

Novels in the Internet Age: “House of Leaves” and New Media’s Influence in Contemporary Fictional Literature

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The now-ubiquitous nature of the Internet has changed the way we see the world, and these changes must be reflected in how we experience other media forms. Postmodern works such as Harry Mathew's "The Journalist" have challenged the way we read and electronic literature like Steve Tomasula's "Toc" have stretched the use of the digital to produce stories; but contemporary literature combines the medium and techniques of postmodern literature with the character of the digital. This project explores the influences of the characteristics and attitudes of the Internet medium as they are partially realized in Jonathan Safran Foer's "Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close" and as they are fully realized in Mark Z. Danielewski's "House of Leaves." It reveals through these examples the focus on multimedia, connectivity, and interactivity imbued in the literary medium through consideration of the Internet-savvy reader. By examining the form and content of these texts, this study shows how literature can come to grips with a medium that may consider neither form nor content but instead motion, comparison, and experience.

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Tyler Gegg is a junior from Mahomet, Illinois, majoring in English and minoring in humanities and new media journalism. Research on this project was inspired by his coursework with new media forms and his experience with non-literary storytelling media.

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