Genre ambiguity and (ephemeral) digital epitexts: co-constructing Michael Chabon's *Moonglow*

Virginia Pignagnoli[1]

Abstract

This article presents an analysis of Michael Chabon's *Moonglow* (2016) inclusive of the digital epitexts the author shared on his account on social media Instagram (2015-2018). Following a (rhetorical) co-constructive approach, the analysis shows Chabon's combined use of digital epitexts and genre ambiguity and highlights the relevance of both narrative resources for the co-construction of *Moonglow*. In particular, I claim that the onomastic connections providing trauma autofictions like *Moonglow* with authenticity (cf. Worthington 2018) are realized through the digital epitexts on Instagram. These digital epitexts, in turn, come into being in the context of an ephemeral personal narrative, while Chabon's use of mixed framing clues is linked with the current interest in sincerity and relationality of twenty-first-century American fiction.

Keywords Post-postmodern fiction · American literature · Digital epitexts · Instagram narratives · Social media · Autofiction

Introduction

This article analyzes the use of digital epitexts in connection with a novel: *Moonglow* (2016) by Michael Chabon. Digital epitexts are paratexts appearing not "in proximity of the text" (see Genette[, 1987] 1997, p. 344) *and* in the digital world: they consist of authors' additional digital support to their novels (Effron et al. 2019; see also Pignagnoli, 2018 for an earlier definition). I will focus on a specific kind of digital epitexts: the thirty-something posts shared on Chabon's Instagram profile (www.instagram.com/michael.chabon/) between 2015 and 2018. As I will argue, these digital epitexts are particularly relevant in connection with another rhetorical resource (Phelan, 2017) amply employed in *Moonglow*, namely an autofictional play aimed at blurring the fiction/nonfiction distinction, in line with the current

✉ Virginia Pignagnoli
vpignagnoli@unizar.es

1 Department of English and German Philology, University of Zaragoza, Zaragoza, Spain

reshuffling of postmodern features in light of a new dominant interest in relationality (Holland, 2013; Moraru, 2011). The "self-reflexive ethics" (Alber & Bell, 2019) characteristic of twenty-first-century narratives is here achieved through the genre ambiguity employed both in *Moonglow* and its digital epitexts on Instagram.

The article contains six sections. The first section introduces Chabon's profile on Instagram and presents the context of how digital epitexts come into being. There is a larger personal narrative made of posts not necessarily connected to *Moonglow*, but that embodies an idea of social media practices concerned with both an archival function and the focus on an ongoing conversation among users. The second section delves deeper into the kind of digital epitexts shared through the Instagram profile, showing different functionalities and their relevance for the readers' co-construction of Chabon's novel. Co-construction is the activity—collaboratively undertaken by authors and audiences—of co-building storyworlds and the actual world (Effron et al., 2019). I use the word storyworlds following David Herman's definition as "the worlds evoked by narrative; reciprocally, narratives can be defined as the blueprints for a specific mode of world creation" (2009, p. 105). In the narrative communication, the audience identifies a 'purposive design' (Phelan, 2017, p. 203) and co-constructs a storyworld.

The third section explores Chabon's use of genre ambiguity in *Moonglow*, a resource that is further employed in his digital epitexts on Instagram. In the fourth section, I present a reconstruction of *Moonglow*'s storyworld from the narrative's blueprints and despite Chabon's mix of temporal levels and framing clues. I also explore further intersections between the narrative and its digital epitexts. Then, in the fifth section, I claim that the onomastic connections providing trauma autofictions like *Moonglow* with authenticity (cf. Worthington, 2018) are realized through the digital epitexts. Finally, the conclusion reflects on Chabon's combined use of genre ambiguity and digital epitexts within the current interest in sincerity and relationality of twenty-first-century American fiction. Thus, I highlight the relevance of both rhetorical resources for the co-construction of *Moonglow*.

Instagram narratives as ephemeral archives

In describing how today's authors use social media, Bronwen Thomas argues that "maintaining a social media presence has become an expectation rather than an exception" (2020, p. 99). Common practices include employing social media as a "forum for social and political activism," to "raise awareness," for "creative expression," and to express "reading and viewing habits and preferences" (2020, pp. 99-101). All these four ways of using social media emerge in what is—at the time of writing (February 2021)—novelist Michael Chabon's last post (which means the latest in chronological order) on his Instagram feed. An Instagram "post" is primarily made up of a photo—or multiple photos or a video—that can be edited (adjusting light, shape, or adding "filters" and frames) through the app itself or through other apps before the upload. The post can contain tags or @mentions of other users, a caption containing text, hashtags, and emojis, and a geo-tag with location information (Pignagnoli, 2019). Chabon's post displays a screenshot of an old Instagram

post by Chabon himself portraying a child (one of his daughters) and shared on the platform on October 6, 2010. Together with the screenshot, the post displays a long caption, so long in fact that exceeds the word limit and continues in two of the comments below the caption. It starts by describing the screenshot and offering an intimate recollection of his first use of the social media: "This was my first post on Instagram. Posted on October 6, 2010, which @wikipedia informs me was the day Instagram went live. I must have read about it on #daringfireball. Anyway, clearly I did not understand what it was for or how I might want to use it, because my *second* post is dated 1/22/14" (Nov. 16, 2020, geotag: Brooklin, Maine).[1] Then, he expresses what he has been able to achieve through his use of the platform, mainly a raw archive of his daily life, comprising his reading, listening and viewing habits and preferences, and a way to express his creativity too: "So I tried it again, and gradually discovered what Instagram was for, for me: to keep a kind of visual record of my days, my life and the life of my family, stuff I'm into, current creative projects, passing obsessions, random thoughts and observations triggered by the act of seeing and then capturing an image" (ibid.). In a confessional tone, Chabon praises the affordances of Instagram, which allowed him to create such personal archive, which he compares to the writing of a journal: "I make my art and my living by words, yet had always been unable to sustain any of the many attempts I had made to keep a written journal. The visual, picture-taking aspect of Instagram turned out to be the key to enabling me to document my daily experience, to create a record" (ibid.). He highlights a rawness and spontaneity linked with his practice: "A record, that is, for *me*. I've never pruned or edited my feed to produce some desired esthetic effect, or coherence, for other eyes. I'm the only one who ever goes scrolling back through the 2500+ posts, reminding myself of where I was, what I cared about, on almost any given day in the past decade" (ibid.).

His feed, which is currently composed by 2,513 posts, does mainly display and tell about him and his family: his wife, the novelist Ayelet Waldman, and their four children. Chabon's last post, however, creates a rapture in the flux of posts and emphasizes the social media's overall archival function, as well as its ephemerality. After the initial description of his creative and intimate use of Instagram, Chabon attempts to raise awareness around Facebook's policies communicating his decision to suspend his Instagram account and thus, *de facto*, interrupting his life writing on the platform because of political reasons. The caption says:

> Inevitably, I suppose, politics entered into the situation—my own and the world's, creating a second purpose, and a worrisome anxiety. Instagram became a place for political expression, advocacy, and activism—yours and mine; but in 2012 Instagram sold itself to Facebook, which has since proven corrosive and toxic to liberal democracy at home and around the world to a degree equaled only by @foxnews. Indeed given Facebook's global dominance and instrumentalizing of algorithmic social control, its malignancy has argu-

---

[1] On Instagram and other social media, as it is not possible to use bold or italics to emphasize a word or a sentence, it is common practice to use asterisks instead.

ably been more far-reaching and destructive. […] I'm only going to suspend, for now. Maybe something will change. Maybe #markzuckerberg will repent and atone. Maybe the Feds will eventually break up the FB octopus, and IG will be sold off to less objectionable owners. […] (ibid.).

Today, the feed is still there but as a memento, not as an ongoing narrative. And while this might be the ultimate gesture to highlight a certain political message (for a recent critique to Facebook see Vaidhyanathan, 2018), it also shows how ephemeral digital epitexts on social media can be, because the content is easily erasable. Individual posts or entire accounts can be deleted anytime. Indeed, as Thomas notices: "One of the challenges of writing about new technologies is the rapid pace of change and the ephemerality not just of individual contributions but of the very platforms and technologies themselves" (2020, p. 22).

In short, Chabon's digital journal created through Instagram is a self-narrative made of single posts that attend to his feed's overall design as fragments of a coherent narrative (Pignagnoli, 2019). This narrative has an archival function but, at the same time, could disappear anytime because inherently ephemeral. The fact that these two opposing qualities coexist in Instagram narratives is linked to the current reclaiming of digital media by the ephemeral that started with Snapchat, as Jill Walker Rettberg points out, and that aims at "reemphasizing social connections through phatic communication" (2018, pp. 190-191). In other words, there is an ongoing switch in social media storytelling that foregrounds a connecting function over an archiving role of social media practices. Chabon's "un-updated" social profile on Instagram comprises both the "old" idea of the internet as archive and the new one of social media as sites that put the phatic communication of conversations and oral cultures to the fore, as Rettberg highlights. While, as mentioned above, in this article I will focus mainly on the posts Chabon shared on his Instagram feed with an explicit connection to his novel *Moonglow* (often characterized by the use of the hashtag #Moonglow), this section highlights how these digital epitexts do happen in the context of a larger personal narrative, a narrative that, as I will show in the analysis below, at times intersects with the narrative communicative act in *Moonglow* as a whole.

Introducing *Moonglow*'s digital epitexts on Instagram and their multiple functions

Of the thirty-something posts directly related to *Moonglow* that Chabon shared on his Instagram feed between September 1, 2015 and May 2, 2018, about half of them were shared before the publication of the novel, one was shared on the publication day, and the others were shared after, with higher frequency in the weeks immediately following the day the novel was published. Among these, some comprise "clues" on the themes that the narrative will explore. These include the picture of a rocket and the caption "This is a clue. This is only a clue. @petermendelsund #moonglow" (Sept. 1, 2015); the picture of three cartomancy cards and the caption, "This is a clue. This is only a clue. #moonglow #lenormandcards" (Feb. 29, 2016);

and a few pictures of the moon or moon-related drawings (e.g., Nov. 17, 2016 and Nov. 18, 2017). A few other posts contain images from the printed book and captions informing of the publication date (cf. Oct. 24, 2016 and Nov. 2, 2016). Other posts recall David Shields's statement that "contemporary narration is the account of the manufacturing of the work, not the actual work" (2010, p. 36). For instance, there is the screenshot of a manuscript page with the caption, "Editing and revising *Moonglow*, novel, forthcoming 11/3/16"; the screenshot of a style sheet with the caption, "Style sheet. Copy-edit of #moonglow arrived today!" (May 18, 2016); a self-portrait with the image of two rockets and the caption, "My V-2 plans. #Moonglow #madscientist #prisma" (Aug., 16, 2016); and a picture of the print edition of *Moonglow* with a longer caption that says:

> The day you hand in a book is a relief, but you never really do finish it. The day you get the edited manuscript just means more work, and another, in my case quite prolonged, confrontation with the book's, and your own, failings. The day the finished hardcover arrives falls much too close to pub date, that holiday of dreadful hope or hopeful dread. The day the first ARE shows up is the best day. #moonglow" (July 15, 2016).

This caption is an example of performing authorship in the digital literary sphere linked to the idea of the illusion of intimacy or *performed* intimacy (cf. Murray, 2018). As Simone Murray explains drawing on Horton and Wohl (1956), "digital mediums foster substantial upswing in author-reader para-social pseudo-intimacy, on top of the actual interaction they facilitate" (2018, p. 29). But this intimacy, as much as performed, also captures contemporary narratives' current interests in sincerity and earnestness, whose origins are generally attributed to David Foster Wallace's critique of television's appropriation of irony (McHale, 2015, p. 136).

These digital epitexts show an illocutionary force that is, in various degrees, informative, promotional and performative. But there are three posts that go beyond such functionality, engaging with *Moonglow*'s storyworld directly and extending the ambiguity of the novel towards its genre. The first post showing a functionality beyond its illocutionary force displays a photograph of Chabon as a little child, smiling between a man and a woman, whom the caption reveals to be his grandparents, Ernest and Nettie: "Ernest and Nettie Cohen and me, circa 1964. This, too, is a clue. #tbt" (Sept. 3, 2015). The second is the picture of a man, presumably in his sixties, with grey hair, standing close to a tree near a suburban house. The caption under it states: "This week marked the yahrzeit of my grandfather, Ernest Cohen--very, very loosely the inspiration for #moonglow --who died in 1989. He was a cool dude and a good grandfather, smart, curious and funny. I still think of him almost every day" (May 15, 2016). And the third is shared on *Moonglow*'s publication date: a picture of an old high school yearbook portraying a young man named Ernest Cohen. The caption this time is much longer and again pays tribute to Chabon's "real" grandfather:

> No #Moonglow without this man. Trained as an engineer and a lawyer, employed most of his life at the US Patent Office, he loved wordplay, bad puns, etymologies, and the parsing of odd idioms and figures of speech ("I wonder what else I could eat a *dollop* of?") with legalistic rigor. He

taught me to use dangerous tools, to be comfortable as a man in a kitchen, to read science fiction for the science, and to revere Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain*. In my mother's childhood, unlikely toys, compounds and implements emerged from the dank Maryland basement workshop of my grandparents' house at 10304 Cherry Tree Lane in Silver Spring, Maryland: a wooden periscope for seeing around corners, heavy and long as a small bazooka. A pair of stilts-cum-crutches that doubled a child's height. A pinewood photo enlarger like some kind scale-model cross between a telescope and a medieval siege engine. The famous "magnetic paint," for which he received US Patent number US3826667 A. (Nov. 22, 2016).

After this memoiristic description, Chabon continues with a confessional mode, explaining the important role his grandfather played in his life:

Stepping up for young Mike Chabon at a time when my father was stepping out, he became the most important, certainly the most dependable male adult presence in my life. If he thought my ten-year-old's theories about the world held water, he would entertain them. If not, he would shoot them full of holes or dismiss them with the merciful swiftness of a hangman. He was proud to be American, a Socialist, and a Jew, and not ultimately persuaded, in the end, that people with opposing political views were necessarily deserving of scorn and contempt. He had a way of looking at you, when you went off on Nixon or Kissinger or, later, on Reagan or Oliver North, and giving his shoulders a pained little hunch that seemed to say, "How can you be sure that you wouldn't see it the same way if you knew what they think they know." He knew, unquestionably, what is what. [Bronx High School Yearbook, 1915.] (ibid.).

In a crescendo of (performed) intimacy, Chabon reveals details of his life that readers of *Moonglow* will find described in the narrative too.

For rhetorical readers, encountering these digital epitexts before reading *Moonglow* allows that they will incorporate them in their world-building efforts. This means, for instance, paying special attention to the themes Chabon puts to the fore through his posts. Mostly, however, it means to incorporate the information they contain when trying to join the authorial audience. *Moonglow* does, in fact, tell the story of "Mike's grandfather." While the novel does not include a name for him, the digital epitexts revealing Ernest Cohen to be "Mike's inspiration" invite actual readers to make a connection between the grandfather-character and Chabon's actual grandfather. These examples show that digital epitexts are relevant for actual audiences who will incorporate in their co-constructive efforts not only the specific functionalities of these Instagram posts—e.g., informing about the themes, performing of authorship (and intimacy), promoting the novel—but also the additional details they reveal, extending the narrative act with further details on its storyworld.

Fiction, nonfiction, metafiction

Moonglow starts playing with its generic status in the peritext. The book cover describes it as fiction (a novel). Such generic framework is later confirmed by a peri-textual disclaimer in the copyright page, which declares:

> This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are products of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously and are not construed as real. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, organizations, or persons, liv-ing or dead, is entirely coincidental. *Scout's honor* (Chabon, 2016, copyright page; my emphasis).

However, in the "Author's Note" placed before Chapter 1, *Moonglow* is described as nonfiction (a memoir):

> In preparing this memoir, I have stuck to facts except when facts refused to conform with memory, narrative purpose, or the truth as I prefer to understand it. Wherever liberties have been taken with names, dates, places, events, and conversations, or with the identities, motivations, and interrelationships of family members and historical personages, the reader is assured that they have been taken *with due abandon*. (Chabon, 2016, Author's Note; my emphasis)

Thus, while according to the note in the copyright page *Moonglow* is a work of fiction, according to the "Author's Note" *Moonglow* is a work of nonfiction with incursions of fictionality (what he calls "liberties"). The expression "with due aban-don" and "Scout's honor," however, signal a playful posture vis-à-vis the distinction between fiction and nonfiction. In these peritextual elements, Chabon undermines such distinction by simultaneously making a claim for and challenging the sincerity of the preceding statements (Pignagnoli, 2019). Moreover, in order to support the nonfictional framing, placed right below the "Author's Note," there is the reproduc-tion of an advertisement for a 1:20-scale model of a U.S. Navy's Aerobee-Hi rocket produced by a company named "Chabon Scientific Co" and allegedly published in October 1958 on *Esquire* magazine (an image that is also shared on his feed on October 24, 2016; see above). The rocket advertisement, whether authentic or not, signals the presence of extratextual referentiality, thus supporting the nonfictional framing of *Moonglow*.

Moonglow opens with the sentence, "This is how I heard the story," followed by the description of the narrator's grandfather arrest on "May 25, 1957" (Chabon, 2016, p. 1). The narrator goes on explaining that the grandfather told him parts of this story during the last week of his life, when he went to say goodbye to him at his mother's house in Oakland, California. At that time, dying of bone cancer, the grandfather is under pain medication, which makes him very talkative. His grand-son, the narrator, stays with him until his death, listening to his recollections: "he started talking almost the minute I sat down in the chair by his bed. It was as if he had been waiting for my company, but I believe now that he simply knew he was running out of time" (Chabon, 2016, p. 5). These recollections, we are told, "emerged in no discernible order" (ibid.). It is not specified if the order in which

the grandfather recounted them is the same un-discernible order in which they are presented in the narrative. Indeed, the narrative communication unfolds through a mixed temporal order, as there are two main temporal levels corresponding to the two main telling situations in the narrative.[2] One mainly revolves around the life of the narrator's grandfather, from his childhood in Philadelphia to his retirement in Florida and death in Oakland. The other comprises a confessional and metafictional mode through which the narrator reveals further details on his decision to write his memoir. The narrator changes accordingly, switching from heterodiegetic and omniscient when telling the grandfather's ventures, to a homodiegetic narrating-I with different degrees of resemblance with the actual author (comprising an ono-mastic connection between the two: Michael is "Mike" like in his post on Nov. 22, 2016) when switching to the memoirist mode. The fictionalized memories of the narrator's grandfather are complemented with the telling of other events involving the narrator's grandmother, and the mother's and the narrator's own recollections. These two main telling situations are then further complicated by a narrative occur-ring in a third temporal level. This level presents the narrator at the time he receives most of the information he will then fictionalize and include in the first telling: dur-ing the grandfather's last week of his life in Oakland, California, in 1989/1990. This third temporal level works as watershed moment, separating the memories around the narrator's family and the memoirist effort to recount such memories. It is this third, watershed telling that provides the primary framing for the telling unfolding around the life of the narrator's grandfather.

The telling of the narrator's family history is framed as fiction; the telling of the narrator as the grandson who dutifully listened to his grandfather's recollec-tions and many years later decided to transform those into a narrative is framed as a fictional memoir. However, mixed generic clues are disseminated throughout the narrative progression, in spite of the confessional telling emerging more pre-dominantly towards the ending, and despite the "Oakland's telling" functioning as *myse en abyme* device. For instance, while the advertisement for the Aerobee-Hi rocket below the Author's note seemed to indicate an extratextual referentiality— i.e. a company named "Chabon Scientific Co" existed in the actual world,—when the narrative refers to it again (i.e. other than in the peritext), the description of its inception seems more fictional than nonfictional. The grandfather is serving his time at Wallkill Prison, which was an actual-world correction facility strongly oriented towards the rehabilitation of its inmates. There, a man named Sam Chabon (the nar-rator's great-uncle, also known as Uncle Sammy) sees the grandfather giving a kid a model rocket and decide to invest in their production, hiring the grandfather in his company, Chabon Scientific Co. The narrator does not specify if the narration of this event comes from a memory his grandfather or someone else told him, nor he speci-fies how much of his re-telling is fictionalized.

---

[2] I use the term telling situation following James Phelan's definition of narrative as a communicative act between "somebody *telling* somebody else on some occasion and for some purposes that something hap-pened" (2017, p. ix; my emphasis).

Chabon's combined use of mixed framing clues and different temporal levels, allow for ambiguity vis-à-vis the narrative's fictional status to be constantly present throughout the progression of *Moonglow*. The narrative progresses with the three telling situations continuously intermingling and challenging the audience's co-constructing efforts as the two main telling situations juxtapose in the storyworld. Thus, rhetorical readers unsure about the fictional status of the novel or simply frustrated with the constant switching may incorporate some of the information included in the digital epitexts and juxtapose the fictional grandfather character with Chabon's actual grandfather, Ernest Cohen, who, as they have learned, also died in 1989 (see post above, published on May 15, 2016). Other correspondences between the grandfather-character and the actual grandfather described on Chabon's Instagram profile include the references to Thomas Mann's *The Magic Mountain* (1924) and Silver Spring in the post published on November 22, 2016 (see above): Mann's novel is cited as the grandfather's "favorite" one (Chabon, 2016, p. 136); Beth El is a synagogue in Silver Spring mentioned as a place where the grandfather went and "say *kaddish*" and where he took Mike "a couple of times" (Chabon, 2016, p. 385). Significantly, the "confirmations" on *Moonglow*'s telling situations expressed through the digital epitexts concern not only the autobiographical nature of some of the events narrated or details about the characters (e.g., the grandfather's love for science-fiction and his background in engineering), but also the fact that most of it is just invented (e.g., the actual grandfather being, after all, only an "inspiration" for the character and the discrepancies between the two, such as the former having worked at the US Patent Office for most of his life, as he tells on his post dated Nov. 22, 2016).

Reconstructing *Moonglow*'s storyworld

An outline of *Moonglow*'s storyworld, as reconstructed from the various non-sequential telling situations, might be the following. A man, described as the narrator's grandfather grows up in South Philadelphia, with his parents of Jewish and German origins, and his younger brother, Reynard, also known as "Uncle Ray." In December 8, 1941, the grandfather enlists in the Army Corps of Engineers, and later studies "mayhem and spycraft" at an OSS training facility in the Maryland mountains (Chabon, 2016, p. 116). In 1944, he spends some months in London and then France, where he will be traumatized by the death of his friend Alvin Aughenbaugh, a Lieutenant whose lighter he would carry with him for the rest of his days. In Germany, he is part of a military unit in a mission to find Wernher von Braun, the engineer who invented the V-2 rocket, together with other "'Nazi' professors" (Chabon, 2016, p. 131). Those actual readers who encountered Chabon's "clues" on Instagram will immediately recall them, reinforcing the connection between the narrative and its digital epitexts. Moreover, on September 20, 2017, Chabon shares a video of "visual inspiration" containing various moon-related images and the "Moonglow" song by Benny Goodman Aughenbaugh used to whistle.

The grandfather goes to the concentration camp of Nordhausen, where the V-2 rockets were made by thousands of prisoners kept in unspeakable conditions. He

does not find von Braun, but he manages to recover the files containing the studies that brought him and his team to the construction of the V-2. In the telling of this episode, the narrator engages with the trope of "truth in fiction." When the grandfather tells him he went to Nordhausen, he refuses to describe what he saw and experienced: "You want to know what happened at Nordhausen? […] Look it up," he says (Chabon, 2016, p. 246). When Mike does look it up, he discovers that beyond Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow* (1973) "there was not a lot" (Chabon, 2016, p. 258). Pynchon's novel is "accurately researched" (Chabon, 2016, p. 247) and the accounts of the U.S. troops entering the camps and the tunnels under Kohnstein Mountain had been "followed closely by Pynchon when he had his engineer Pökler tour KZ Dora" (Chabon, 2016, p. 253). Then, following Pynchon's example (for an accurate account of this intertextual level see Collado-Rodríguez 2019), Chabon offers a fictionalized, but (apparently) accurately researched, account of Nordhausen through his grandfather's memories: "Between the impressment of the local citizens as gravediggers and the beginning of the end of my grandfather's war," he says, "I can offer only informed speculation, combined with a few little facts that he inadvertently dropped over the course of the next few days" (Chabon, 2016, p. 253). The telling of Nordhausen, as Francisco Collado-Rodríguez highlights, "aims at a clear moral target related to the importance of collective memory: Americans should not have forgotten that von Braun was a Nazi and that landing on the Moon had meant earlier experiments with the destructive power of the rocket in its original version as the V-2 weapon" (2019, p. 92).

Later, in February 1947, the grandfather meets the narrator's grandmother for the first time in a synagogue in Baltimore, where he went dragged along by his brother, Uncle Ray. The grandfather will eventually marry the grandmother, who presents herself as a Holocaust survivor and a widow. She speaks with a French accent and arrives to the United States with a four-year-old daughter, the narrator's mother. At this point, the grandfather starts working as "aerospace engineer" first for a company called Glenn L. Martin, and then "at a firm of his own, Patapsco Engineering, designing inertial guidance and telemetry systems" (Chabon, 2016, p. 85). In the meanwhile, the grandmother is "an on-air personality" (Chabon, 2016, p. 181): a "frequent guest on WAAM's *Home Cooking,* giving lessons in French cooking to Baltimore housewives" (Chabon, 2016, p. 46) and reading horror fiction impersonating a witch in a late-night show called *The Crypt of Nevermore*, which "aired weekly from October 7, 1949, the centennial of Edgar Allan Poe's death, to October 24, 1952" (Chabon, 2016, p. 182). Confirming the "clue" revealed by Chabon in the digital epitexts (the Lenormand cards posted on Feb., 29, 2016, with the caption "This is a clue. This is only a clue. #moonglow #lenormandcards"), the narrator (young Mike) says the grandmother owns a deck of fortune-telling cards that she used to tell him stories. In 1952, however, she has a mental breakdown, probably ignited by a miscarriage, which leads her to be hospitalized until "late 1954" (Chabon, 2016, p. 44). To pay for her treatments, the grandfather seeks a more lucrative job, and their ten-years-old daughter goes living with her paternal grandparents.

For a couple of years, he works as salesman in a company called Feathercombs, Inc. and they all live in a farmhouse outside of Ho-Ho-Kus, New Jersey. After her hospitalization, the grandmother "emerged from that first time at Greystone in

a fragile and quiet state, holding herself like an egg balanced on a spoon, but for the next twenty-eight months they lived on the farm in relative contentment" (Chabon, 2016, p. 44). In 1957, however, the grandfather gets arrested upon the attempted strangling of his employer with a telephone cord. He had been fired for no particular reason, but it was also "the day after the first time [the grandmother] tried to burn down a tree" (Chabon, 2016, p. 348) in front of their house, thus showing signs of a relapse. The grandmother is hospitalized in a mental institution for the second time and the grandfather will serve thirteen months in Wallkill Prison. Their fourteen-year-old daughter is left with Uncle Ray who, in the meanwhile, had become a hustler and a gambler. As the grandfather recounts, "Your mother was fourteen when I went in, Mike. Stuck in Baltimore, where she didn't know a soul. Living with a pool hustler and a grumpy old lady" (Chabon, 2016, p. 292). While in prison, he builds a model rocket for the warden's grandson. Sam Chabon (Uncle Sammy), a businessman with a "production floor at the prison where [the] grandfather served his sentence" (Chabon, 2016, p. 311) sees the model rocket and decides to invest in their production. The grandfather becomes the "managing partner of MRX, Inc., with Sam Chabon as a partner and principal investor and a contract to supply Chabon Scientific with five thousand 1:20-scale solid-fueled Aerobee-Hi rockets" (Chabon, 2016, p. 331), whose "advertisement" on *Esquire* readers encountered in the peritext and, possibly, also in the digital epitexts on Instagram.

Right after getting out of prison, the grandfather goes to the mental institution where the grandmother is hospitalized to bring her home. Here, he speaks with Dr. Medved, who reveals to him that the grandmother's past is different from what she has been telling him. He replies that he doesn't need to know everything: "She's broken, I'm broken. Everybody's broken. If she's not in misery anymore, I'll take it" (Chabon, 2016, p. 352). They now live in Riverdale, NYC, and the narrator's mother meets Sam Chabon's nephew, "a dark-eyed good-looking kid, crown prince of his family, not yet twenty and already in medical school" (Chabon, 2016, p. 332), whom will soon become the narrator's father (in a post dated Oct. 13, 2017, actual readers will also find confirmation of Chabon's actual father being a doctor, as he shares a photo of him from Pittsburgh Press published in 1964, with the caption "#Currently thinking and writing about my father as a young doctor"). In 1972, Sam Chabon's nephew/the narrator' father invests money in Uncle Ray's chain of billiards clubs, which were slightly connected to the Philadelphia Mob. This results in him being fugitive for the rest of his life and the grandfather losing his interests in his company, MRX. In 1975, the grandmother dies of endometrial cancer. She was fifty-two and the narrator, who is now known as Mike, was eleven. The same year, Mike's parents get divorced, and the grandfather eventually meets Wernher von Braun at the Twelfth Space Congress in Cocoa Beach, Florida. He will also move to Fontana Village, a retirement community in Coconut Creek, Florida. There, in 1989, he meets Sally Sichel, a fellow retiree, and falls in love. A few months later, he discovers he has bone cancer, but keeps it to himself until the day, in March 1990, he breaks his leg and the narrator's mother flies him to California, to live with her in Oakland. In the "last week of his life" (Chabon, 2016, p. 5) or "its final ten days" (Chabon, 2016, p. 91), he will recount some of these events to his grandson, Mike.

Again, those members of the authorial audience who encountered the digital epitexts on Instagram co-construct the narrative knowing that Chabon's parents actually divorced (see the post shared on Nov. 22, 2016), or that his mother actually lives in Oakland (this information is shared in a post dated March 30, 2018, displaying a photo of old pictures hung on a wall, the geotag "Oakland, California," and the caption "Old photos, @sharonchabon's home office"). At the same time, they may recognize the continuous inconsistencies within the narrative and in the digital epitexts (in the passage above, the grandfather has died in 1990, while earlier was mentioned it was 1989, the same year Chabon's actual grandfather died, according to the digital epitexts). In Oakland, Mike listens to his grandfather, who confesses that he is disappointed in himself. Mike replies that, on the contrary, he is "proud" and that his story is "a pretty good story" (Chabon, 2016, p. 241). The grandfather therefore tells him: "You can have it. I'm giving it to you. After I'm gone, write it down. Explain everything. Make it mean something. Use a lot of those fancy metaphors of yours. Put the whole thing in proper chronological order, not like this mishmash I'm making you. Start with the night I was born. March second, 1915" (Chabon, 2016, p. 241). The grandfather, in other words, authorizes Mike to use his memories and "make them mean something," even if that means to fictionalize them.

As compared to the extent of the grandfather's telling, Mike's is limited, and the episodes narrated within Mike's telling are those in which the autobiographical connections are more evident: Mike is a novelist "about to start a reading tour for the paperback edition of [his] first novel" (Chabon, 2016, p. 48). Mike, like the author Michael, graduated from the University of Irvine, got divorced, and then settled with his second wife in Berkeley. Readers familiar with Chabon's Instagram feed would easily spot these connections (see, for instance, the multiple posts geotagged in Berkeley, California including a "selfie" published on Dec. 14, 2015, and a photo of his studio published on Oct. 10, 2017). The *mise-en-abyme* story of the grandfather, as mentioned above, is incepted in a fictional nonfictional framework. Mike tells us about some episodes that took place many years after his grandfather's death. For instance, when Mike "had long since become a resident of Berkeley, California," his mother pays him a visit while packing up to "move out of the house where [his] grandfather had died" and brings him some old liquor boxes full of his "old junk" (Chabon, 2016, p. 177). One of the boxes actually belongs to her and its content triggers some memories involving her mother's hospitalization: "They dropped me with Bubbe and Zayde and then he took her to the hospital. She was really, you know. Something was really out of whack" (Chabon, 2016, p. 179). The telling of the mother's own memories support the truthfulness of the grandfather's story, that is, its truthfulness within the incepted narrative telling his life.

Examples of these veiled metalepses abound. At one of Mike's readings, at "Books and Books in Coral Gables," a dentist who reconstructed the grandmother's teeth tells him that "he never entirely recovered from the shock of the ruin he found" in her mouth (Chabon, 2016, p. 65). At another reading in Coral Gables, after he has published his second book, his grandfather later love interest, Sally Sichel, shows up and they end up having dinner chatting about the grandfather and their six-months relationship. And again, in 2014, Mike interviews Barry Kahn, the director of the show the grandmother was starring in. Earlier, in 2013, Mike "tracks down"

Lorraine Medved-Engel, the eldest child of Dr. Leo Medved, the doctor who treated his grandmother at the psychiatric hospital Greystone Park, as he "had been thinking of writing a novel based on what [he] knew about [his] grandmother and her illness" (Chabon, 2016, p. 353). Here, he finds a notebook where Dr. Medved annotated a few paragraphs over his grandmother's case.

As the grandfather's telling had anticipated, these notes offer an account of her experiences during the war very different from the one she had given during her life. Mike had "heard the story" of his grandmother as follows:

> sometime after the fall of France my grandmother, unwed, not yet eighteen, and pregnant with my mother, had been taken in by Carmelite nuns in the countryside outside of Lille, where her family were prominent Jewish dealers in horses and hides. On learning that she was pregnant, and with the bastard of a Catholic—unappeased by knowing that the father was a handsome young doctor—her family had disowned her. It was the family of the handsome young doctor who had arranged things with the nuns. Shortly after my mother's birth, my grandmother's family was deported to Auschwitz, where they perished. After the handsome young doctor had treated the injuries of some local members of the Resistance, the SS had shot him (Chabon, 2016, p. 43).

Mike knows, because his grandfather told him (and warned him not to mention it to his mother) that this version probably did not contain the whole story. But the revelations contained in Dr. Medved's notes are still shocking: the father was not a handsome young doctor, but a local SS captain who raped the grandmother. She had suffered from "*prolonged, acute depression postpartum*" and, after the convent of the Carmelite nuns was destroyed by a V-2 rocket, she was "*forced into months of vagrancy, cold, near-starvation*" (Chabon, 2016, p. 355). She'd steal and prostitute herself for "*food and money*" (ibid.). She'd adopt a dead friend's name and identity, and lie about her being interned in Auschwitz—"*US soldier w/ sewing needle and pen ink tattooed numbers on patient's arm in return for sex*"—so that she could be brought to the US by HIAS (Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society) agents (ibid.).

Dr. Medved's notes prove to have an enormous impact on Mike. "This discovery," he writes, "—that my genetic grandfather had been a Nazi, that my grandmother had been born to a life, with a biography, very different than the one I had always been told, that she had perpetrated such a charged deception on everyone for so long— messed me up for a long time" (Chabon, 2016, p. 356). Although he had previously briefly referred to the narrative as his own "manuscript" (Chabon, 2016, p. 168), it is only after this discovery that Mike offers a fuller explanation of its genesis:

> One by one I began to subject my memories of my grandmother, of the things she had told me and the way she had behaved, to a formal review, a kind of failure analysis, searching and testing them for their content of deceit, for the hidden presence in them of the truth. I kept what I had learned from my wife until I returned from Mantoloking. I kept it from my mother and the rest of the world until I began to research and write this memoir, abandoning—repudiating—a novelistic approach to the material. Sometimes even lovers of fiction can be satisfied only by the truth. I felt like I needed to "get my story straight,"

so to speak, in my mind and in my heart. I needed to work out, if I could, the relationship between the things I had heard and learned about my family and its history while growing up, and the things I now knew to be true (Chabon, 2016, p. 356).

This passage is full of pathos, but it is also full of irony. Mike seems very serious about choosing to write this story as nonfiction, in order to be truthful but, at this point, readers have already co-constructed *Moonglow*'s storyworld accepting his genre ambiguity and playfulness on the fact and fiction distinction. Readers are aware of the fictional framework not only because the peritext describes *Moonglow* as a novel: Chabon has been signaling it throughout the narrative by including details and dialogues that clearly bear no referentiality and by switching to omniscient narration. The memories of the grandfather are told in a novelistic and not in a memoiristic way. As the narrative cues the readers' attention towards its overall fictional nature, the narrator's insistence on truth-telling in nonfiction results ironic.

Moonglow as trauma autofiction

The main purpose of Chabon's use of genre ambiguity seems to communicate that fiction or invention do not make the narrative communication less authentic or sincere. Rather, borrowing Stefan Kjerkegaard's remark about Philip Roth's *The facts. A novelist's autobiography* (1988), *Moonglow* "*intends* to tell the truth, but the truth must sometimes be framed by fiction in order to come across as truth" (2016, p. 127; original emphasis). Playing with the fiction/nonfiction distinction in order for the narrative to express some truth emerges because the ambiguity on the generic framing of the narrative, together with Chabon's use of a mixed temporal order (see the page numbers throughout the reconstruction of *Moonglow*'s storyworld to observe the extensive use of this resource) guides the readers interests on thematic issues such as identity, trauma, memory. On the one hand, the temporal gaps convey a sense of fragmentariness that the audience can ascribe to the narrator's own effort in reconstructing his identity through some blurred family tales recounted over many decades. The events recounted are not only intermingled and fragmented, sometimes they are told more than once, the way family stories often are. *Moonglow*, therefore, is about the telling of a family history as it is about the re-telling of family histories: sometimes filling the gaps deepens the understanding of the past, sometimes it makes it even more blurred.

On the other hand, Chabon includes temporal inconsistencies concerning the year or the duration of certain events. It is not clear, for instance, if the grandfather dies in 1989 or in 1990, nor if the grandmother dies in 1975 or in 1974, whether the narrator spent a week or ten days with him in Oakland, and even whether the grandfather met his wife in 1944 or in 1947. Such inconsistencies, however, do not stress so much the unreliability of the narrator (after all, he signals he is mixing fact and fiction), but emphasize Chabon's thematic interest in identity issues. Beyond the problem of the collective memory of the Holocaust, there is also a more intimate or family-related ethical question that *Moonglow* conveys: How can we know who we

are if it is not possible to be sure about our past, as our memories and the memories we pass on generation after generation are not fixed entities and inevitably contain so many inaccuracies? As Collado-Rodríguez points out, "Mental gaps, trauma and nostalgia are features that Chabon frequently uses in *Moonglow* to draw a portrait of his narrator as somebody who incessantly challenges our human ability to know the truth about past experiences" (2019, p. 92). But, Collado-Rodríguez also notices that "there is always a certain level of distortion; there are gaps, smaller or bigger inaccuracies induced by different factors which may go from physical handicaps or psychic trauma to the feeling of nostalgia" (ibid.). That is, trauma affects memory (see Caruth, 1995 and Hirsch, 2008).

Trauma, memory, historical fiction are not new modes and themes for Chabon. Rather, they are well embedded into his investigation "into [his] heritage—rights and privileges, duties and burdens—as a Jew and as a teller of Jewish stories," as he explains (Chabon, 2010, p. 158) and as it is evident by his similar exploration of the same modes and themes in his previous works, most notably in *The amazing adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (2002) and *The Yiddish Policemen's Union* (2007). In this regard, Marjorie Worthington's definition of "trauma autofictions" (2018) provides a further explanation for Chabon's investment in blurring the lines of the fiction/nonfiction distinction in *Moonglow*. As she argues, "onomastic connection between author and author-character implies that the authors have indeed suffered a trauma. This connection imbues the narrative with an authenticity that a traditional trauma narrative requires, even if that authenticity turns out to be ironic or false" (Worthington, 2018, p. 132).[3] In fact, in *Moonglow*, the onomastic connection is not even so explicit: the first-person narrator remains unnamed for most of the narrative and he is eventually referred to as "Mike" only towards the ending. Moreover, as mentioned above, instead of referring to his grandfather by his actual name, the narrator always refers to him as "my grandfather."

Significantly, these connections are made through digital epitexts that directly mention (often with a hashtag) the novel, within a feed itself devoted to the fragmented and repetitive telling of a family history. Fragmentariness is linked with the affordances of the social media platform (see also Thomas, 2020, p. 51), but so is repetition: if the reverse chronology of the feed, together with the ephemerality and the abundance of the elements shared make users focus on the communication in real time, repetition of content is a way to ensure its delivery. Chabon repeats his first post in his last (see above), but also other personal stories/images (cf. his post of a photograph of him and his father, published on Dec. 2, 2016 and June 19, 2017), and "clues" about #Moonglow. These repetitions further emphasize the connection between *Moonglow* and its digital epitexts, a connection that, in turn, participates to Chabon's autofictional play. Indeed, the possible extension of the communicative

---

[3] For different definitions of autofiction see, for instance, Alison Gibbons (2017), who defines contemporary autofiction as ruled by an "affective and situational" logic (118), or Frank Zipfel's idea of an autofictional double contract with the audience made of an "autobiographical contract demanding the author to tell the truth about his life," together with a "fictional contract allowing fabulation and invention" (2005, p. 35).

act through digital epitexts takes place also thanks to the several posts that contain autobiographical facts mentioned in the novel (his parents' divorce, his residence in Berkeley, California, and so on).

Partly linked with historiographic metafiction, partly "filtered by the insistent focus that trauma narratives have put on the difficulties or even impossibility to narrate past traumatic events" (Collado-Rodriguez, 2019, p. 92), *Moonglow* does have a "patina of factual accuracy" as "the author-character place [himself] in the rhetorical position of someone authorized to tell a story of trauma" (Worthington, 2018, p. 131). And Chabon *authorizes* Mike to talk about the collective trauma of the Holocaust, through another (fictionalized) personal trauma—his grandmother's lies which deconstruct his own Jewish origins. So, like trauma autofictions, *Moonglow* draws its authority from "the depth and universality of story-truths" of its being fictional, but also "remains yoked to referentiality through the author-character's onomastic connection to the author" (Worthington, 2018, p. 133). And such referentiality, as I showed, finds correspondence in and is expanded on its digital epitexts on Instagram.

Finally, the novel ends with a third peritextual element, a final metalepsis in the form of acknowledgements. These include a list of people mentioned in the narrative such as Barry Kahn or Lorraine Medved-Engel that "if they existed, would have been instrumental to the completion of this work" and the revelation that the memories of the grandfather actually belong to Chabon's "mother's maternal uncle, Stanley Werbow (1922–2005), a professor of medieval German at the University of Texas and a former staff sergeant operating in the field with the 849th Signal Intelligence Service at the Battle of Monte Cassino" (2016). According to the acknowledgments, Stan Werbow was "persuaded by one of his daughters to dictate some memories of growing up Jewish in Philadelphia and Washington in the early part of the twentieth century. Though fragmentary and rambling, that narrative, […] provided the spark that kindled this one, along with some crucial bits of atmosphere" (Chabon, 2016: n.d.). The revelation of the different identity of the "grandfather," analogously to the effect Dr. Medved's notes have on Mike, forces the authorial audience to reframe the narrative communication through a final layer of ambiguity towards *Moonglow*'s generic status.

The digital epitexts on Chabon's Instagram feed confirming that some of the events narrated have actually happened add even a further layer. Indeed, as mentioned earlier, the posts referring directly to *Moonglow* did not end with its publication. For instance, on January 13, 2017, Chabon shared a post displaying the merged images of a screenshot from a street on Google Earth including its actual location (137, 27th Ave) and the picture of a "Whip truck." The caption is explanatory and includes an excerpt from *Moonglow*: "When I was little and we still lived in Flushing, the Whip used to come shambling down our block, a hectic fanfare blowing from its loudspeaker horn […]—Chapter 32, #Moonglow. #fbf [Google Earth boyhood home h/t: @sharonchabon]." This digital epitext confirms the referentiality of some of the elements included in the fictional memoir, inviting actual readers, once again, to assess their (fictional/nonfictional) reconstruction. Potential readers who encounter this digital epitext before reading, instead, may incorporate the connection between Mike and @michael.chabon once they have joined the authorial

audience. That is, when encountering this passage in the novel, they will presumably frame it according to @michael.chabon's visual reference to his actual childhood home on his Instagram post.

Finally, on January 26, 2017 and on September 7, 2017, Chabon shares two portraits of a man with the captions: "#Myrealgrandfather, Ernest Cohen, selfie pioneer. Circa 1987. #tbt #Moonglow" (Jan. 26, 2017) and "My maternal grandfather, Ernest Samuel Cohen, inspiration for the protagonist of #Moonglow (in paperback from @harpercollinsus 9/17/17). Circa ≈ 1933, aged ≈18? (@sharonchabon?) #tbt" (Sept. 7, 2017). As the posts published before the publication of the novel, these digital epitexts function as visual extensions for the grandfather character, providing an autobiographical connection that is both confirmed by the reference to the novel through the hashtag #Moonglow and dismissed through the stating of him being only an "inspiration." Significantly enough, on May 2, 2018, Chabon shares another old picture of a man and a woman with the caption: "One more lovely shot, new to me. My great-uncle, Stanely Werbow, an inspiration for the grandfather character in #Moonglow, with his wife, my Aunt Naomi. Sometime in the 1940s, I'm guessing." Thus, he confirms not only the existence of the uncle mentioned in the Acknowledgments, but also his being an inspiration for the grandfather character in his novel, an information that can seem at odds with the previous posts revealing the inspiration to be his grandfather Ernest, but in line with the Acknowledgments in *Moonglow*.

Conclusion

Chabon's interest in blurring the lines between fiction and nonfiction is not only recurrent in his own novels, but linked with the "reshuffling" (McHale, 2005, p. 457) of such practice in contemporary American fiction. As Jan Alber and Alice Bell maintains, "Whether postmodernism is dead, dying, deadish or simply less dominant, there is a growing argument that many cultural artefacts in the twenty-first century use postmodern techniques not to foreground the artificiality of all narratives and by implication the world beyond but instead to earnestly engage with the moral, ethical and political issues affecting contemporary society" (2019, p. 124). One of such techniques is the blurring of the fiction/nonfiction distinction (or playing with the boundary between fact and fiction.) The use of digital epitexts, whether in an informative, promotional and performative way, or by engaging with *Moonglow*'s storyworld directly, move within the same idea of "using postmodernist devices for sincere purposes" (Alber & Bell, 2019, p. 124). The overall rhetorical function of the digital epitexts supports the overall purposes of *Moonglow*, providing the personal connection and situated lived experience necessary to complete the metafictional gesture "toward the extratextual world outside [*Moonglow*] and the extratextual author of the narrative" typical of autofiction, as Worthington points out (2018, p. 133).

The communicative dynamics that the digital epitexts elicit move within a social media logic that puts to the fore a phatic and ephemeral communication (Rettberg, 2018), as I briefly outlined in the introduction. So, the situated context where *Moonglow*'s digital epitexts occur is connected with ideas of community and relationality

in line with the way scholars have been describing fiction after postmodernism. See, for instance, Mary K. Holland's argument for a call of humanism characterized by "Literature's and theory's ability to be about something, to matter, to communicate meaning, to foster the sense that language connects us more than it estranges us, so that we can come together in ways that build relationship and community rather than alienation and solipsism of anti-humanistic postmodern literature" (2013, p. 6). And Chabon's final gesture/post to "leave" Instagram because of Facebook's "global dominance and instrumentalizing of algorithmic social control" simply confirms the idea that the ontological ambiguity contained in *Moonglow* (and fostered through the digital epitexts) was meant to "engage with very specific moral, ethical and/or political issues that they consider to be relevant to the real world" as Alber and Bell point out (2019, p. 125).

In this sense, these digital epitexts contain both illocutionary functionality and are self-reflexive in their nature. They connect with the actual or potential readers, sometimes confirming information to be found in the narrative fiction, sometimes offering new information. A post published right after the publication of *Moonglow* is emblematic in this sense: it displays a screenshot from a review published on the Edmonton Journal with a highlighted sentence confirming the fact that *Moonglow*'s epigraph "There is no dark side of the moon, really. Matter of fact, it's all dark" is a quotation (ironically) misattributed to von Braun, instead of the Pink Floyd, and a caption "We have a winner" (Nov. 24, 2016) confirming the accuracy of the reviewer's observation. This digital epitext both confirms what some readers may also have guessed and provides new information for those who did not catch the misattribution, or have not read the novel yet. But its very existence is due to Chabon's choice to use a digital epitext to communicate such information, and it is this choice to include such information in a medium currently so charged with political and social discourse and inherently ephemeral that makes the digital epitext itself self-reflexive.

References

Alber, J., & Bell, A. (2019). The importance of being earnest again: fact and fiction in contemporary narratives across media. *European Journal of English Studies, 23*(2), 121–135

Caruth, C. (Ed.). (1995). *Trauma: Explorations in memory*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Chabon, M. (2010). *Maps and legends: Reading and writing along the borderlands*. Harper Perennial.

Chabon, M. (2016). *Moonglow*. HarperCollins.

Chabon, M. (N.d.). @michael.chabon. https://www.instagram.com/michael.chabon/. Accessed 5 Mar 2021.

Collado-Rodrìguez, F. (2019). Narratives of the rocket: Chabon's 'amnesiac' revisitation of Pynchon's Posthuman Zone. *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction, 61*(1), 91–103

Effron, M., McMurry, M., & Pignagnoli, V. (2019). Narrative co-construction: A rhetorical approach. *Narrative, 27*(3), 332–352

Genette, G. ([1987] 1997). *Paratexts: Thresholds of interpretation* (J.E. Lewin, Trans.). Cambridge University Press.

Gibbons, A. (2017). Contemporary autofiction and metamodern affect. In R. van den Akker, A. Gibbons & T. Vermeulen (Eds.), *Metamodernism: Historicity, affect, and depth after postmodernism* (pp. 117–130). Rowman & Littlefield.

Herman, D. (2009). *Basic elements of narrative*. John Wiley & Sons.

Hirsch, M. (2008). The generation of postmemory. *Poetics Today, 29*(1), 103–128

Holland, M. (2013). *Succeeding postmodernism: Language and humanism in contemporary American literature*. Bloomsbury.

Horton, D., & Wohl, R. R. (1956). Mass communication and para-social interaction: Observations on intimacy at a distance. *Psychiatry*, *19*, 215–229.

Kjerjegaard, S. (2016). Fictionality as a means of self-fashioning in Bret Easton Ellis and (Claus Beck) Nielsen. In S. J. Paulson & A. S. Malvik (Eds.), *Literature in contemporary media culture. Technology—subjectivity—aesthetics* (pp. 129–148). John Benjamins.

McHale, B. (2005). Postmodern narrative. In D. Herman, M. Jahn, & M.-L. Ryan (Eds.), *Routledge encyclopedia of narrative theory.* (pp. 456–460). Routledge.

McHale, B. (2015). *The Cambridge introduction to Postmodernism*. Cambridge University Press.

Moraru, C. (2011). *Cosmodernism: American narrative, late globalization, and the new cultural imaginary*. University of Michigan Press.

Murray, S. (2018). *The digital literary sphere reading, Writing, and selling books in the Internet era*. Johns Hopkins University Press.

Phelan, J. (2017). *Somebody telling somebody else: A rhetorical poetics of narrative*. The Ohio State University Press.

Pignagnoli, V. (2018). Narrative theory and the brief and wondrous life of Post-postmodern fiction. *Poetics Today, 39*(1), 183–199

Pignagnoli, V. (2019). Changing dominants, changing features? The fiction/nonfiction distinction in contemporary literary and Instagram narratives. *European Journal of English Studies, 23*(2), 224–238

Rettberg, J. W. (2018). Snapchat: phatic communication and ephemeral social media. In J. W. Morris & S. Murray (Eds.), *Appified: culture in the age of apps.* (pp. 188–196). University of Michigan Press.

Shields, D. (2010). *Reality hunger: A manifesto*. Knopf.

Thomas, B. (2020). *Literature and social media*. Routledge.

Vaidhyanathan, S. (2018). *Antisocial media: How Facebook disconnects us and undermines democracy*. Oxford University Press.

Worthington, M. (2018). *The story of "Me." Contemporary American autofiction*. University of Nebraska Press.

Zipfel, F. (2005). Autofiction. In D. Herman, M. Jahn, & M.-L. Ryan (Eds.), *Routledge encyclopedia of narrative theory.* (pp. 36–37). Routledge.