is a Narrative Construct, shortened Narcon. Narcon is presented as the program that leads the narrative structure of the book, it cannot answer questions or feel anything, but it looks like an omniscient narrator: Narcon is divided in 9 subcategories that refer to the 9 threads, in fact, each thread has its own font and narrative structure. Narcon tells the reader that it must follow a structure and lists the parameters that govern this structure. This section is presented only in the first volume, but its comments are present in all the three published volumes. In a TV series, it can be compared to a voice-over, it is something that explains things but not even a character in the book up to now is aware of it. It is not always present and at a certain point it rebels and does not want to translate every single sentence in other languages and claims that it is not google translate. At that point the reader is not sure if this Narrative Construct follows the parameters properly or not and if it is not a Narrative Construct what is it? This question cannot be answered for the moment.

The nine threads of the series are identified with the main characters: Xanther, Luther, Anwar, Jing Jing, Astair, the Orb, Oz, Isadorno and Shnorhk. Each chapter has a page covered with an image on which the name of the chapter and an epigraph are printed. The drawings and the epigram change for each chapter. As previously mentioned, each thread has its own color and font that makes it always recognizable because it never changes.



11

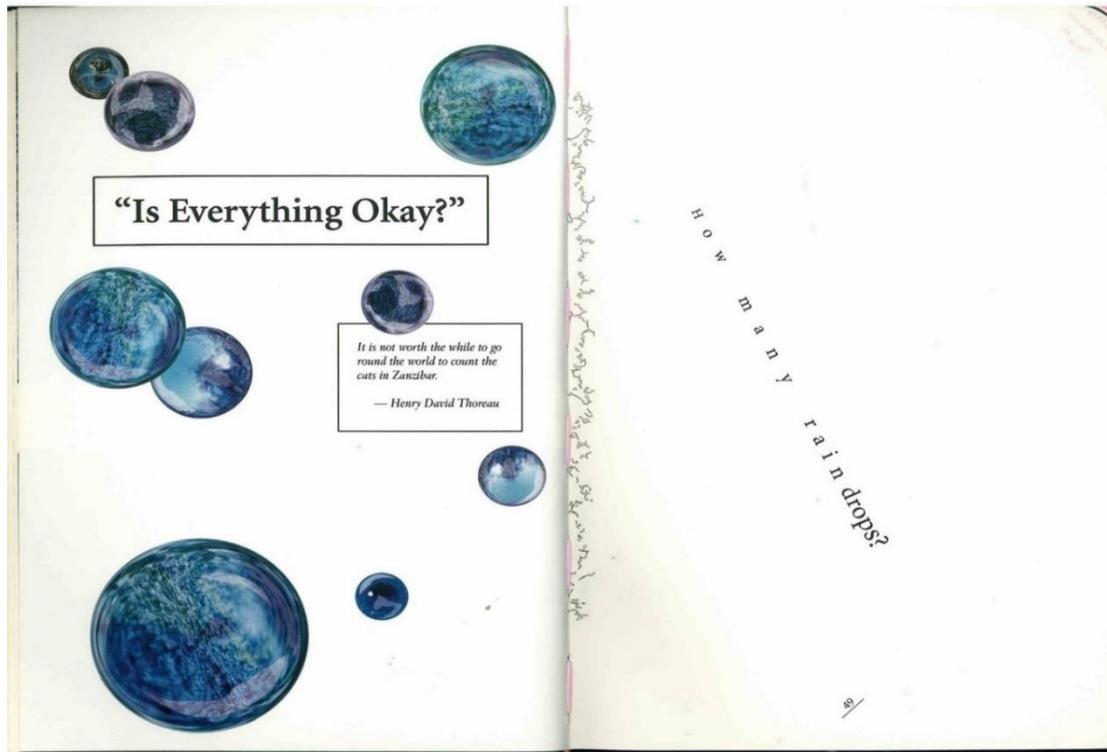
Each book has nine threads, characterized by nine different but repeated colors. The threads follow one another without any recurrent scheme in the three published volumes, creating 30 different chapters. The use of different colors makes the threads easily recognizable by the reader so that he/she knows who comes next in the story. This permits him/her to skip the threads he/she is not interested in and it gives the possibility to go directly to the more interesting one. In this way, the threads are easy to find also backwards if the reader wants to reread something he did not understand or he/she has forgotten. The colored threads can be useful as a sort of rewind and fast forward to go to most interesting parts or, as I mentioned before, to come back to something unclear. This is something similar to watching a series online or on a DVD, because the public has the power to decide which part to watch again or to skip.

¹¹ From left to right: *One Rainy Day in May*, *Into the Forest* and *Honeysuckle and Pain*



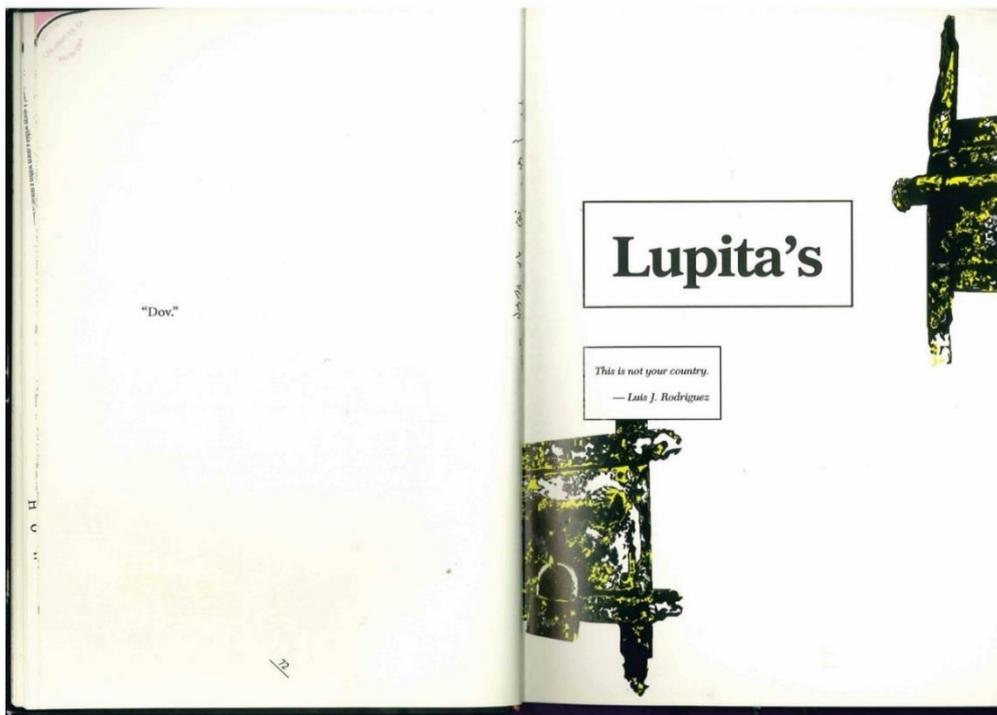
The first page of each chapter has on the upper right corner a little-colored triangle, which represents the thread that is going to be read. In the same corner, there is the time, the place and the day in which what is written is taking place. The same temporal and spatial indication are placed at the same corner of the last page of the chapter. This information

ushers the reader directly into the story, which starts in medias res, without causing too much confusion. At least the reader knows when and where the story is taking place. These colored corner function also as a tag, in fact as soon as the reader sees the color he/she knows what he/she is going to read. This concept reminds the reader more of web services and software than to TV series. To get back to TV series remediation it is interesting to underline the fact that the attention to the characters' emotional and psychological sphere is really important in this book. In fact, all the main characters have their own thread in which the story telling focuses only on their stories. It is very likely that all the threads are going to cross their paths sooner or later, but for the moment they have their own moment of glory and attention. This is not true for Xanther, Astair and Anwar who already know each other and are already connected, their threads are intersected from the very beginning because they are a family. What is really different from other series is that usually most of the characters meet in the first episode, in this case we have an entire volume in which only three characters know each other just because they are part of the same family. It is interesting because usually we have this kind of 'zooming' in the protagonists' lives later in a series typically to explain some decisions or actions or why they are in a certain place in a certain time, in this case we have already a close focus on their life before they meet. I previously said that every main protagonist has its own thread in which the emotional and psychological aspects of the character have a certain space; it must be noticed however that as far as the first volume is concerned only few threads have a well presented introspective outline, the other will be developed in the next volumes.



The first thread the reader meets in the first volume *One Rainy Day in May* is the pink one: Xanther's. The fact that her coded color is the same pink of the title could mean that her thread is the most important. In fact, her thread is the most detailed and complete for the moment. Her thread is narrated in third-person from the girl's perspective.

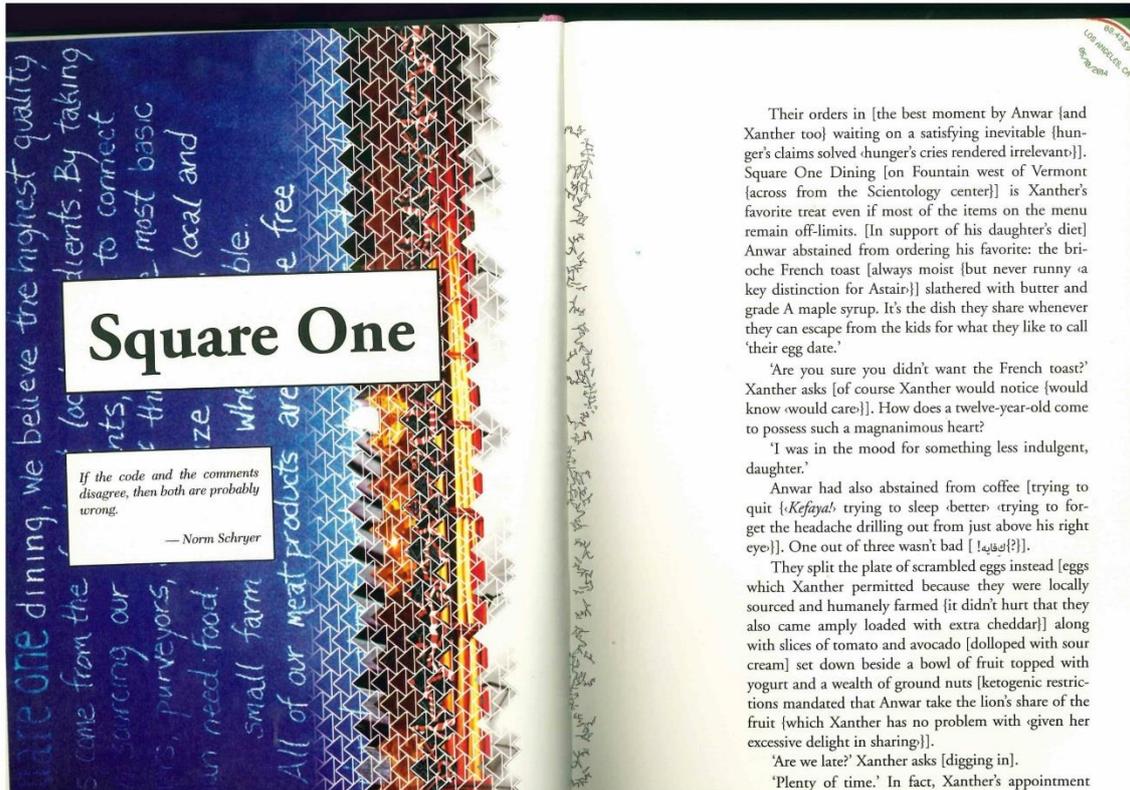
Xanther is a twelve year old girl who suffers from epilepsy and sometimes has seizures which are visually represented in the book. She has long, usually braided, black hair, braces, she wears glasses and she loves pink. The reader is told that she lives with her family and they have moved many times because of her parents' jobs and her problems in schools. She has the common problems of a girl approaching the teenage plus the problems connected with epilepsy.



Luther is the member of an East L.A. gang. He is firstly described as a Hispanic tattooed, hooded man with big white socks and many scars. His chapter is narrated in third-person, from Luther's perspective. The language that characterizes his chapter is a bit difficult for a reader which is not accustomed to urban slang or gang jargon. In fact, there are many expressions referring to drugs, pimps, and prostitutes, which is the context in which Luther's story takes place.

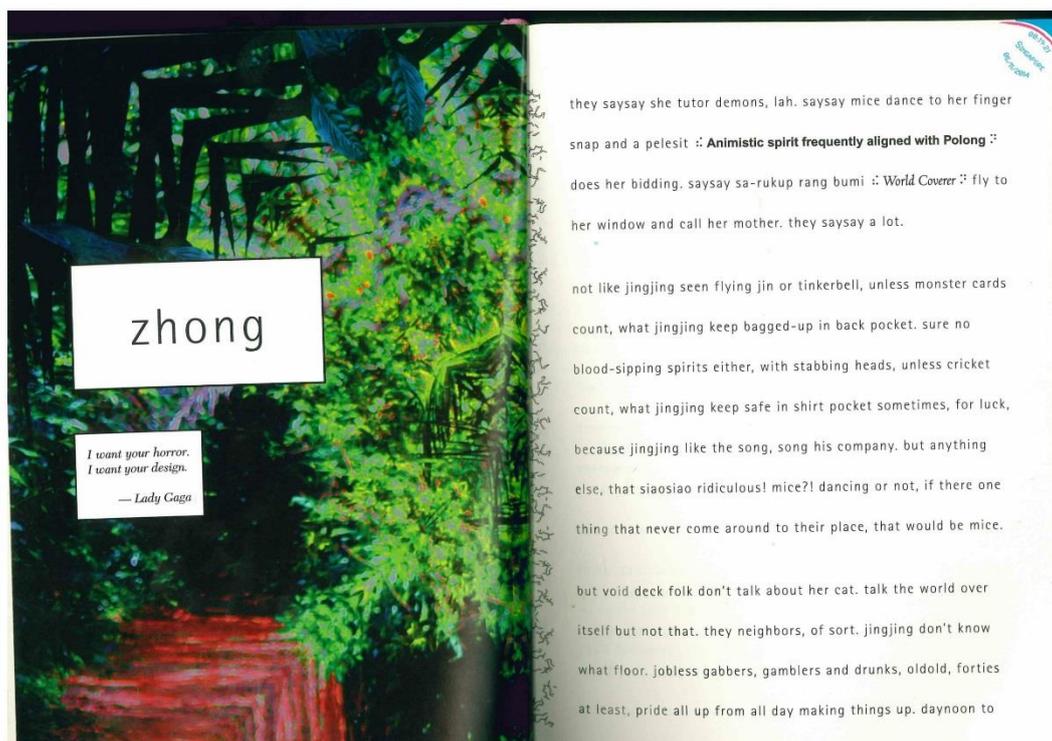
The layout is regular, there are only a few pages with drawings or with few sentences in a page. This neat and almost regular form is in contrast with what happens and to the setting. In fact, many times during the narration what is happening is not clear and the reader gets lost in flashbacks and memories. Each chapter finishes with something that

leaves suspense in the reader who wants to know what happened and what is going to happen next.



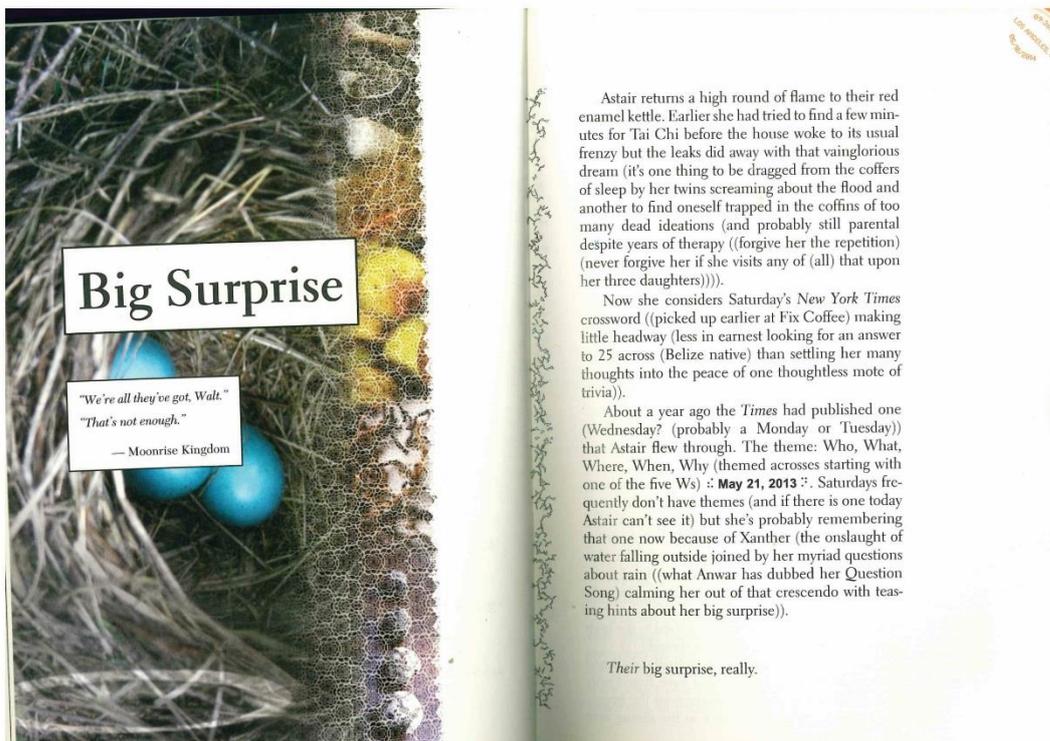
The third thread is the green one and its main character is Anwar. He is Xanther’s father, he is a programmer and he is from Egypt. In fact, there are some expressions in Arabic that are not always translated, as in the black thread with Spanish. The narration is a third-person narration from Anwar’s perspective and his language is an educated and precise one. His thoughts are elaborated through parentheses which add or correct something in his thought. He calls Xanther “daughter” but he is the one telling the reader that he is not her biological father. He started dating Astair (Xanther’s mother) when she was three

months pregnant and expecting the little Xanther. Xanther's biological father is Dov, a soldier who died because of a bomb explosion. Even though Anwar is not Xanther's father their relationship is exactly a father daughter's one. He is very paternal and tries to answer all Xanther's questions. Anwar is a calm, reflective and intelligent person; these qualities are tested by Mefisto, who is a close friend of Anwar and for whom Xanther feels a strong respect. Mefisto used Anwar and Astairs' contacts for a prank, they receive a huge amount of emails, messages and calls from people who wanted to try to win money, or were looking for any kind of information and other fake ads made by Mefisto.



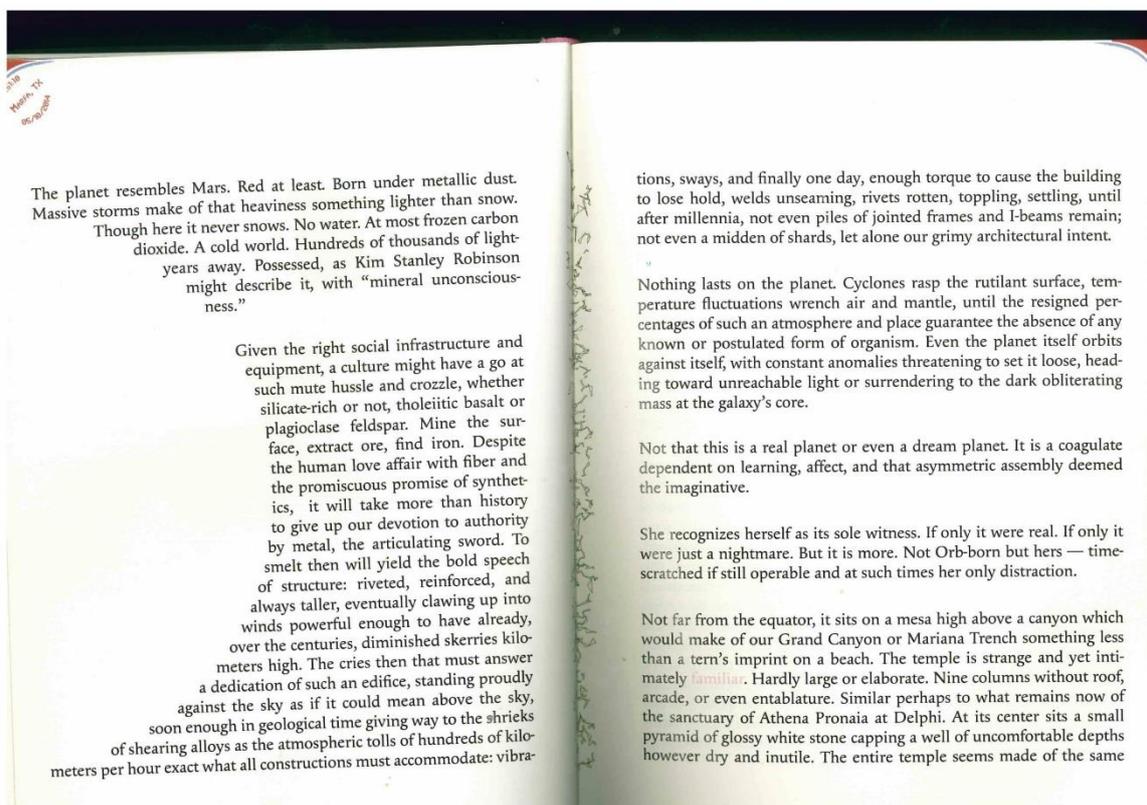
The blue thread opens in Singapore. The first thing we notice is the layout, which is clear and with a wide line spacing. As soon as we start reading it the clear structure gives way

to a more complicated language. The narrator is JingJing, a man who lives with his aunt in Singapore. JingJing follows his aunt because she has supernatural and healing powers and she was demanded by a very rich businessman whose child is sick. As his name suggest, he is not English, but Asian, probably Chinese, and his narration is difficult to understand because it is full of literal translations from his mother tongue. For example, he repeats words two times which is a structure taken from the Chinese language, moreover there are many languages used in these chapters and most of the sentences are not translated, neither by JingJing nor by Narcon, which at page 104 rebels after a Japanese sentence and says “Really? Not your Google bitch”.



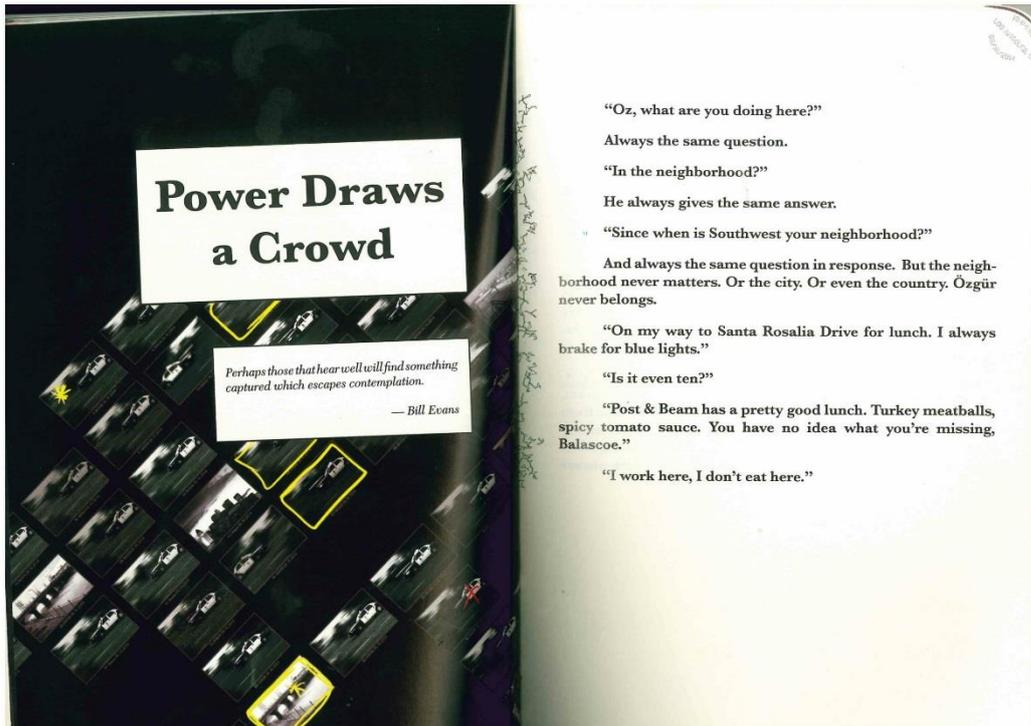
The orange thread is Astair's, Xanther's natural mother. She is a therapist in training with three daughters: Xanther, Shasti and Freya (the twins). She is a mother and has the typical problems of working moms, she must cope with work, motherhood and her studies. The telling follows a third-person narration from Astair's perspective.

Parentheses interrupt her narration and contain her thoughts even more manifestly than in her husband's thread. This is interesting because it underlines how her thoughts are constructed; parentheses frequently contain what she really thinks but does not dare to say aloud. Sometimes her thoughts can become very complex because of this enormous amount of parentheses that confuse the origin and the development of the sentence. This is of course a very effective way to go inside a character's mind but it must be said that some thoughts are likely to be read more than once to be understood.



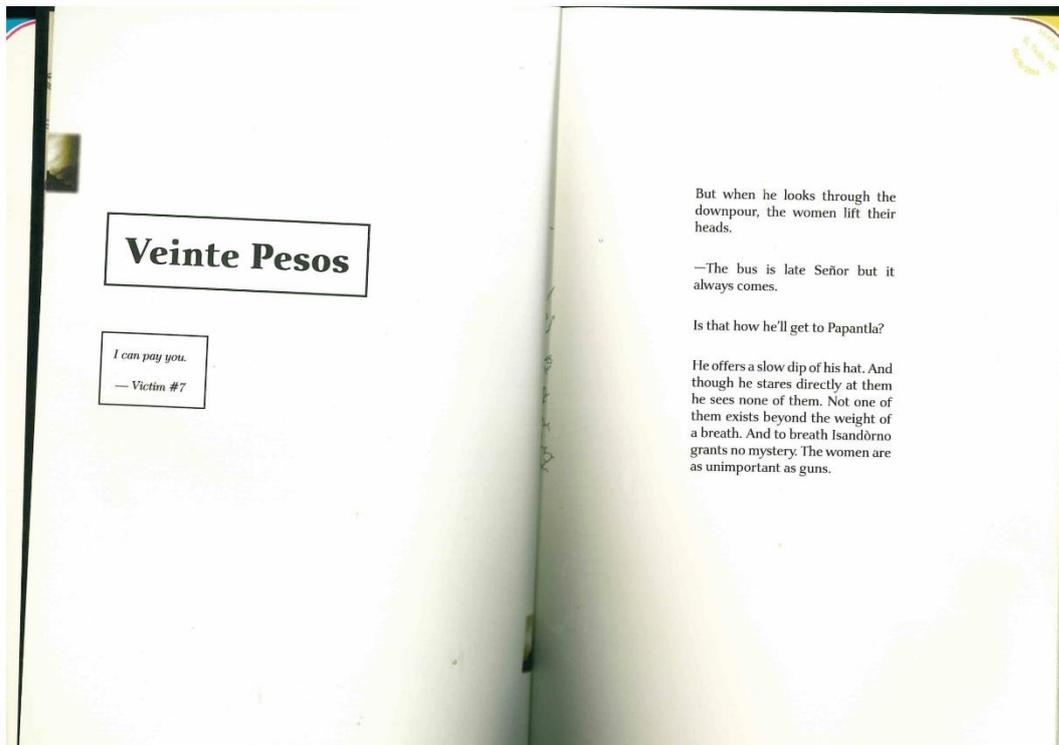
The following thread is the Orb, which is a mysterious object kept by some scientists. The narration is in third-person from their perspective. Due to this strange object, they must keep running away and hiding from unknown people. The layout of this thread represents the Orb itself and it 'moves' through the pages of the book. The Orb is clearly the main theme of this thread and its importance is also represented graphically by this blank sphere that occupies almost half the page, and in some cases almost the entire page.

Connected to this strange object there are a lot of secrets: what is the Orb? Who build it? Is it an alien evidence? Is it a human project? Where does this thing come from? What is its usefulness in the world? Is it dangerous? All these questions cannot be answered for the time being, but the story has just begun. Probably they will be all answered later, however it is not possible to know when; all that the reader can do is to imagine and make his/her own theories about it.



The grey thread is detective Oz's, it is narrated in third-person from his perspective. He works in Los Angeles and he is investigating gang violence. His work is all his life. The reader does not have much information about him because his thread is not yet well developed and also Oz as a character is not yet defined. He was just presented with few facts that give some input for his storyline but for the moment this is all the reader gets. It can be imagined that his thread will be the classic crime/detective plot that everyone watched at least once.

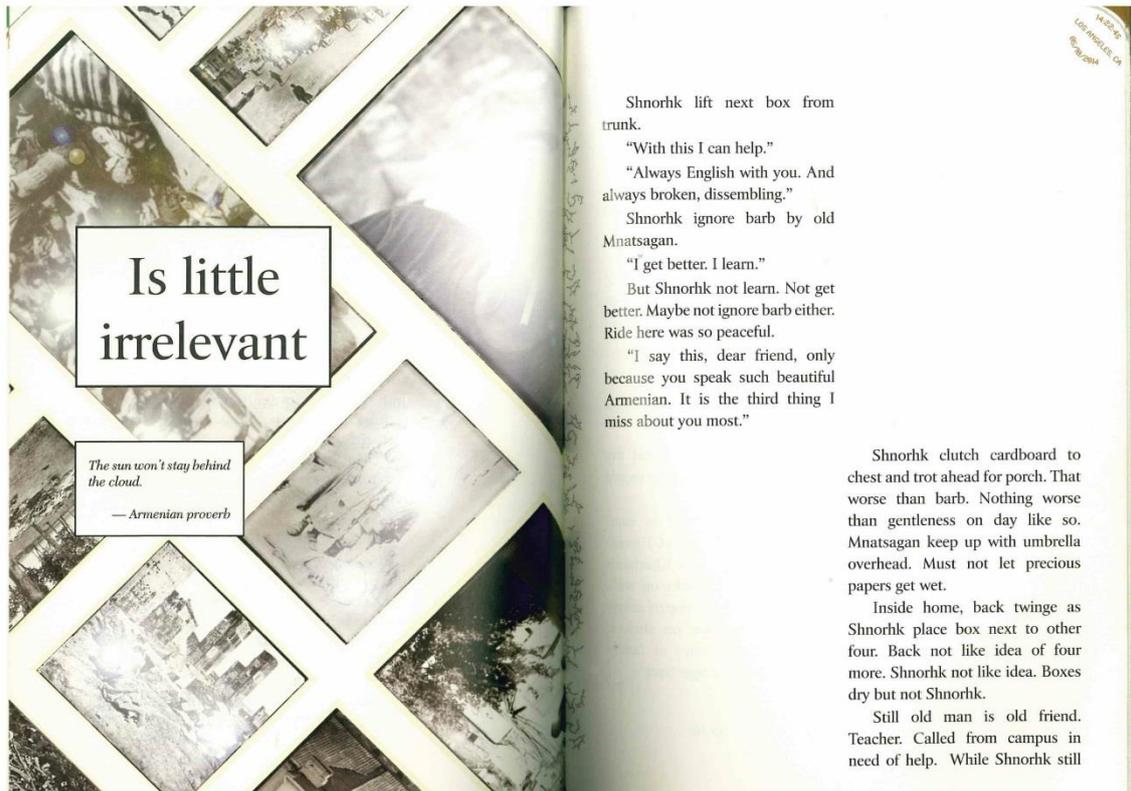
Oz is after a gang and it is possible that this thread will end being connected with Luther's thread, the reader has some evidence of it in the second and third volume when some names seems to correspond in both threads. Moreover, in TV series (usually) sooner or later all the plots collide in a bigger and more complex plot, which is something the reader could expect here too.



Isadorno is represented by the yellow thread. His story is narrated in third-person from his perspective. He is a mysterious man, he is working his way through Mexico and very little is known about him. As Oz's thread, Isadorno's is also not well defined, neither the story line nor the character. The reader has even less information about this story than the others, but for what it is known, he seems to be related to organized crime or at least with some shady business. These clues can lead the reader once again to think about a plot potentially interweaving with Luther and Oz's threads sooner than the others because of the similarity of the themes represented.

Its layout is very basic and minimal. The pages are written with a regular font, nothing that mixes graphics and texts. Compared with other threads this is very plain, the text

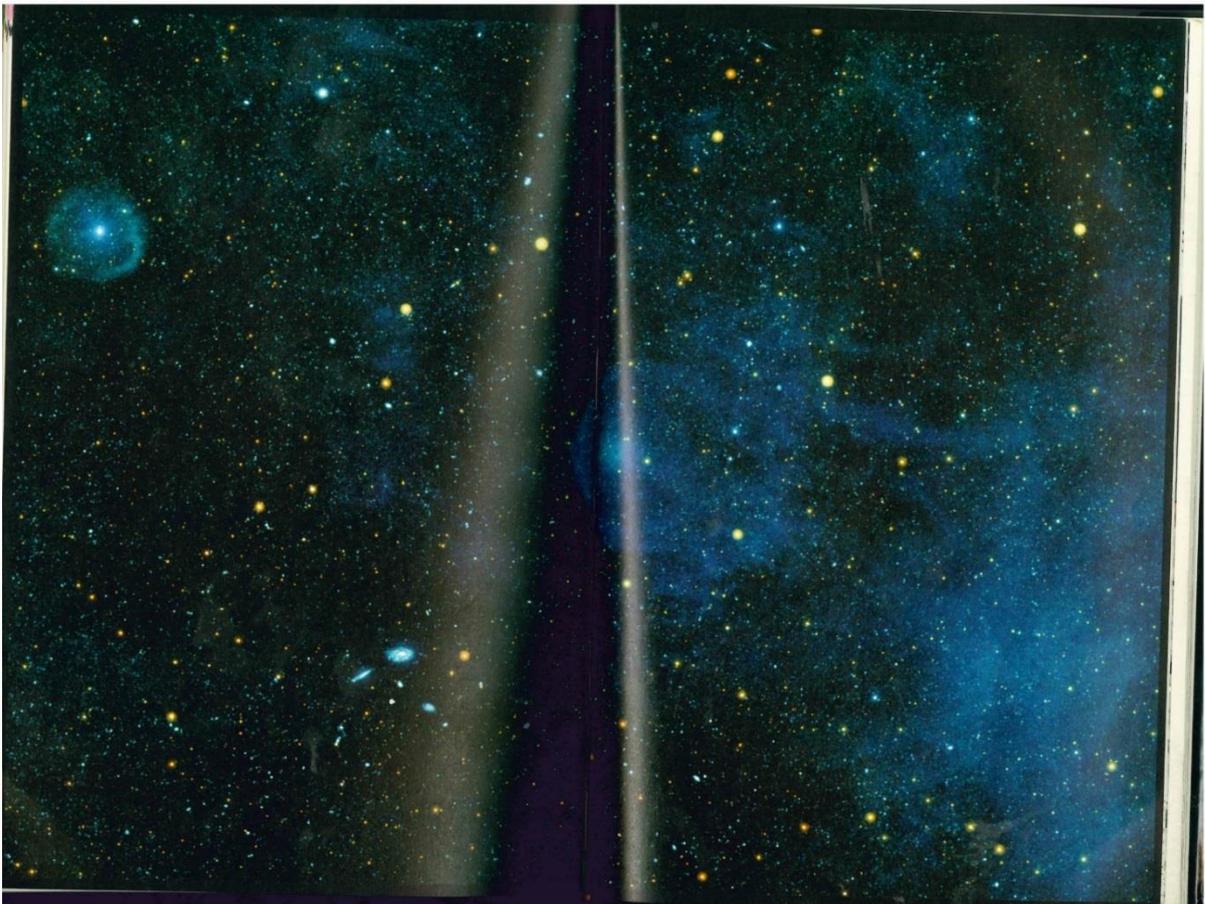
forms a quite small rectangular in the center of the page and the structure does not vary through the chapters.



The last thread presented in the first volume is the brown one, its main character is Shnorhk. This thread too has a third-person narration from the character's perspective. He is a Taxi driver of Armenian origins. Not very much is known about him, just that he lives with his wife, he is humble, proud of his driving license and has an illness that makes him cough blood.

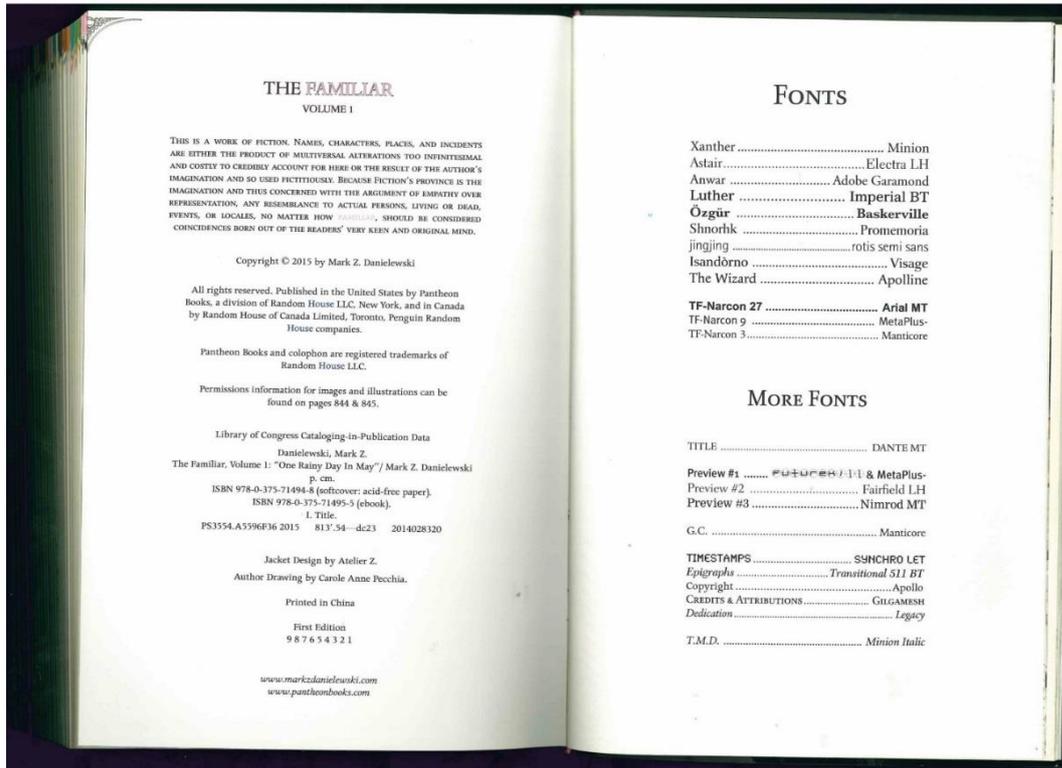
He is probably looking for information about his people or maybe he is doing a research about what happened to his people. It is not clear what he is doing with all the crates he

unloads in his house. It must be said that his character seems to suffer and not only because of the illness but his suffering seems connected with the crates. Few information is given about those crates, what they contain or where they come from. The reader has to wait for the other volumes to know more about it. Its layout is formed by two rectangles positioned to the opposite side of the page, one is on the top left and the other on the bottom right.



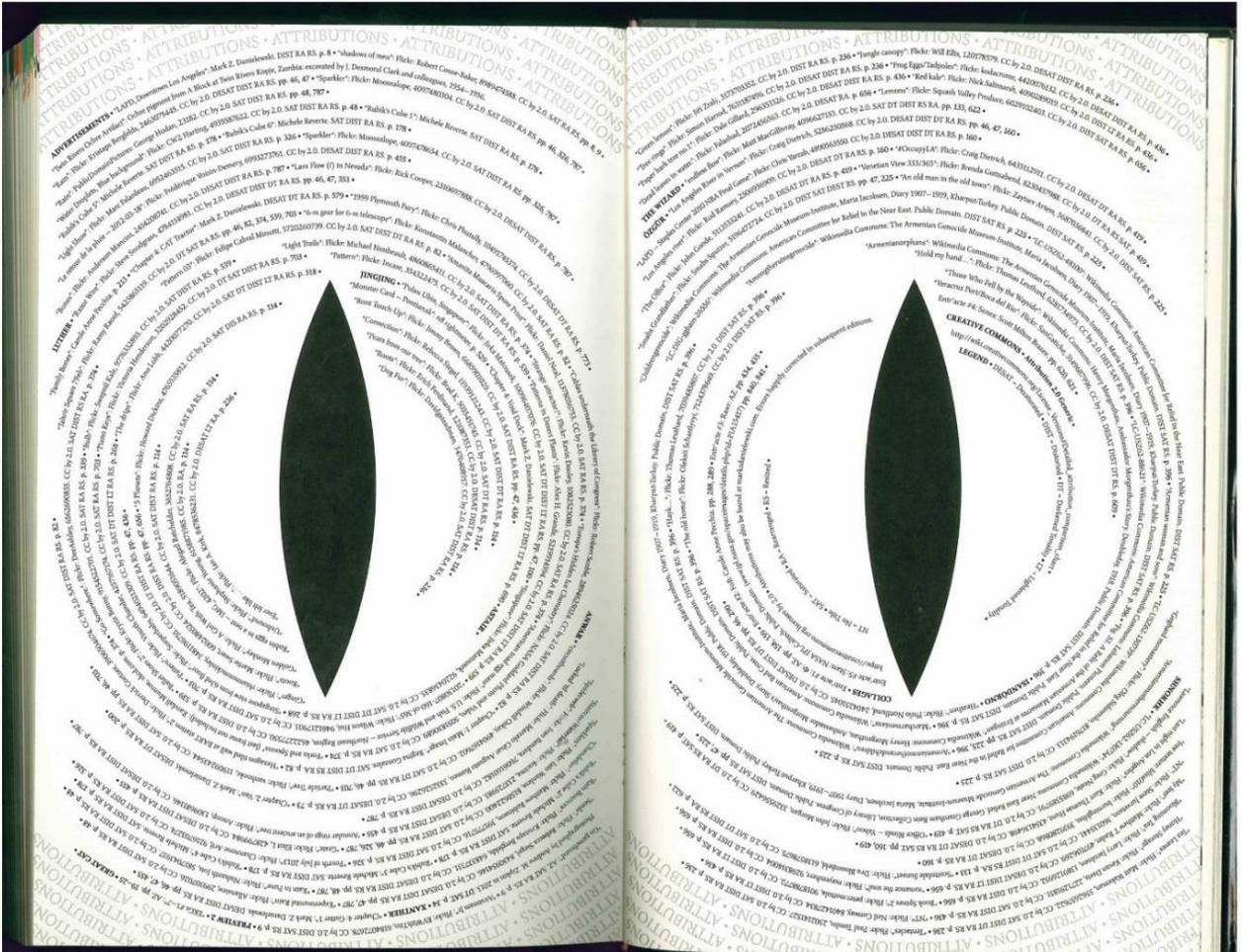
If the first part of the paratext can be compared to the opening theme of a series, the last part of the book can certainly represent the closing theme. It must be noticed that the ‘opening theme’ of the book is much more similar to a TV series than the ‘closing theme’, which follows a bit more a book structure. In fact, skipping to the end of the book the reader finds a two pages’ image representing outer space, probably it refers to the concept that everything started (and will end) there. It can also represent a creation of a new world or a parallel universe in which the story develops, or it can remind the reader that what he/she reads is not of this world but comes from another. It is not possible to define with a high level of certainty what this image refers to but it can be said that the reference to the universe and different worlds are many; the reader is immersed from the beginning in a new world and in the end, he/she is requested to leave in the same way he/she has arrived, he/she should emerge from the story.

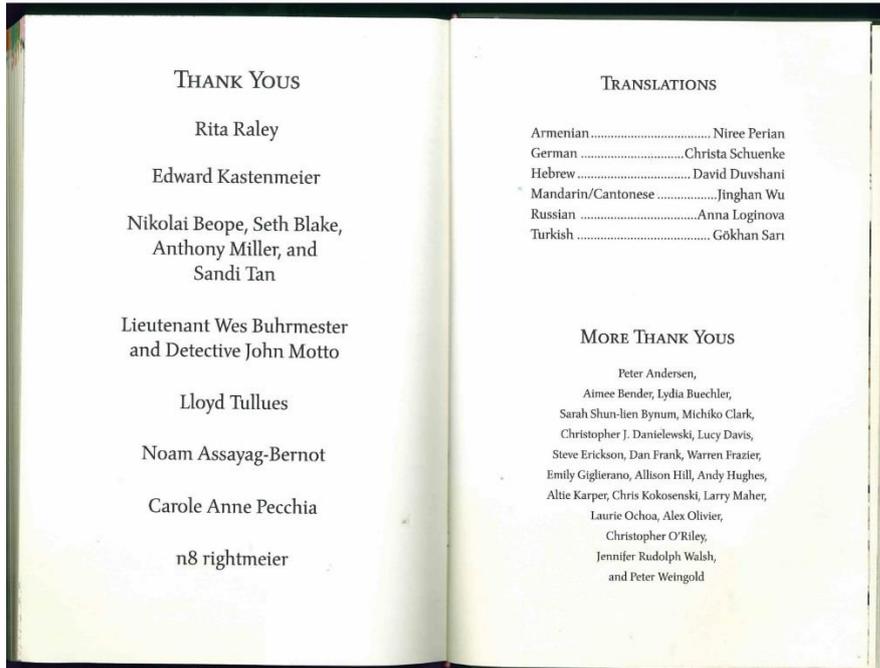
This image opens the part that can be compared to the ‘final theme song’ of the series in which the people who contributed to the creation of the ‘pilot volume’ and the other volumes of the series are named and some anticipation of the following volume is presented.



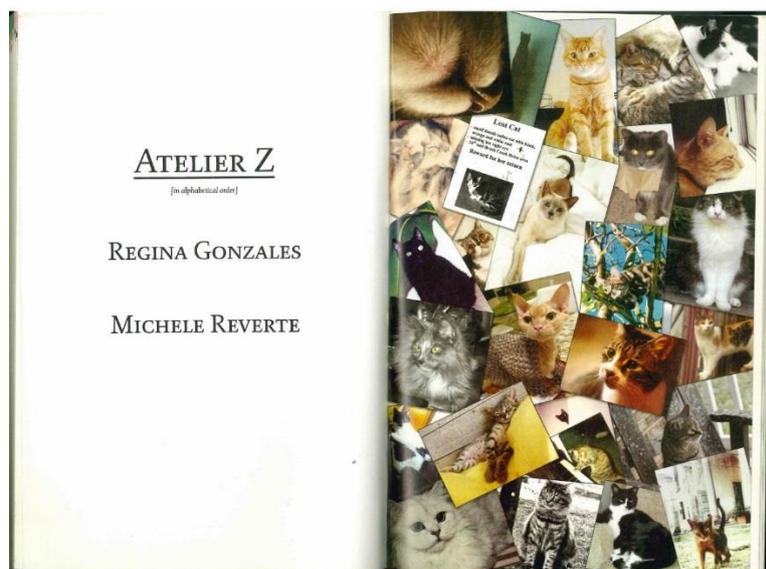
It follows the edition notes. As I mentioned before, this page of the book follows the construction of typical books, in fact, it has a regular structure that gives some general information about the book as I mentioned earlier. This is one of the few pages that maintains a certain structure the reader expects to find in other ordinary books. On the other page we find the main fonts and other fonts used in the book. This structure puts in relation the text with the graphical aspect of the book, which are both important for the realization of the volume. In fact, “typography visualizes textual ‘difference’ and identifiable textual elements, voices, ways, styles and modes of writing, but it also represents the material side and the technologies of writing, from the fountain pen, the typewriter and book print to the digits of electroni and multimedial hypertext” (Hallet, 138-139). Turning the page another uncommon layout takes the reader back to the novel

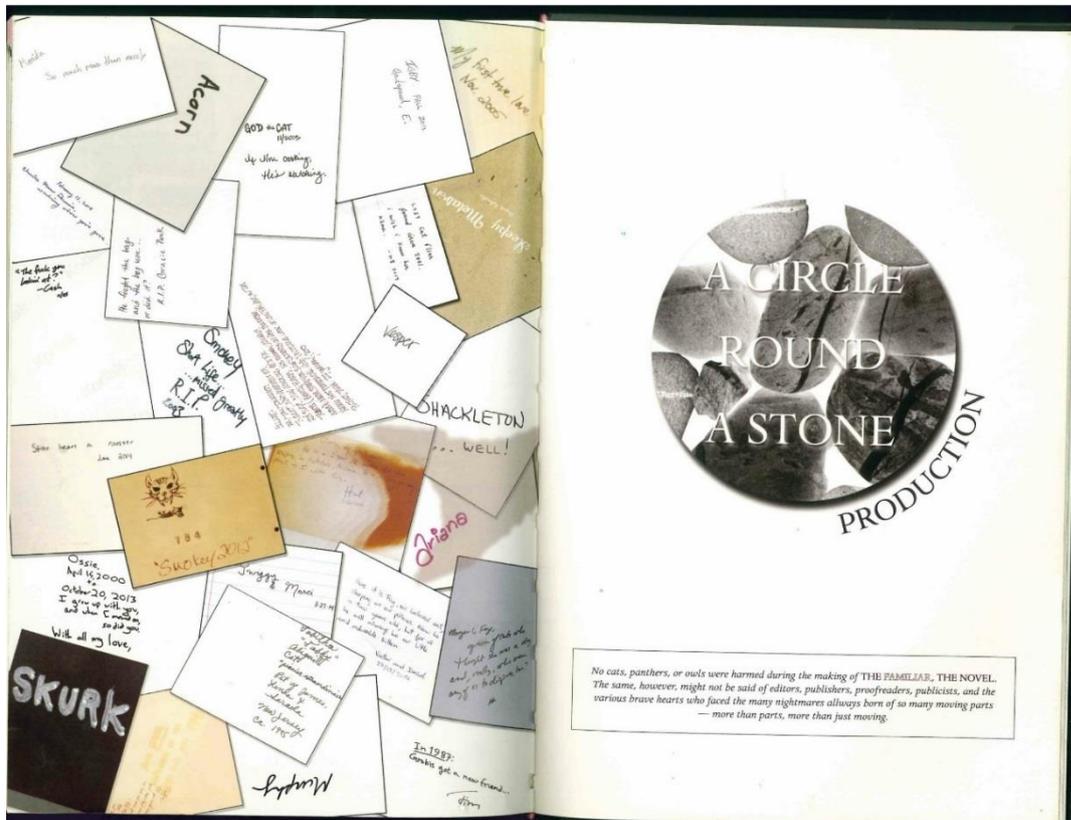
he/she has just finished to read. These two pages could represent cat's eyes, probably the newly found kitten of the story.





Two pages of ‘thank you’s’ and the name of the translators take the reader again to a more common layout, but the second part of ‘thank you’s’ is a calligram and it forms an image which seems a mushroom. In these pages the visual and verbal are presented both in a very moderate way, in fact, there are no bright colors, but a simple black and white.





After the acknowledgements, there is a page dedicated to two members of the Atelier Z, which is the staff that helped Danielewski to create all the graphics in the volumes. Following this, there is a page full of cats' pictures and another one with cards written by the owners of these or other cats. Danielewski himself asked on his Facebook page to post the picture of his followers' cats because some of them would have been chosen to be in this segment of the book. And again, the "a circle round a stone production" under which there is a small section where the author guarantees that no cats or animals in general were harmed in the making of this series, but the same cannot be said of his colleagues.

COMING SOON . . .

THE FAMILIAR

2

FALL 2015

And Oria the Owl fell.

Talons tucked away. Great wings too.

Only rectrices carve the air into a direction—

toward that moving moment

below,

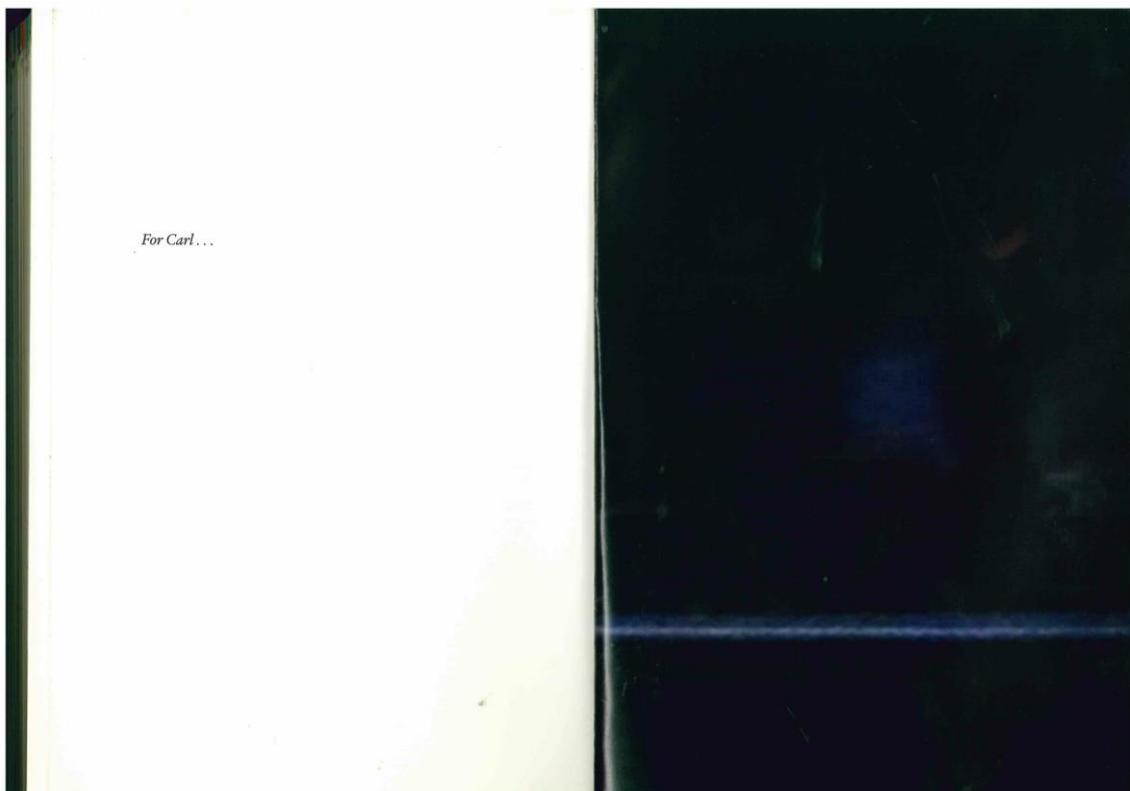
squirming along,

blind to the great amber eyes fixed on its useless progress.

*Even in the wind of this descent Oria hears the bleating
racket of her prey as it struggles across the field.*

She's not the only one.

The last section of the volume is an anticipation of what will come in the following volume and when it will be released. What is strange is that what happens in this anticipation does not actually occur in the following volume. It is probably something that is going to come together later in other publications, or maybe not. It is not possible to tell anything for sure, because there are a lot of books still to be published and things can change with every new volume.



There is also a dedication in each volume released for the moment.



The book ends up with the continuation of the same universe of the beginning. To conclude, the book maintains a fixed paratextual structure: advertisements; anticipations; leitmotif made by title, publisher, and producer; the episodes divided by intermezzos and the preview of the “coming soon” volumes. All these sections can be compared to an intro theme and to a final theme that opens and conclude an episode of a TV series.

Other reasons that lead the reader to make a simultaneous comparison with a TV series can be thus summarized. (1) The episodes are linked together in a bigger plot that develops very slowly in the different volumes. This is also why it is difficult to establish where an episode ends and begins, also because there is no caption that suggests the fact that the intermezzos are meant to separate different episodes. (2) Most of the characters are not yet well defined, only few of them have already a distinct personality and a well-

formed characterization. The reader expects an evolution in the protagonists, both in the ones already “known” and in the ones not yet well-rounded.

2.3.2 Words and images: relationships and approaches

We already mentioned the fact that this volume is a multimodal book according to Hallet’s definition of multimodal. We can say that the particularity of this kind of novels is that the combination of various narrative modes forces the reader to employ different cognitive faculties at the same time. In fact, “readers will perceive them [narrative modes, An] as an integral part of the novel and will thus incorporate them in their cognitive construction of the narrated world and narrative meaning” (131).

Hartmut Stöckl in *The language-image-text – Theoretical and analytical inroads into semiotic complexity* argues that communication is always multimodal for two main reasons: “firstly, as humans are equipped with more than one sense, it seems fair to address all of them, if possible, in mediated communication. Secondly, what sign-users generally want from texts is the possibly perfect simulation of reality: semiotic objects are supposed to convey information in a true-to-life fashion, which reduces the discrepancy between the world depicted and the medium used” (205). It is agreed that reality has always been represented however, what man has tried to achieve was transparency of the medium in order to have the most realistic representation possible. Stöckl continues that the more senses are involved the more effectively and realistically the message can be perceived. Another reason why communication should be considered multimodal is the fact that all media are interrelated because one is the compensation for a communicative lack in the other. For example, verbal texts are

converted into movies or music to make them more effective and to give a more powerful perception of what is written. In this way, more than one sense is involved and the global impression is more accurate.

As previously highlighted, the book is a combination of words and images. Books of this kind are not something new, there are examples that date back to Middle Ages like illuminated manuscripts, or the more recent illustrated volumes or Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn*. It is important to consider which is the relation between words and images. First of all, it is important to mention that by 'word' we mean language, verbal communication in general both acoustic (oral) and visual (writing) and by 'image' pictures and visual communication; in this case, it is necessary to restrict the field to words and images printed on paper so that we exclude oral communication with its gestures, facial and eye communication and verbal images. We can identify different relations between words and images in printed paper: from a syntactic point of view, we can consider a temporal and a spatial relation. Temporally, words and images can be simultaneous, that is to say, that the reader is "struck by words and images at the same time; he cannot perceive them separately" (33) as we read in *Criteria for Describing Word-and-Image Relations* by Áron Kibédi Varga. He exemplifies simultaneity with comics, in which every image has its own speech bubble to complete it and words and image are perceived as a unit. Images and words alternatively can be consecutive, in fact, "the artist can be inspired by a preexisting image and writes ekphrasis, or by a preexisting text and paint some scene" (33). In this case, the reader only sees the picture or reads the poem, without being necessarily exposed to the other source text. It must be noticed that "this distinction implies that we must argue from the point of view of reception rather than production" (33) because considering production image and text always appear

consecutively because they are (usually) created by different artists, in case of one artist he/she usually creates one at a time. The spatial relation has two different categories: one that is related to quantity and the other to form. As far as quantity is concerned, the distinction is between a 'single object' and a 'series of objects'. What distinguishes one from the other is exactly the spatial context, in fact, Kibédi Varga argues that a poster, has it to be considered a single object, but it often appears with other posters on pillars, that can lead the beholder to think of a series. He continues "it is the socially determined place which influences the decision of the reader-beholder, whether he wants to consider an object single or part of a series" (35). Another distinction must be made in the series category concerning quantity: they can be perceived as fixed or moving. A fixed series is a series of objects that do not move, for example, church windows are fixed, it is the beholder who has to move, on the contrary, the beholder's eyes are fixed when they watch a movie which is a moving series. Single objects and series lead to another distinction, concerning their function. Usually, single objects have an argumentative function, which means that they highlight only one concept or a series of concepts, even though painters have always tried to narrate different scenes in a single painting. Series of images (accompanied with words or not) are frequently considered narrative "because they require us to spend time on them and to follow them" (36). Considering form there are two distinctions to bear in mind: identity and separateness. In the first case, words and image fuse completely; in the second, the two parts are distinct. In the category of identity two subdivisions can be identified: calligraphy and visual poetry. As Kibédi Varga notes "calligraphy is the purest and most radical example of fusion of word and image because in it we cannot decide whether a letter becomes an image or an image a letter" (37). In visual poetry, the identification is as complete as in calligraphy, nevertheless, the

difference is in the ‘direction’, as letters and words emulate pictures but never the other way round. Visual poetry has a long tradition, we have various examples in Guillaume Apollinaire’s poems like *Reconnais-toi* (1915)

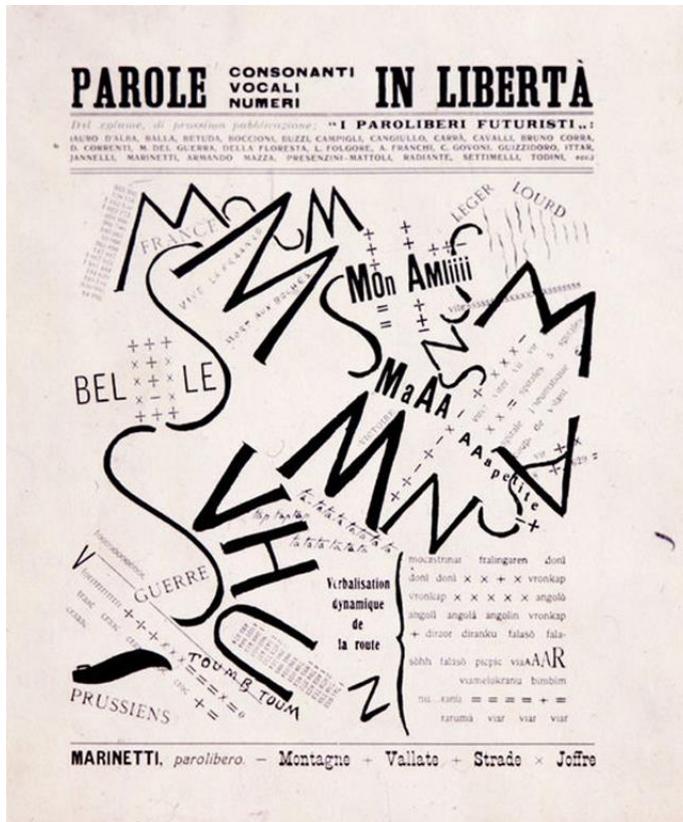


12

In this calligram, Apollinaire was inspired by a certain girl and he imitates this real picture of Lou (Louise de Coligny-Chatillon) and draws a poem on her own image. Another example can be found in Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s poems in a more abstract way, for example, he combines words and lines in the poem *After the Marne, Joffre Visited the*

¹² Picture of Louise de Coligny-Chatillon and Guillaume Apollinaire’s poem *Reconnais-toi* (1915)

Front by Car (1919) and tries to suggest with the use of M and S the itinerary followed by Joffre with his car when he drove to the front after the battle of the Marne.

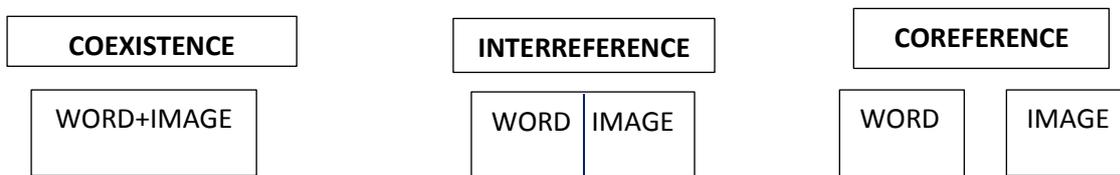


13

In this case, the path is just evoked because an actual picture did not inspire Marinetti, but a path is something that exists and everyone knows what a path is. When we look and try to read these kinds of poems we perceive them in two different ways, because we are looking at them and we want to read them. Kibédi Varga argues that “to read a poem is to betray it; to restore it to verblality is to eliminate half of its meaning” (37). In fact, the visual part is as important as the meaning per se. In most of the cases the reader/beholder

¹³ Filippo Tommaso Marinetti’s poem *After the Marne, Joffre Visited the Front by Car* (1919)

can distinguish words from the image and this union can be divided into three different levels: a) coexistence, in which words and image cohabit in the same spatial frame; b) interference, words and image are parted but presented on the same page, for example an illustration and a text; c) coreference, words and image are not presented on the same page but refer to the same thing or event. The following graphic is used by Kibédi Varga in his book at page 42 to visually show these three categories.



Talking about contiguity we can also talk about inclusion. For inclusion, we mean the presence of words in an image. There are four degrees of inclusion: representation of words in pictures, such as a picture of a written page; pictorialization of words, they lose their utilitarian character and become aesthetic as in Futurist poetry; inscription, where the picture is used as a surface to write; and indexical inscription where words are inscribed in the picture and indicate other objects in the picture. In Kibédi Varga's text, he mentions a series of experiments in a 1986 study conducted by Yvette Hatwell on haptic perception versus visual perception. It suggests that "seeing might be the highest sense hierarchically, superior even to hearing" (32) but considering sight if we take a close look at word and image which is the one subordinated to the other? Is there a hierarchy? Kibédi Varga answers reconsidering the categories of quantity. In fact, "in single verbal-visual objects, image dominates only in the exceptional case when the given image is so well known to the beholder that he does not need any words to identify it or

to grasp its meaning and message; in all other cases, image is subordinated to the word” (42). Moreover, he points out that this is true only for ‘regular’ objects, but this is not applicable for modern artworks because “painters have made several attempts to free painting from verbal dominance by altering the relation between the title and its visual reference” (42) an example can be the previously mentioned Magritte. Considering series, “the dominance of the word is less obvious. Successive images can ‘explain’ each other; words can be either functional and indispensable or simply ornamental” (43). In fact, comics can be divided into the ones whose comprehension is released from words and the ones that necessitate words. All these word-image relations are taken in consideration in cases in which words and images appear simultaneously, but if they are consecutive the relations are different. The main criterion is: which one appears first? If the word appears before the image we can talk of illustration, as in biology or narrative books; if the image precedes the word we can talk of ekphrasis (it is an exact description that should evoke or substitute the painting) or Bildgedicht (poems that are inspired by a painting or painter). The dominance is of the first object published because the first one is unique, what comes after can be multiplied and it is an interpretation of the first object. The dominance of images on words and vice versa is not the only semantic relationship. We can also have a complementarity in which words and images are both necessary to comprehend a concept or a message. Redundancy, when the text not only conveys the same message of the image and vice versa but is a mere repetition of meaning. Discrepancy and contradiction are forms of mistaken word and image combination because words and images do not fit together. This can be a mere mistake or can be used to create confusion in the reader/ beholder and cause him/her to think of it more than he/she would, this technique is often used in advertisements.

Now that the main kinds of words and image relationships are explained we can focus on the book. We have already talked about the introductory and conclusive part of the volume and images are an important part of it because they are used to let the reader in the story world as if it was a TV series theme. In this part, I would like to concentrate on the words and images relations in the main body of the volume, the threads. Each thread, as I mentioned before, has its own visual features, its own layout, and its own font. Generally, this volume is characterized by (a) calligrams or visual writing, (b) blank or almost blank pages and (c) pictures, it is interesting to notice that not only the presence of images is important but also the lack of them is a remarkable characteristic. I decided to highlight these kinds of graphics because they are another example of Danielewski's attempt to remediate a TV series, in fact "graphic elements are not merely introduced in the place of verbal description; they represent the protagonist's and narrator's individual, specific way of looking at and conceiving of the world" (Hallet, 135). Hallet continues "they are neither supposed to represent the object itself, i. e. 'reality', nor do they simply substitute for verbal descriptions. [...] In that sense, they are visualizations of the human mind's capacity to construct the world according to human needs and wishes" (135-136). All of these visuals, help to convey the dynamism and the movement of a TV series, with the difference that the reader's eyes while reading the book have to move together with the graphics whereas watching TV, eyes are fixed.

(a) Calligrams and visual writing

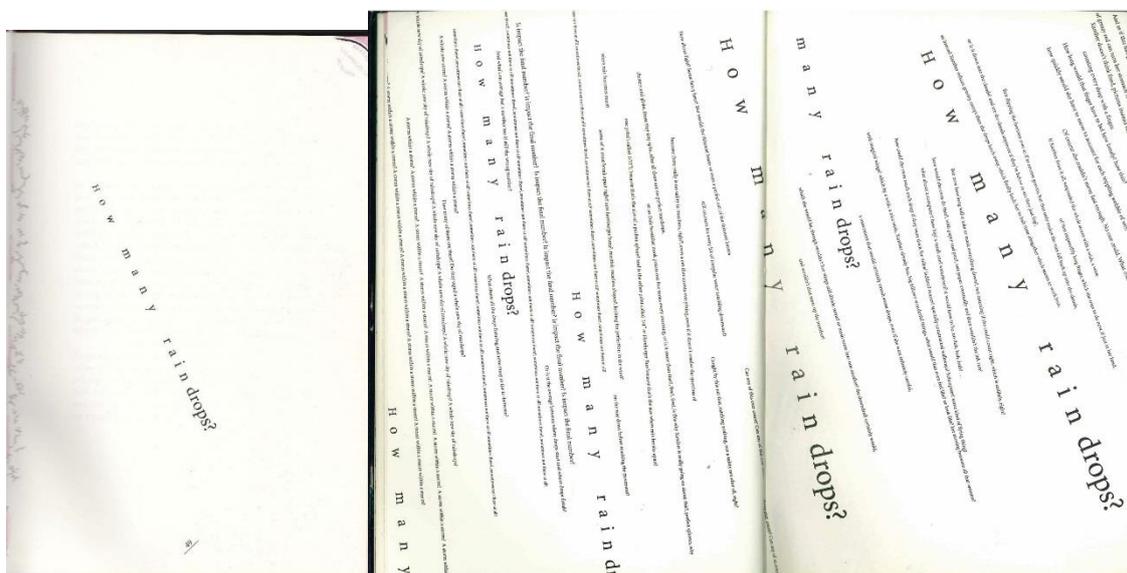
We previously mentioned visual poetry and calligraphy. In this volume, we cannot talk about poetry because the book is in prose, in this case, we will use the term visual writing

instead of visual poetry in order to describe the same kind of graphic with different forms of literature. In this section, we are going to discuss calligrams that are a big part of the graphic conception of the volume. According to the words and image relationships mentioned before, it can be said that in calligrams words and images are simultaneous because they are part of the same structure, they usually have a narrative function and coexist in the same space. Calligrams are useful tools to give the reader the visual and dynamic perception typical of TV series that usually is lacking in books. Calligrams here are used as a device to remediate a TV series in a book.

A calligram is “a design in which the letters of a word (such as a name) are rearranged so as to form a decorative pattern or figure (as for a seal)” (*Merriam-Webster Online*, Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 07 February 2017). Page 49 is the first page of the first thread (Xanther’s) and it opens with a question: how many rain drops? On the page, there is only this question that takes all the central part of the page and it is diagonal. The visual representation of this single question does not occupy the entire page but the author and his collaborators decided to leave it alone on the page. The question has its own space because it is crucial throughout the book, especially in the first chapter, in fact, it is represented many times because it provokes Xanther a seizure. We have it represented at page 51, 55, 62, 63, 64, 65, 68, and 69 only in the first chapter. The Atelier Z, which is Danielewski’s team, used the question not only to represent the rain but also to represent the seizure itself and this is very effective. In fact, it gives the reader the idea of how the weather is like and the sounds that could be present in that moment, such as the ticking of the rain on the car. A visually represented single sentence gives all these pieces of information without describing it explicitly with words, this is very similar to what happens in a series when a raining scene is presented, the description is not necessary to

understand and perceive or at least imagine the protagonists' perception. This graphic clearly has a narrative function and according to the previously mentioned spatial relations words and image coexist in the same space.

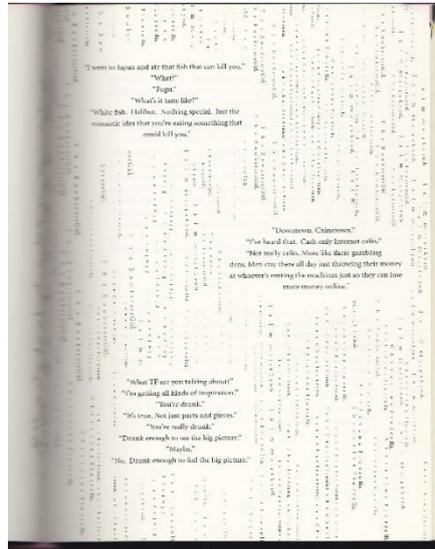
The seizure, as I said, is 'provoked' by the question because Xanther becomes obsessed with the counting of the rain drops. Visually, the question is written in vertical and it is recognizable with the rain falling, moreover, the texts have different dimensions so that they can represent the difference between the rain drops.



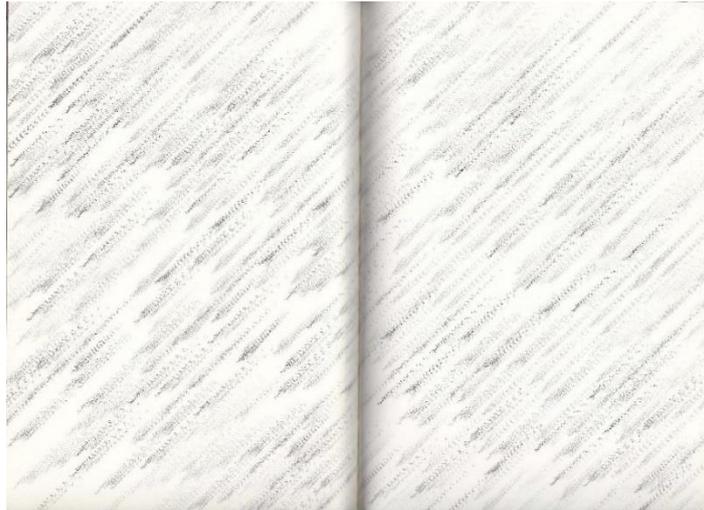
Proceeding with the images, we can notice an increase in the number of repetition of the question, that can represent not only the growing intensity of the rain but also of Xanther's seizure. The calligram here is part of the story, it does not represent something already said, it has a narrative function by itself.

We have a similar graphic at page 331, where vertical sentences represent rain. In this case, the graphic is announced by Xanther because she says that the rain was not only outside, but inside too, there is a rain of voices (330). This rain of words is interrupted by a 'speech bubble' which contains parts of dialogues between unspecified people in the

office. In this case, words and image coexist in the same page, but there is also a relation of coreference because the part of the text in which Xanther compares rain with voices is in another page.



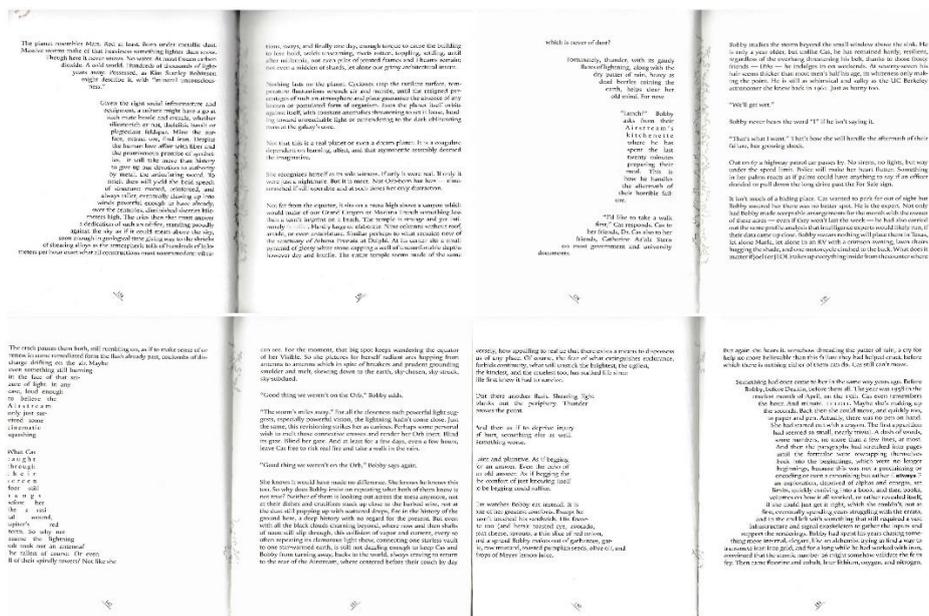
Gradually, the images representing the rain become more and more ‘aggressive’ because the rain becomes a rainstorm as we can see at page 478-479, 494-495 and 514-515. This representation allows the reader not only to imagine visually the rain, its movement, and its development but also to perceive its sound, firstly the ‘regular’ and soft falling of some drops and then the irregular and thunderous pounding of the rainstorm. This image help the reader to set the scene as if he/she sees the scene in a series.



At page 506, 507 the rainstorm seems to pause a moment and we enjoy a close look of the rain drops. The question is the same: how many rain drops? This time it forms exactly the drops and it is like the reader has a close-up of what the girl sees in that precise moment. She was focusing on each single rain drop to count them. The calligrams are effective because give the reader the impression of actually seeing the rain as if it was happening right in the moment of reading. It is a technique that visually allows the reader to see and not only read that it is raining during that rainy day in May.



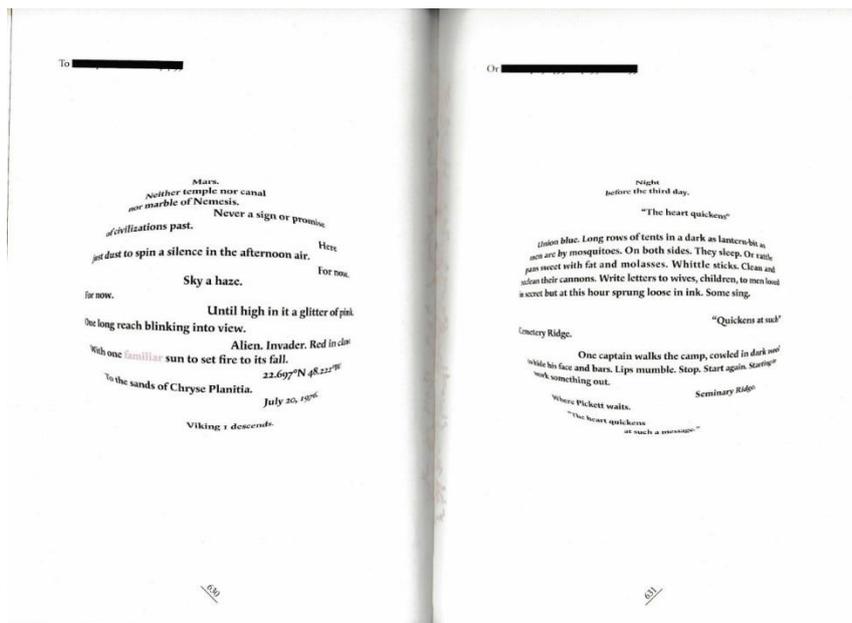
Another thread in which visual writing is very important is the Orb thread. As mentioned before, the text is written considering the form of this object. The first time it appears it seems to move from the right side of the page to the center and then to the left. One possible connection is with the moon phases, in fact, we can recognize the waxing crescent, the first quarter, the waxing gibbous and the full moon.



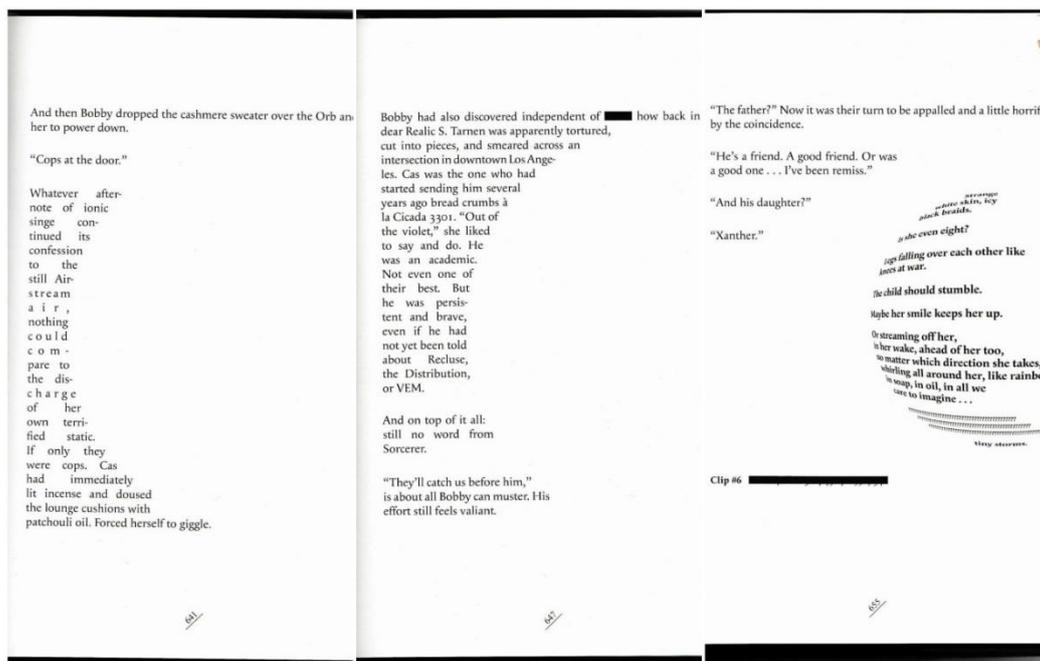
In this thread, the graphic is part of the narration but is has no narrative function per se, because it visually represents the main 'character' of the thread but the graphic itself does not tell the Orb story, in the sense that the blank circle itself does not say any story, it is just a circle. Nevertheless, this representation is important to give the reader a general idea of what the Orb looks like: a sphere.

In the second chapter, the image of the orb is no more a blank sphere in the page, but the words are included in it. The writing in the first Orb chapter and in the first pages of the

second is flat, but as the words start to be part of the sphere they become bold and give the impression of an almost 3D image. The words seem to be closer to the reader in the center of the sphere while the extremities of the sentence seem 'far'. The spatial relationship is always of coexistence because words and visuals are the same thing, they are blended together in one graphic.



In the last pages of the second chapter, the visual representation of the text seems to follow the last lunar phases: waning gibbous, the third quarter and the waning crescent.



Another thread that has many visual references is Astair's. As previously mentioned, her thoughts flow is represented with parentheses. They open and close thoughts and 'help' the reader to understand how she formulates them in her head. This flow is a bit chaotic, but it gives the right impression of her and her thoughts. For example, pages 118-119 are an example of the excessive use of parentheses.

"Itsy Bitsy Spider!" her daughters' voices suddenly chorus ((and not close either) upstairs now).

Astair grabs an eight-quart pot (glass lid still on (what would that do? (wouldn't))). She isn't even sure if the pot will do. Her two eight-year-olds are just inside the bathroom staring up at the gusher. "Itsy Bitsy Spider" had (spontaneously) become their code for a leak (though this one (the 6th) was far greater than any of the others).

"No need for this," Astair laughs (meaning the pot).

They all laugh. The worst leak of all had ended up right above the kids' bathtub (a small piece of good news Astair happily accepts (and like that the good news (in her mind) compounds: piano (spared) computers (spared) books or anything perishable (anything theirs (spared))). So far the only thing lost: the contents of one cup of tea (another coffee is what she really wants (needs)).

The top of the stairs (however) checks Astair's enthusiasm. Shasti spots the telltale splatter first ((the 7th leak) on the top step). Freya centers the pot under the drip. And then both go off to discover another (8th) in the den (but again sparing the large plasma screen and Anwar's various gaming platforms (sparing even the black (faux) leather couch)). Nothing the twins can't fix with a big salad bowl.

Astair urges them to get rain-ready (Astair heading back to her own room for better socks and a hat). Laynor is late (ahh the joys of a one-car household of five (soon six)) but who knows if she's called.

The phones haven't stopped ringing for days. This morning was the worst (landline and both

Anwar's and Astair's cells (Anwar's e-mail accounts all suffering the deluge too (at least there (her e-mail account) Astair was spared))).

Her phone sits on the edge of her bed ((silenced but for the constantly illuminating screen marking yet another message) the number of missed calls staggering (Astair can't face the number)). (for reasons too pathetic to admit) Anwar and Astair couldn't unplug all the cordless phones (one remains ((a reminder) in Anwar's office) and it's been ringing straight for three days).

Also on the bed waits the thick manila envelope. The return address says all she needs to know about who it's from (herself in fact (at least contents by) (if not (what matters) the final word(s) filling margins ((unseen) grade topping the title page))).

"You're still not opening it?" Anwar had asked again this morning (her paper arrived yesterday).

"Tonight. When we have time to celebrate."

Anwar had tilted his head cautiously (the way he does when enough doubt (and fear?) prevents him from keeping his gaze level).

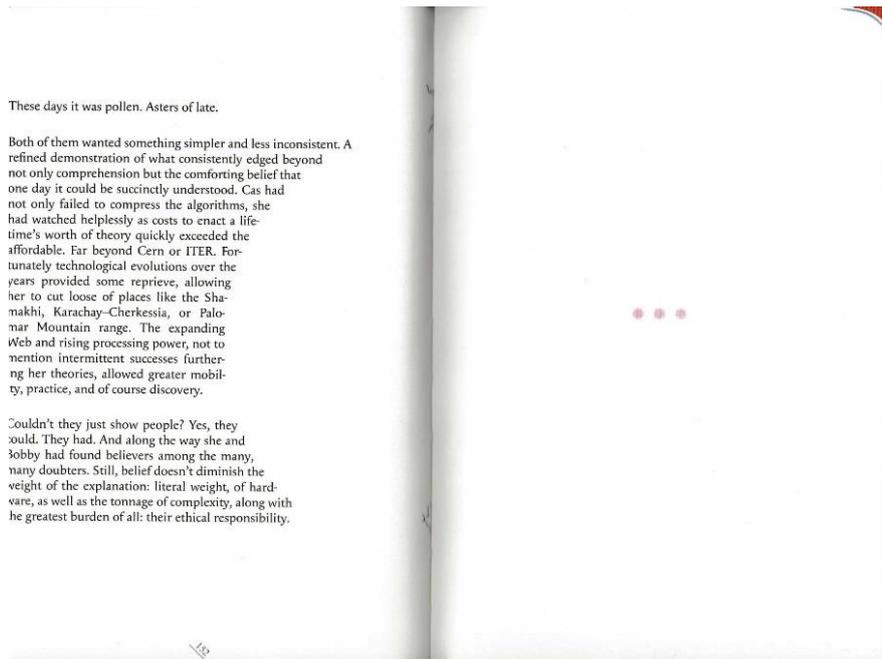
"Okay, feasibly," Astair quickly admitted (it wasn't hard to admit). "I could get a lousy grade but the likelihood that this thesis will be out-and-out failed is highly improbable. From what I've heard the only papers not passed are those deemed incomplete. Have you forgotten what my advisor wrote after the penultimate draft?" (A rave that had (even back then) started Astair thinking about trying to get her work published by a university press or even a big New York house (once she had her diploma in hand (of course))).

At page 658, we have an overlapping of parentheses that creates a sort of cloud of thoughts. The reader can perceive in this way the confusion of her thoughts. This image shows confusion mixed with preoccupation as Astair is preoccupied for her girl, Xanther, because she is having a seizure.

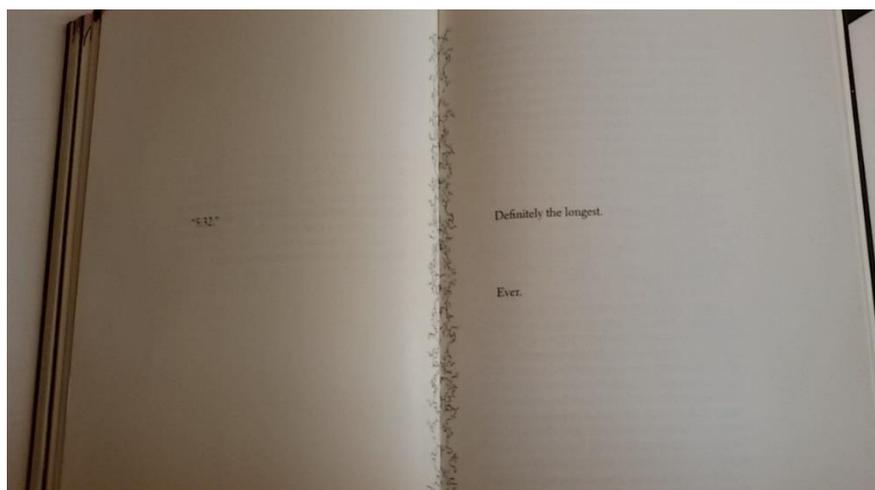
It can be said that calligrams and visual writing are simultaneous because the image and the text are perceived at the same time, they coexist in the same frame, and most of them have a narrative function.

(b) Use of spaces and blank pages

This volume offers another variety of graphics but instead of filling the pages with words or images the pages are left almost blank. Spaces between sentences have an important role in the narration and they are often preponderant. The graphic involvement in this case is not used to represent the story visually, but to mark the rhythm of the telling. As we already have seen in the Orb thread the pages are partly written and partly white. There are also pages in which the blank part dominates on the written part. The blankness is used in almost every thread and it is a very effective technique to create suspense and to accelerate the rhythm of the story or to slow it down and create a sort of pause in the reading process. An example of a pause can be found at page 152-153 in the thread regarding the Orb, in which we find pink ellipsis point.



At pages 252-253 we find Astair considering how long Xanther's seizure lasted. She is preoccupied even though the seizure has just stopped because it was the longest the girl has ever had. These few sentences convey both relief and anxiety. They are brief and concise information about the seizure, one in a page and two in the other as if she breathes a sigh of relief or her brain takes a 'pause' in the meanwhile.

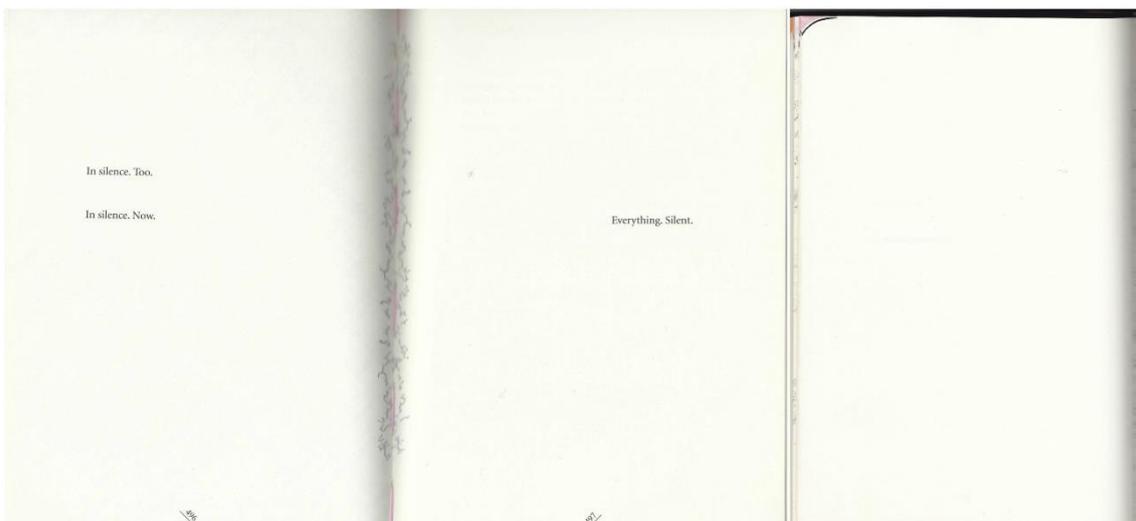


In Xanther's chapter at page 486- 487 we find another pink ellipsis that suggests a pause, but the rhythm is much faster than the previously mentioned one, she is looking for

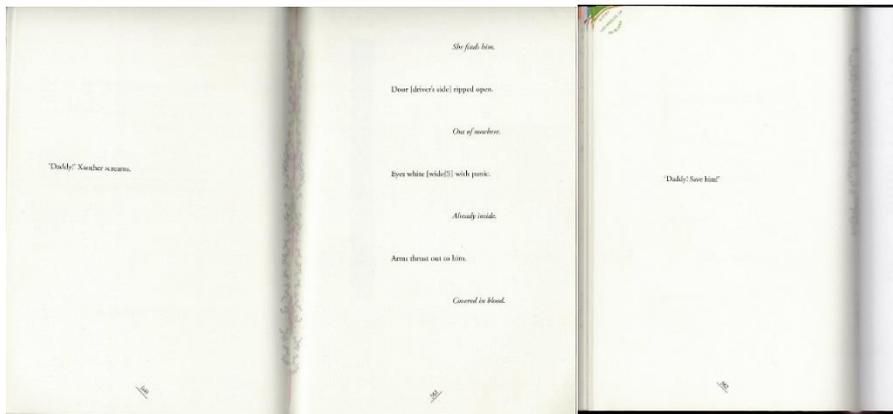
something she does not know, she jumps out of the car to reach this thing, she is running under the rainstorm. She really does not know what is it, but she has to reach it, it keeps calling her.



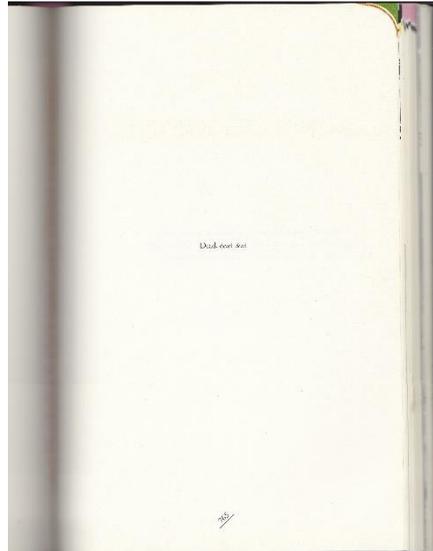
Page 496-497-498 suggest no sound, in fact, after the brief indications of silence follows an entirely blank page. The complete white page represents the silence, no words are written on it, no images, no punctuation, nothing. Just silence. The blank space prevails on any written possibility.



In Anwar's thread at pages 560-561-562, the spaces between the sentences increase the tension. He hears his daughter screaming for help. At page 561 in particular, the describing sentences are in italics the other that describe the actions are in regular font. Page 562 shows a crucial sentence which is repeated also at page 704, 707 and again 741 and 743. "Daddy! Save him!", Xanther begs her father to save the little creature she has in her hands, and the creature seems to be the most important 'character' in the book, the cat.



Page 765 has the word dead repeated three times in a smaller and smaller font. It gives the idea of life going away from the little body, so frail, so innocent. Anwar cannot do anything more than he has already done, his hope in saving the cat is fading, like the word dead.



Going back to Astair at pages 684-685 we found some thoughts about the new entry, the cat, written in an order that considering both pages resembles an X. She combines sympathetic with insensitive thoughts. Thoughts might suggest confusion but the X might propose a prohibition, a ban. The image, in this case, suggests what is the whole feeling about the cat, according to Astair. The X might also suggest an unknown quantity or element; this might refer to the yet unknown role of the cat in the novel.



On the basis of the relations mentioned before, it can be said that the spaces have a narrative function which is a bit different from the calligrams and visual writing narrative function. In fact, the blankness isolates some sentences to add tension or to modify the rhythm of the storytelling. The function is indeed to mark times and rhythm in the telling. This device is interesting because in a sense there is an external influence to mark the rhythm, like in TV series the watcher has no control on the narrative rhythm, as it is imposed on him/her. The spatial relations mentioned in the introductory part are not really applicable to this section, because spaces have a different function, but when words are present, it can be said that they coexist with the spaces.

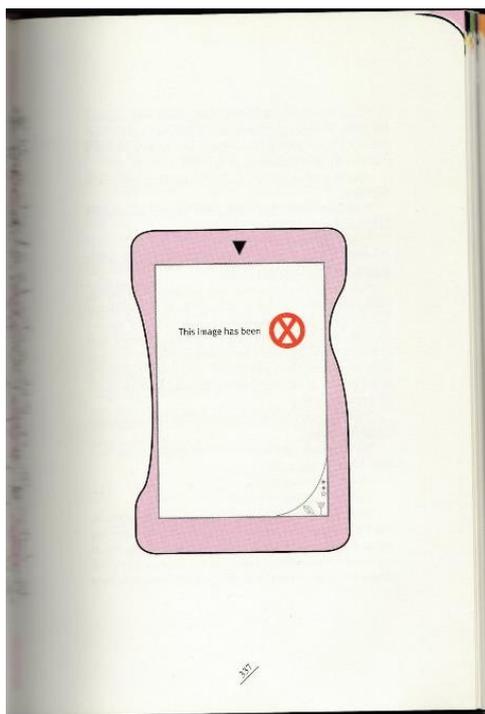
(c) Pictures

Pictures are not very used in the body of the volume, the main graphics are the ones previously mentioned visual writing, calligrams and the use of spaces. Nevertheless, images are always consecutive to the text and they have an important role in the telling. The first picture we encounter is at page 213 in Luther's thread. It represents a gang of skeletons, which represents Luther's gang. They all seem pretty happy and friendly, they greet each other and the skeleton dog wags its tail. Unlike the real gang, these skeletons are not frightful at all, they look nice and it is the graphics that leads to this idea. The lines are soft, not hard, they look like the drawings for children books. The contrast with the real gang is pretty evident. This image has an interreferential relation with the text because they are present in the same page but the image has an argumentative function, it does not narrate a part of the story, it represents a sort of alter ego of Luther's gang.

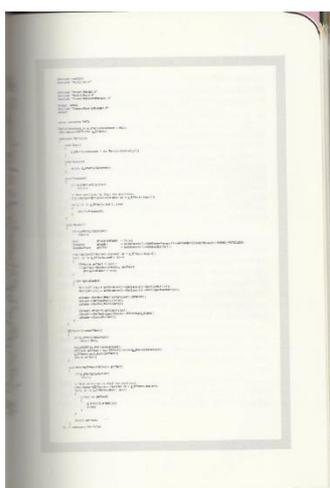


213

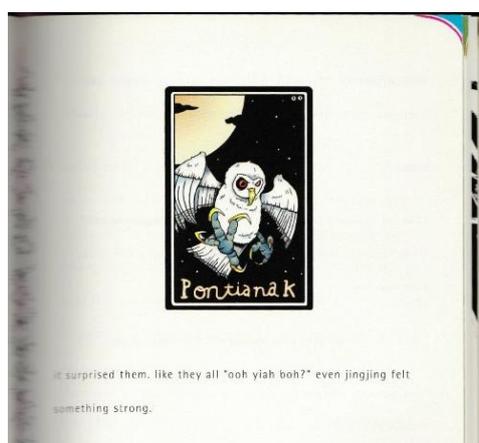
At page 337 the image represents a cell phone and precisely Xanther's mobile. Differently, from the previous image, this one has a narrative function, in fact, it tells part of the story. Xanther receives a message in which there is a fake photo made with an app. This photo shocks Xanther because it is a group photo of dead bodies, the corpses of her and her friends. The image, in fact, represents the phone and the screen shows the sentence: this image has been 'deleted'. In this case, the photo actually tells that Xanther deleted the photo, given this information is not given anywhere else. The spatial relation between the text and the image is coreferential because they are in two different pages, but refer to the same event. In this case, the image both precedes and follows the text because the image refers both to the preceding and following pages. In fact, on one hand the image is consecutive considering the preceding page, on the other hand the text is consecutive if we consider the following page.



At page 343 we enter Xanther's head and we see what she sees with the 3D glasses. The page is designed like a screen full of codes. This page puts again the reader in the story from Xanther's point of view in order to have the same perceptions she has. The image is consecutive considering the text and has a coreferential relation with it.



At page 529 the image represented in JingJing's thread is very different from the other previously mentioned. It is a card representing a white owl flying in the night ready to grab something. Under the bird, there is a word: Pontianak. Pontianak is a female ghost in Malaysian and Indonesian folklore, it is also called kuntilanak or matianak, which means "death of a child" in Indonesian. This demon in Indonesian culture appears as a pale woman with long hair who can transform herself into a night bird. This image is an omen of the death of Zhong's son. This image has not exactly a narrative function because it does not tell part of the story, but it is a representation of an object of the telling. In fact, JingJing has just picked this card up from his deck and shows it to his audience. It can be said that this image has an interreferential relation with the text and it is clearly consecutive.



In this book, pictures usually have a narrative function, exactly as the other graphics previously mentioned. They are consecutive to texts and the spatial relations with words can be of coexistence or interreference or coreference. They are used as a focus on a detail of the telling and can be compared to some framing in TV series when the authors want the watcher to focus on a particular detail of the telling. All these graphic devices are used

to convey a more complex visual message. As we said before, the book is not only to be read but also seen to have a complete sensorial experience.

CONCLUSIONS

In my dissertation, I wanted to present and analyze the most ambitious project by Mark Z. Danielewski, *The Familiar*, focusing on the first volume of the series *One Rainy Day in May*. In order to present the book, I introduced the concept of ergodic literature considered by most critics the perfect definition for Danielewski's style. In fact, according to Aarseth's definition, the term ergodic represents texts which require a cognitive effort from the reader who has to combine his/her mental faculties, which means that he/she not only has to turn pages to read the story, but he/she also has to turn the book upside down, cope with different fonts, images and other visual representations. Even though the definition seems to fit Danielewski's style he is not satisfied with it and he prefers to define his writing as signiconic, which implies that the cognitive effort of the reader combined with his/her sensorial perceptions open a new dimension of the reading process. These characteristics are combined in his ongoing project *The Familiar* that should be the remediation of a TV series. I thought it was useful for a reader not familiar with the term to explain what remediation is and how it works according to Bolter and Grusin. It is interesting to underline why Danielewski probably decided to remediate a TV series and not another media. To explain this choice, I considered Mittell's analysis of the importance of TV series in American television and the increasing complexity of the narrative, highlighting new phenomena well described by Kirby's digimodernism. Complex TV series narration is possible thanks to new technologies, like VCR, DVD, or Internet, that allow the audience to keep up with the episodes. All these technologies encouraged the audience to create fandoms, forums and blogs in order to express opinions, to ask for information about an episode or an unclear passage in it. These technological possibilities help the audience to feel part of something and less alone. All

these online materials also changed the way authors wrote their scripts, in fact, it is common for them to check on the Internet how the audience perceives the show and, in case the show is not well perceived, it gives the possibility to the authors to adjust the story. Through my dissertation, I tried to compare the structure of the book to the main characteristics of a TV series in order to see if Danielewski succeeded in the act of remediation or not. I considered as main characteristics of a TV series the theme, the structure, and the characters. I would say that the paratext of the book can be compared to a TV series theme because both are sequences of images with the function of introducing the reader in the story. As in a TV series, in the book there is an opening theme and a closing theme that allow the reader to immerse and emerge from the story world. In my opinion this device is effective in order to remediate a TV series and it is well represented in the book with anticipating images, the editor's logo, the epigraph, and the 'new this season' advertisement. The characters represent another important characteristic of a series. Usually in series there are some characters around whom the story is constructed, only the main characters are presented in a 'complete' way, by which I mean that the audience comes to know the protagonists' perspective, emotional and psychological aspects. In this book, we already know who the main characters are and some of them are already well defined and have a quite complete psychological profile. An interesting fact about the book is that the characters do not know each other and their paths do not cross in the first volume, neither in the second nor in the third. There are only three characters who know each other just because they are members of the same family, this can be suggestive of the solitude that characterizes each protagonist in a different way. In my dissertation, I highlighted the fact that the protagonists' threads fonts and images represent their emotional and psychological sphere. Each character has his/her

own font and language to describe their worlds. The graphic representation is very important in this book because it gives the reader a visual perception that can be compared with a series because both in series and in this book there are sequences of images. One big difference is the way in which the reader perceives the images. In the series, the watcher's eyes are fixed, in a book the effort of the eyes is dynamic. It must be noticed that the difference is not only between the effort required but also between the words and images relationships. In series words are physically represented by actors, frames and landscapes from the real world, or computers; in this book words and images follow different relations. In this book the main visual representations are calligrams and visual writings, the use of spaces and blank pages and pictures. In this book, calligrams and visual writing usually have a narrative function because they tell part of the story, describe a situation, or set a scene. The use of spaces and blank pages have a different function, they mark the rhythm of the narration and alternate suspense to pauses. Pictures usually have a narrative function, they tell part of the story not mentioned in the text. All these visual devices are effective if we consider the graphics of a series, but it must be said that the main difference between a series and this book is the effort required. It is not easy to read this kind of books and this one in particular requires a lot of work from the reader, a series usually necessitates less efforts while watching because the images move in front of the watcher and he/she should 'only' focus on what he/ she sees. The increasing complexity of TV series narration nowadays can be compared to the complexity of *The Familiar* which is a characteristic that connects these two media together. In my opinion, the remediation of a TV series is quite effective even for a reader not very acquainted with series because the author focuses on the main characteristics of both media without distorting their 'souls'. I find very interesting that the reader can find the strong points of

both media in one single book which is not only a fascinating object to own, it not only tells an engaging story but, in my opinion, it also has a strong message. On February 18, 2017 I wrote to Danielewski to ask him about Sheila Nightingale's epigraph and he replied:

“Tricky, isn't it? What of those voices that don't live on the web or are canonized in academic discourse? Don't they too deserve to resound through worlds?”.

Even if he has not really helped me with the epigraph, I think that these sentences are applicable to the entire concept of the book: to give voice to those who are not listened to. The remediation of TV series (which is probably one of the most influential media nowadays) in a book (which is an everlasting medium) ensures those voices to resound through different worlds. Those different worlds are not only represented by the two media, but also by all the different threads which include both the voices and the worlds. In fact, each character comes from a different place, has a different background and a different current context. Every single character is important in his/her own way, which is not yet clear, but he/she will certainly contribute to the story. Remediation is not only the 'refashioning' of a medium in another, but also the inclusion of different characteristics/worlds to create a new universe. As the solitude of the characters' voices will intermingle in a wider plot, the reader's voice as well will join other readers' voices in blogs and forums to create another world, the fandom.

WORKS CITED

Aarseth, Espen J. *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*. John Hopkins University Press, 1997.

Alberti Leon Battista. *On Painting and on Sculpture: The Latin Texts of De Pittura and De Statua*. Phaidon, 1972. 55.

Apollinaire, Guillaume. *Reconnais-toi*. 1915. Web. February 1, 2017

Bolter, Jay David, Richard, Grusin. *Remediation. Understanding New Media*. MIT Press, 2000.

Bordwell, David. *Narration in the Fiction Film*. University of Wisconsin Press. 1985.

“Calligram.” *Merriam-Webster Online*, Merriam-Webster, n.d. Web. 07 February 2017

Carpenter, Kasey. “Allways: An Interview with Mark Z. Danielewski”. *The Millions*. October 15, 2012. Web. July 10, 2016.

Clark, Jonathan Russell. “Did Mark Z. Danielewski just reinvent the novel?” *Literary Hub*. May 13, 2015. Web. July 10, 2016.

Courbet, Gustave. *The Artist's Studio; A real allegory summing up seven years of my artistic and moral life*. 1854-55 oil, on canvas, 361 x 598 cm. Musée d'Orsay, Paris. Web. February 16, 2017.

Danielewski, Mark Z. *House of Leaves*. Pantheon Books, 2000.

---. *The Familiar. One Rainy Day in May*. Pantheon Books, 2015.

---. *The Familiar. Into the Forest*. Pantheon Books, 2015.

---. *The Familiar. Honeysuckle and Pain*. Pantheon Books, 2016.

---. Message to the author. February 19, 2017. Instagram message.

Dürer, Albrecht. *Engravings*. 1525. Web. February 16, 2017.

Genette, Gérard. *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*. Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Grasso, Aldo. *Enciclopedia Garzanti della Televisione Le Garzantine*. Garzanti, 2002. 674.

Kirby, Alan. "Digimodernism: How New Technologies Dismantle the Postmodern and Reconfigure our Culture." *Supplanting the Postmodern. An Antology of Writings on the Arts and Culture of the early 21st Century*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015.

---. "The Death of Postmodernism and Beyond". *Philosophy Now*, Issue 58. Web. October 2016.

Hallet, Wolfgang. "The Multimodal Novel. The Integration of Modes and Media in Novelistic Narration". *Narratology in the Age of Cross-Disciplinary Narrative Research*. Walter de Gruyter, 2009. 129-153.

Magritte, Rene. *The Treachery of Images*. 1948 oil, on canvas, 63.5 x 93.98 cm. Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Web. February 16, 2017.

Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. *After the Marne, Joffre Visited the Front by Car*. 1919. Web. February 1, 2017.

McLuhan, Marshall. *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. New American Library, Timer Mirror. 1964.

Mittell, Jason. "Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television". University of Texas Press. *The Velvet Light Trap*, Number 58, Fall 2006. 29-40.
---. "Why has TV storytelling become so complex?" *The Conversation*. March 27, 2015. Web. October 22, 2016.

Nöth, Winfried. "Word and Image: Intermedial Aspects". *Medien Pedagogik*. August 6, 2001. Web. December 2016.

Stöckl, Hartmut. "The Language-Image-Text – Theoretical and Analytical Inroads into Semiotic Complexity." Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik Universität Salzburg. *Band 34*, Heft 2, 2009. 203-226.

Varga, Kibédi Áron. "Criteria for Describing Word-and-Image Relations". Duke University Press. *Poetics Today*, Volume 10, Number 1, Art and Literature I, 1989. 31-53.

Wallace, David Foster. "E Unibus Pluram: Television and U.S. Fiction". *Review of Contemporary Fiction*, 1993. 151-194.

FURTHER READINGS

Foley, Dylan. "The Rumpus Interview with Mark Danielewski". *The Rumpus*. May 20, 2015. Web. July 10, 2016.

LeClair, Tom. "Familiar Core". *American Book Review*, Volume 37, Number 2. January/February 2016. 9.

Letzler, David. "Familiar, Vaguely Familiar". *American Book Review*, Volume 37, Number 2. January/February 2016. 7-8.

McLaughlin, Robert L. "Post-Postmodern Discontent: Contemporary Fiction and the Social World". *Symplokē*, Volume 12, Number 1/2, Fiction's Present, 2004. 53-68.

Mittell, Jason. "A Cultural Approach to Television Genre Theory". *Cinema Journal* 40, Number 3, 2001. 3-24.

O’Kane, Sean. “Rewriting the novel: A Q&A with author Mark Danielewski”. *The Verge*. June 9, 2015. Web. July 10, 2016.

Simonetti, Paolo. “Retrospectiva: al posto del postmoderno”. *Parodie della Fine*. Aracne Editrice, 2015. 245-263.

Thomas, Lindsay. “Why we Read Novels”. *University of Wisconsin Press*. *Contemporary Literature*, Volume 56, Number 2, 2015. 386-393.

Traub, Courtney. “Ecocatastrophic Nightmares: Romantic Sublime Legacies in Contemporary American Experimental Fiction”. University of Arizona. *Arizona Quarterly: A Journal of American Literature, Culture and Theory*, Volume 72, Number 2, 2016. 26-60.

FORUMS

Discussion board for Mark Z. Danielewski's THE FAMILIAR, Volume 1

<https://thefamiliar.wordpress.com/>

The Familiar-MZD FORUMS <http://forums.markzdanielewski.com/forum/the-familiar/the-familiar-aa>

FORUM the Familiar wikia <http://the-familiar.wikia.com/wiki/Special:Forum>.