

Metafiction, Reflexivity and Intertextuality in David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten* and *number9dream*

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BA Thesis English Literature

15 June 2018

ENGELSE TAAL EN CULTUUR

Teacher who will receive this document: Dr U. Wilbers

Title of document: The Role of Narrative Structure in
Ghostwritten and *number9dream*

Name of course: BA Thesis English Literature

Date of submission: 12 June 2018

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Abstract

This research topic focuses on two novels by the author David Mitchell, *Ghostwritten* (1999) and *number9dream* (2001). These novels in particular were chosen because they were his first two novels before the publication of his bestseller, *Cloud Atlas* (2004), which has garnered much academic attention. They have similar complex narratives but have not had as much academic interest. This thesis explores his use of complex narrative structure in relation to three postmodern concepts: metafiction, reflexivity and intertextuality. The thesis will establish what these concepts entail, and employ a close reading of the two novels to establish a connection between these concepts and the respective narrative structures of the novels. The intent is to find out whether the narrative structures of these two texts strengthen the use of these postmodern concepts within the novels.

Keywords: David Mitchell, *Ghostwritten*, *number9dream*, narrative structure, postmodernism, metafiction, reflexivity, intertextuality

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Introduction

David Mitchell has been shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize twice, won the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize for his debut novel *Ghostwritten* (1999) and both his works *Cloud Atlas* (2004) and *number9dream* (2001) have been adapted to the screen. He is a writer of contemporary (often postmodern) literature and has garnered recognition for his work nationally and internationally¹. David Mitchell is also partaking in the *Future Library* project², for which “one hundred outstanding writers”³ are invited. This might give an indication of his position in the British literary field even more. Mitchell himself engages with his literature by writing about it. His characters travel from one story to another and his works have a unique intertextual nature. His works are narratively intricate, self-aware, and do not shy away from complexity.

Research into the works of a contemporary author like Mitchell could give a good sense of the state of postmodern literature in Britain. There also seems to be more academic interest in his work and we can see that it has been becoming subject matter for theses and articles the past few years. Most research tends to focus on exploring specific themes present in his novels, the adaptation of *Cloud Atlas*, or the interlinking narratives he has become so well-known⁴ for. There is still a gap in the research on his work, however: the novels are most often discussed separate from each other, and the focus on narrative structure is often one that tries to find out what the fragmentation of the structure does to the readers’s experience of the central message⁵. Most of the research is also focussed on *Cloud Atlas*, his most famous novel.

¹ Mitchell has been called “a genius” by the New York Times and “one of the most electric writers alive” by the Boston Globe, amongst others.

² The Future Library is a project by artist Katie Paterson, the objective is to grow a forest which will serve as the paper for an anthology which will consist of the manuscripts buried there by a group of hand-picked writers.

³ “Information.” *Future Library*, accessed April 25, 2018. <https://www.futurelibrary.no/>.

⁴ As seen in Gerd Bayer’s “Perpetual Apocalypses: David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* and the Absence of Time”, Jo Alyson Parker’s “From Time's Boomerang to Pointillist Mosaic: Translating *Cloud Atlas* into Film”, and Peter Child’s article “Food Chain: Predatory Links in the Novels of David Mitchell”.

⁵ I came across at least two theses from 2015 with this approach: “Postmodern narrative strategies in David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas*” by Ivan Radoš and “Re-Construction Through

That is why in this research I will not focus on *Cloud Atlas* but rather explore Mitchell's debut novel, *Ghostwritten*, and his second novel, *number9dream*. These novels have not been exhaustively analysed yet and they are the first examples of Mitchell's style and content. This thesis will explore how the structure interacts with the postmodern techniques he uses across his work. The expectation is that narrative structure strengthens the postmodern concepts he employs in his novels. The aim is to discover exactly what role narrative structure plays in strengthening the metafictional, reflexive and intertextual techniques used in David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten* (1999) and *number9dream* (2001).

Sources on *Ghostwritten* also often examine *Cloud Atlas*, and little attention has been paid to *number9dream*. There are however plenty of examples to use as guidelines if we look at *Cloud Atlas* to also analyse these two novels. One such article would be "Finding Stories to Tell: Metafiction and Narrative in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*" (2016) by Kevin Brown, which focusses on how "Mitchell uses metafiction and intertextuality differently than those who have come before him"⁶ and also links this to the narrative structure. The Brown article has a similar topic but focuses on *Cloud Atlas*. The interaction between the three aforementioned concepts and narrative structure is central to this research, and the way Brown has analysed these concepts within *Cloud Atlas* is a good template to use in this thesis. He for instance notes that "[Mitchell] wants to force the reader to question his or her reality, using the story-within-story technique to explore the next level outside the story, which is the reader's reality"⁷, and with this he relates the concept of metafiction directly to the narrative structure of the novel. The methodology will be a combination of close reading the novels and applying theory. It will also involve reviewing and synthesizing secondary literature.

Theories central to this research are those of Brian McHale's *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987) and Linda Hutcheon's *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988). These are landmark works in postmodern theory and have been highly influential. I will also be looking at Hutcheon's work *Narcissistic Narrative* (1980) and Patricia Waugh's *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984). I will be focussing on three postmodern concepts, namely metafiction, intertextuality, and reflexivity, which will be

Fragmentation: A Cosmodern Reading of David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*" by Beth Katherine Miller.

⁶ Kevin Brown, "Finding Stories to Tell: Metafiction and Narrative in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*," *Journal of Language, Literature and Culture* 63, no. 1 (2016): 78.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.

further explained in chapter one. Metafiction and reflexivity are similar in definition, as they both promote the idea that the text is aware of its status as a text and references or uses that awareness within the text. The difference is that reflexivity, or self-reflexivity, is focussed on the process of the composition of the text, and metafiction draws attention to its status as a fictional text, in form or content. Hutcheon coined the term 'historiographic metafiction', a term specifically used for fiction that details history. This idea of 'historiographic metafiction' complicates the sense that history is fact, and highlights how history is also a constructed narrative. This will be a part of metafiction that will be most important in the chapter about *Ghostwritten*, as parts of the novel have a specific historical setting.

Intertextuality in the case of David Mitchell's work is quite specific: he often features characters that are protagonists in one novel as side-characters in another, he also incorporates references to his own works in other ways. Overall intertextuality supports the idea that texts are part of a network, and the concept of the 'network' is pervasive in Mitchell's work.

The theories and concepts mentioned before will be further explained in the first chapter, which will detail the theoretical framework. The concepts will be applied to the novels and the results from this will be reviewed in the subsequent two chapters. The three concepts, metafiction, intertextuality, and reflexivity, will each be discussed in relation to the narrative structure of the novel per chapter. The second chapter will be about *Ghostwritten* and the third about *number9dream*. This order is chosen based on their order of release. How the novels relate to each other will mostly be discussed in chapter three. The conclusion will synthesize an answer to the research question and discuss the findings of the overall analysis.

Chapter 1

Narrative structure is an important aspect of any David Mitchell novel as it is often intricately linked to certain techniques or themes he presents the reader with. In *Ways of Reading* (2013) it is stated that narrative structure consists of two aspects, namely content and form:

The content of a narrative is its collection of represented events, along with the participants in those events and the circumstances of those events. The form of a narrative is how those events are represented through a particular narrative medium.⁸

Cloud Atlas (2016) has a particularly complex narrative structure which Kevin Brown examines in his article “Finding Stories to Tell: Metafiction and Narrative in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*” (2016). Yet complex narrative structures are also present in the two novels, *Ghostwritten* (1999) and *number9dream* (2001), this thesis will analyse. There is however a key difference between the narrative structure of *Ghostwritten* and that of *number9dream*, namely that the former is a collection of interconnected stories, each with their own protagonist, while the latter is the alternation between mirror narratives of the same protagonist. Brown explains that the set-up of the structure in *Cloud Atlas* pushes certain ideas onto the reader and that by doing so “Mitchell moves away from the idea of questioning reality to the power of stories themselves”⁹. This link between narrative structure and postmodern ontological inquiry, the questioning of reality through concepts such as metafiction, reflexivity and intertextuality, is also what this thesis examines.

These concepts can be placed within the postmodernist tradition. David Mitchell's work, and in particular these two novels, can be classified as postmodern for a number of reasons. Postmodernism is focussed on the ontological, meaning it “deploys strategies which engage and foreground questions like . . . : “Which world is this? What is to be done in it? Which of my selves is to do it?”¹⁰, in other words, questions pertaining to the nature and existence of reality. These questions are relevant to “the ontology of the literary text itself or

⁸ Montgomery, Martin, and others, *Ways of Reading: Advanced readings skills for students of English Literature* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 260.

⁹ Kevin Brown, “Finding Stories to Tell: Metafiction and Narrative in David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*,” *Journal of Language, Literature and Culture* 63, no. 1 (2016): 80.

¹⁰ Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction* (New York: Methuen, 1987), chap. 1, Kobo.

[to] the ontology of the world which it projects”¹¹, ontology then manifests itself as techniques dealing with the state of being of the text, within the confinements of itself and the world around it. Linda Hutcheon adds to the characterisation of postmodernism in arguing that “the increasing uniformization of mass culture is one of the totalizing forces that postmodernism exists to challenge. Challenge, but not deny.”¹² Postmodernism examines the nature of the literary text and the story it contains, and it confronts the reality it inhabits. Thematically, it is characterised by self-awareness, a focus on capitalism and consumerism, hyperrealism, the use of pastiche, intertextuality and metafiction.

Ghostwritten is David Mitchell’s debut novel, published in 1999. It is a tapestry of nine stories with each portraying a main character, written episodically, yet all interlinked through supposed ‘coincidental’ events. Some of the stories are based on real-life events, like for instance the sarin gas attack on the Tokyo subway of 1995. There are also references and links to other works that were and were not written by Mitchell. *Ghostwritten* crosses different eras, countries and genres and is a good example of David Mitchell’s style and label as a postmodernist writer. *number9dream*, Mitchell’s second novel from 2001, follows one protagonist, Eiji Miyake, on his quest for identity while juxtaposing the actual journey with an imaginative one. The novel is divided into nine chapters, each with their own particular twist on narration. This novel is very comparative to the works of Haruki Murakami¹³, one of Mitchell’s chief inspirations, and follows a tradition of interest Mitchell has shown in Japan and Japanese culture¹⁴. In fact, both novels are completely or partially set in Japan, and “critics also noted the influence of Japanese authors, in particular Haruki Murakami, on his writing”¹⁵. There is a theme of narrative experimentation and a use of intertextuality in both

¹¹ McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, chap. 1.

¹² Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 6.

¹³ Having read both *Norwegian Wood* (1987) and *Kafka on the Shore* (2002) I can say Mitchell’s novel does echo themes and motifs that Murakami also uses a lot, e.g. coming of age plotlines of a young Japanese man told through embedded narration, and the motif of (jazz) music, which is also present in *Ghostwritten*.

¹⁴ David Mitchell worked as an English teacher in Japan between 1994 and 2002.

¹⁵ William Bradburry, “Finding the locus of David Mitchell,” *Japan Times*, April 2, 2016, <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2016/04/02/books/finding-locus-david-mitchell/#.Wuq3o4iFPIU>

novels. Themes of reality, contemporary capitalist and consumerist society and a blatant self-awareness all feature in these novels. This combined with Mitchell's overall oeuvre of work gives grounds for placing him within the postmodern tradition, and this is why the novels will be analysed with a postmodern framework in mind.

Chief works to consider when analysing these novels with the postmodern concepts metafiction, reflexivity and intertextuality are works by the scholars Linda Hutcheon, Brian McHale and Patricia Waugh. Hutcheon has written about (self-)reflexivity in her work *Narcissistic Narrative* (1980), detailing "four different modes of "narcissistic" fiction"¹⁶, or metafiction, this 'narcissistic fiction' is her term for the self-reflexive novel. She describes two variations, either being "diegetically self-conscious" or demonstrating "an awareness of their linguistic constitution"¹⁷, these, then, can also either be "covert" or "overt". This is explained further as an 'overt' text revealing "their self-awareness in explicit thematizations or allegorizations" while a 'covert' internalises or actualises this process, "such a text is self-reflective but not necessarily self-conscious"¹⁸. She has also written about the postmodern tradition in general, (historiographic) metafiction and intertextuality in *A Poetics of Postmodernism: History, Theory, Fiction* (1988). Especially historiographic metafiction, a term she coined herself, will be essential in analysing the metafictional aspect of *Ghostwritten*. Brian McHale describes and establishes a working definition of postmodernism and its practices in *Postmodernist Fiction* (1987), placing postmodernism within literary history. Brian McHale has been especially precise in forming an idea of the different types of 'worlds' postmodern fiction creates. The intrinsic ontological character of postmodernism is actualized as the concepts that will be discussed. Lastly, when analysing the metafictional elements in the novels, Patricia Waugh's *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984) will be used to define a characterization of metafiction.

The term 'metafiction' is almost self-explanatory; it is fiction that is highly 'meta', self-referential. Metafiction is fiction aware of its status as fictional, or as Patricia Waugh details in *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (1984):

¹⁶Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), i.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

Metafiction is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality.¹⁹

If a text is metafictional the author will provide hints or allusions about the fictionality of the text itself, by for instance employing narrative tricks that create ambiguity in the fabric of reality within the narrative or by creating fictionality within the fictionality.

In providing a critique of their own methods of construction, such writings not only examine the fundamental structures of narrative fiction, they also explore the possible fictionality of the world outside the literary fictional text.²⁰

Metafiction is not afraid to push the reader beyond the boundaries of the text itself; the self-awareness means examining the ‘frame’²¹ of a text and the ‘frame’ of the reality the text inhibits and showing that there is no clear boundary of where one begins and another one ends²². As such, metafiction serves to “always [point] back to the reader to question the reality or fictionality of our existence”²³. This is also the main difference with (self-)reflexivity, metafiction is awareness on a thematic, content, level, while reflexivity refers to the text’s textuality in form, take for instance the use of letters in a novel that is not epistolary. Reflexivity is concerned with the process of writing, not with the blurring of fiction and reality. Hutcheon describes what she calls “narcissistic texts”²⁴, which are concerned either with ‘diegetic self-consciousness’ or “an awareness of their linguistic constitution”²⁵. As mentioned before Hutcheon also makes a difference between ‘covert’ and ‘overt’ texts, the

¹⁹ Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (New York: Routledge, 1984), 2.

²⁰ Waugh, *Metafiction*, 2.

²¹ A frame in this case is explained as a construct, Waugh recounts that “modernism and post-modernism begin with the view that both the world and works of art are organized and perceived through structures or ‘frames’.”(Waugh, *Metafiction*, 28)

²² Waugh, *Metafiction*, 29.

²³ Brown, “Finding Stories to Tell”, 80.

²⁴ Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative*, 7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

covert version then aligns with the concept of metafiction, and the overt with that of reflexivity.

The last concept that will be applied is ‘intertextuality’. The aim of intertextuality in fiction is to posit the text within an existing discourse as it “both provides and undermines context”²⁶. Intertextuality gives the reader a sense of locality within fiction’s tradition and the world around them, but it also makes the reader aware of the text’s intent in relation to that tradition and world. We can see this for instance in story two of *Ghostwritten*, in which there are a number of references to jazz records, these records also play a part in understanding the characters and their interactions. Jazz is also an important element in a Haruki Murakami novels, and here we see how an implicit external literary reference gives a new dimension to the text, depending on how familiar the reader is with the literary tradition the author can be placed in. Intertextuality also for instance concerns the character appearances across and between novels, something which Mitchell is well-known for.

The blueprint for this thesis is Kevin Brown’s article “Finding Stories to Tell: Metafiction and Narrative in David Mitchell’s *Cloud Atlas*” (2016). The reason this article is used is because it explores how the narratives and their structures in *Cloud Atlas* are inherently connected to notions of metafiction, reflexivity, and intertextuality. This is seen in for instance this passage in which he analyses the use of metafiction:

What Mitchell is trying to do through his metafiction is similar to those postmodernists in that he wants to force the reader to question his or her reality, using the story-within-story technique to explore the next level outside the story, which is the reader’s reality.²⁷

A close reading will be used to see how the narrative structure of the novel is designed in such a way that it strengthens the use of certain postmodern concepts. The concepts metafiction, reflexivity and intertextuality all interact differently with the structure in place. That is why they will be examined per chapter. There is also a difference between the analysis of the three postmodern concepts in *Ghostwritten* and *number9dream*. *Ghostwritten* has stories with a semi-historical setting. That is why the analysis of metafiction in this section will also focus on ‘historiographic metafiction’. This is a concept that will only be used in the analysis of

²⁶ Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 127.

²⁷ Brown, “Finding Stories to Tell,” 80.

Ghostwritten and not in that of *number9dream*. Linda Hutcheon describes that a novel that uses this type of metafiction is the “kind of novel [that] asks us to recall that history and fiction are themselves historical terms and that their definitions and interrelations are historically determined and vary with time”²⁸, in other words, historiographic metafiction often ascribes fictionality and narrative quality to history, but also defines fiction as a type of history. *Ghostwritten* has a number of plotlines that either have a historical setting or are based on actual historical events, and therefore it can be subjected to analysis with this type of metafiction in mind. To analyse the presence of metafiction in *Ghostwritten*, the focus will be on the use of “frame and frame-break”²⁹ and the presence of historiographic elements, while in *number9dream* the focus will be on “construction and deconstruction of illusion”³⁰. In both cases there will be concentrated on the idea that “[t]he fictional *content* of the story is constantly reflected by its *formal* existence as text, and the existence of that text within a world viewed in terms of ‘textuality’”³¹ and how this is represented by the narratives of the novels. The presence of reflexivity in the text will be explored by looking at how the narrative structure is expressed in the language and form of the text and the reality of the characters. Lastly, the intertextual element will be used to analyse how the structure might reach within and beyond the isolated novels.

The concepts can be very varied in nature. Metafiction can for instance take a *historiographic* angle instead of a more thematic dimension. Reflexivity can be either considered with issues of genre or occur as a linguistic feature. Likewise, intertextuality is concerned with reference frameworks and these can be very limited or small, or very elaborate and large. These three concepts all, however, highlight the ontological character of postmodernism, and whether these concepts are strengthened by the narrative in place is the question this thesis tackles. In chapter two the narrative structure of *Ghostwritten* will be analysed in relation to the concepts, metafiction, reflexivity and intertextuality. The same method will be applied to *number9dream* in chapter three.

²⁸ Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 105.

²⁹ Waugh, *Metafiction*, 14.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

Chapter 2: *Ghostwritten*

Chapter two will focus on David Mitchell's debut novel *Ghostwritten*, which was first published by Hodder and Stoughton in 1999, and won the John Llewellyn Rhys Prize that same year. This chapter will analyse the novel as has been formulated in the previous chapter but will also make use of some analysis provided by Sarah Dillon in her article "Chaotic Narrative: Complexity, Causality, Time, and Autopoiesis in David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten*" and David Mitchell's own remarks on the novel in the afterword of the 2016 Sceptre edition of *Ghostwritten*.

The novel consists of ten chapters covering nine interconnected stories. The chapters are named after the location the individual narratives are set in, and in chronological order they are: "Okinawa", "Tokyo", "Hong Kong", "Holy Mountain", "Mongolia", "Petersburg", "London", "Clear Island", "Night Train", and "Underground". "Okinawa" and "Underground" are part of the same story. The novel opens with the narrative of Quasar, a member of a Japanese doomsday cult, The Fellowship, who has recently executed a gas attack on the Tokyo subway and has fled to Okinawa at the command of his leader, His Serendipity. The second narrative is Saturo Sonada's story of falling in love with a Chinese-Japanese girl, Tomoyo, who is visiting Tokyo. Satoru's narrative centres around his job at a (jazz) record store and ends with him making plans to join Tomoyo in Hong Kong, where she lives. The third story is that of Neal Brose, a British lawyer working in Hong Kong who is divorcing his wife and lives on Lantau Island in a haunted apartment. Neal Brose ends up climbing a mountain and dying of undiagnosed diabetes at the end of his narrative. The fourth story follows a Chinese woman and her life on the Holy Mountain running a Tea Shack. This story is linear in its own narrative but does not follow the chronology of the whole of the novel as it starts in her late childhood and stops at her supposed death of old age. The fifth story has one protagonist, a disembodied spirit, called the "noncorpum" infiltrating the bodies of a number of characters journeying through or living in Mongolia, in search of its history. The sixth follows the character Margarita Latunsky who is involved in an art heist in Petersburg, Russia, the seventh a drummer and ghost-writer named Marco, who lives in London. The eighth narrative centres around Mo Muntervary, a scientist on the run from the military, who flees to "Clear Island", her home. The penultimate chapter is the story of Bat Segundo, a radio host who interviews an AI called the Zookeeper, invented by Mo. The last chapter then circles back to the first chapter and relates the events of Quasar's attack on the Tokyo Subway. Each of the narratives is intricately linked and interconnected with the other ones.

As mentioned in the introduction and chapter one, David Mitchell's novels almost always present the reader with a complexly constructed narrative. In order to analyse the relation between the narrative structure and the concepts metafiction, reflexivity, and intertextuality, we first need to establish what this narrative structure looks like. Mitchell himself describes the structure in the afterword of the Sceptre 30th Edition of the novel as follows:

I arranged the stories in a sequence that followed the itinerary of my journey, and applied the theme of causality to the structure of the sequence. Each story happens the way it does because of an event or events in the story before. They topple, like dominoes of cause and effect.³²

At first glance the reader would in fact agree with this idea of a domino-sequence, yet there are two elements in the novel that contradict this notion. One is that the first story, "Okinawa", is also the last story, "Underground", and unlike all the other chapters "Okinawa" does not domino into its subsequent chapter, "Tokyo". Quasar's story ends with him meeting a policeman and being invited to his house. This is in no way related to Satoru's story and Quasar is not featured in his narrative; they are not even in the same city. This would, however, been resolved if Mitchell had placed "Underground" within the first chapter, as this one does involve Tokyo, and it does feature Satoru. Yet, it also features all the other characters and their stories in a way. So, it in fact does not domino into one other chapter; it dominoes into all the other chapters. This particular quality of the "Underground" chapter will also be discussed when analysing the metafictional aspect of the novel.

There are two ways to read the novel's structure. One is the one proposed by Mitchell, one of cause and effect; the other way is less easily defined, and is perhaps best understood in relation to this metafictional aspect. So, until that aspect is analysed, I will be working with the notion that there is a cause-and-effect structure at play in most narratives. This is realised in two ways: some narratives contain elements that affect other narratives, for instance characters like Huw Llewellyn who plays minor roles in multiple narratives, or the disembodied spirit who is revealed to have inhibited multiple characters throughout the novel affecting them and the plot. Other narratives merely contain characters or elements that reoccur in the other narratives. An example of this is the description Neal Brose gives of a

³² David Mitchel, *Ghostwritten* (Great Britain: Sceptre, 2016), 440.

couple in a diner in Hong Kong, who the reader can identify as Satoru and Tomoyo. Another one is that of the maid in Neal Brose's narrative, "Hong Kong", who turns out to be a great-granddaughter of the Tea Shack lady in "Holy Mountain" and who clarifies the ending of Neal Brose's story and turns out to have been a beneficiary of his will.

These connections between the narratives on a larger scale also work as intertextual elements. Within the world of the novel the reader is provided with references to the other narratives. Some characters like Huw, Suhbataar and the disembodied spirit feature in multiple narratives, they work like strings connecting multiple beads to the main narrative of the novel. Some characters do indeed turn out to be responsible for events happening in the others's stories, such as Neal Brose dying leads to the demise of Margarita's partners at the hands of Suhbataar³³. Others like Katy Forbes, Brose's ex-wife and Marco's one-night stand, have shadow narratives of their own, but do not meddle in the main narratives. Other reference points are the work that Mo does, which is central to her story and that of the "Night Train", or the gas attack in Tokyo, which is mentioned by Satoru's customer and Tim Cavendish³⁴. This provides the reader with a fictional world that all the stories can be placed within, each reference providing more insight into the workings of that world.

This is but one level of intertextuality in *Ghostwritten*: there are two more. The second level is a type of intertextuality that is present in all of David Mitchell's novels: characters from other novels are featured within *Ghostwritten*. This creates a sense that Mitchell's fictional world is one that covers all the novels he has written. The reader can assume that things that happen in *Ghostwritten* may also have happened in the reality of for instance *Cloud Atlas* (2004) or *number9dream*. In fact, in a chart by Vulture.com³⁵, it can be observed that there are overlaps of character appearances between *Ghostwritten* and *number9dream*. Two characters in particular, Suhbataar and The Texan, will be discussed in chapter three. In some cases a reference can serve as foreboding or further depth to a character. An example of this is the appearance of the character Denholme Cavendish in the "Hong Kong"-narrative. Denholme Cavendish is also the brother of Timothy Cavendish, another secondary character in *Ghostwritten*, in *Cloud Atlas*. In *Ghostwritten* the reader gets the impression that Denholme is a corrupt businessman, not afraid of getting his hands dirty, and this insight would have been very helpful in reading *Cloud Atlas* subsequently because the reader would get a better

³³ Mitchell, *Ghostwritten*, 259

³⁴ Ibid., 61 and 294.

³⁵ See appendix, figure 1.

sense of foreboding of what will happen to Timothy at the mercy of his brother. There is also the ‘Texan’-character which will resurface in *number9dream*, that plays an important role in the plot of Mo Muntervary’s narrative.

The third level of intertextuality that can be observed is the type one usually encounters in postmodern fiction: references to contemporary popular “real” culture. In the novel these are for instance the references to jazz songs that Satoru gives in “Tokyo”. These are however not just casual references, the references serve as a cultural framework and they differ depending on the character that uses them and the message or theme the narrative encompasses. Satoru says at one point “it’s not American culture exploiting us. It’s us exploiting it”³⁶ when he is asked why the Japanese try to “ape American kids”³⁷. It is interesting that Satoru then is someone who is so interested in post-WW2 American culture and references actor Humphrey Bogart and the Jazz music by for instance Miles Davis and John Coltrane, two prominent post-WW2 Jazz artists. After all, it is the late 1940s and 1950s when Japan first becomes saturated with American popular culture. The Japanese culture of the Empire falls away with the end of their reign in Asia and the imperialist becomes the imperialised, at least from an economic point of view. Satoru is right to say that the Japanese youth have adopted a foreign counter-culture because they lack one themselves. This economical imperialism of popular culture is a theme that also appears in a less direct way in other narratives in the novel, but it is most directly addressed in that of Satoru. Other narratives merely have characters complain about foreign tourism, like in “Okinawa”³⁸ and “Holy Mountain”³⁹. Other isolated reference frameworks can be found in for instance the “Hong Kong”-narrative, with Neal Brose calling something “James Bond music”⁴⁰, or referencing John Wayne⁴¹, tough guys, types that Brose may aspire to be like. He references expensive brands such as Rolex or Ralph Lauren, brands that fit the image of the wealthy British lawyer. Margarita Latunsky, from the “Petersburg”-narrative, works at an art museum and some of the artists she mentions, Delacroix and Bronzino, painted religious subjects. She in fact tries to steal a painting called “Eve and the Serpent”. Margarita herself is very

³⁶ Mitchell, *Ghostwritten*, 44.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 89.

religiously conflicted as she even has dreams of angels, and struggles with a past abortion, but she also ‘whores’ herself out, she is a woman who uses her womanhood to provide for herself and identifies with Eve.

Each of these levels of intertextuality expand the novel beyond the isolated narratives. Intertextuality in the novel serves to make the reader question reality, and this is achieved by fragmenting an overarching narrative into smaller points of view, and characters crossing throughout these viewpoints. The first level of intertextuality is the one that interlinks the stories within the novel through anecdotes about characters or events to create an overarching narrative. The second level places the novel and its characters within the larger body of work David Mitchell has written, and the third places it within the reader’s contemporary world or their reality. These two are not necessarily supported by the actual structure of the narrative, but they do influence the perception of reality. The third level of intertextuality is also confined mostly within the separate narratives, as each character has their own cultural framework, which does help set the narratives apart from one another. The questioning of reality is also a metafictional inclination, and it is this metafictional side that can also be connected to the first level type of intertextuality: the events that thread throughout the novel.

These events are historical events: the whole of “Holy Mountain” focuses on the political turmoil of China between the feudal society pre-WW2, to the reign of Communism under Mao Zedong, then moving forward to the ‘present day’. In “Mongolia” the reader is presented with the effects of communism on Mongolia and even more ‘history’ is related. The Tea Shack lady in “Holy Mountain” remarks that she “added ‘writers’ to [her] list of people not to trust. They make everything up”⁴² and that she knows it is “not the truth that matters much”⁴³. This is probably the best way to surmise how history can be seen from this novel’s point of view. Linda Hutcheon remarked that “history and fiction are cultural sign systems, ideological constructions whose ideology includes their appearance of being autonomous and self-contained”⁴⁴, something which is constantly exemplified by the “Holy Mountain”-narrative. Throughout her history the Tea Shack Lady’s community is time and time again ruled by different ideologies and parties, that ‘edit’ their history. An example is for instance the passage in which the Tea Shack Lady is interviewed, just before her remark on writers:

⁴² Mitchell, *Ghostwritten*, 150

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 152.

⁴⁴ Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, 112.

‘I’m not a pioneer,’ I insisted. ‘I lived here because I never had any choice. As for making money, the Party sent people to smash my Tea Shack because I made money.’

‘No they didn’t. You’re old, and you’re quite mistaken. The Party has always encouraged fair trade. Now, I know you have stories that will interest my readers.’⁴⁵

It is in fact quite common for regimes to present their subjects and the outer world with a history that best fits them. It is a fact that is very clearly on display in this narrative. It is also something that Quasar remarks at the very beginning, when he is offered a newspaper he “flinche[s] from the shuffling sheets of lies”⁴⁶. Quasar has, unlike the Tea Shack Lady, already been “brainwashed”⁴⁷ by his regime, at least from the reader’s perspective.

The novel also involves a specific ‘historical’ event: the Tokyo Sarin Gas Attack, also executed by members of a doomsday cult, in 1995. This is far more specific than the loose historical setting of the Tea Shack Lady’s “Holy Mountain” ordeals. In the “Mongolia”-narrative the yellow-hatted Buddhist monks that are mentioned may refer to an actual Chinese Buddhist order, but the historical accuracy of their massacre cannot be traced. The narrative disjoints the idea of historical accuracy and the reality of the world *Ghostwritten* inhabits in a number of ways. One is by placing it within our ‘real’ history, another is by questioning the reality or ‘fictionality’ of the events in the novel itself. In “Chaotic Narrative: Complexity, Causality, Time, and Autopoiesis in David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten*” (2011), Sarah Dillon poses the question whether the story about the ‘Hermitage-heist’ is “a ‘true’ account of those events, or [...] an extract from Luisa’s book”⁴⁸, which is named *Hermitage* as we learn in “Night Train”. The ‘realness’ of the whole narrative is questioned by the last chapter, in which Quasar relates his attack, and in which all characters appear in some way or another. In the first chapter it is evident that Quasar is falling ill, his palms have become “blotchy”, “something is wrong with [his]

⁴⁵Mitchell, *Ghostwritten*, 150.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴⁸ Sarah Dillon, “Chaotic Narrative: Complexity, Causality, Time, and Autopoiesis in David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten*,” *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction* 52, no. 2 (2011), 140.

skin”⁴⁹. This implies that it is not a farfetched idea that everything could have been a hallucination. The reader cannot trust Quasar’s narration from the start, because of his ‘brainwashing’; he even believes that his leader has been inhibited by some sort of spirit⁵⁰. Yet, this is subverted with the introduction of the noncorpum, and his story now seems less crazy. Then the last chapter again subverts this by introducing an end sequence that is jumbled and seems to be part of a hallucination. This is the first time in Quasar’s narrative that we are introduced to the other characters and the other characters become involved with him.

Metafiction also works on a thematic level. Metafictional texts are ‘overt’, ‘narcissistic’ texts, whose self-awareness lies in “explicit thematizations or allegorizations”⁵¹. In *Ghostwritten* this can be seen in certain motifs reoccurring throughout the novel. Motifs like ideology and religion, but also for instance the motif of travelling. Many of the characters are on a journey somewhere and are often in cars, on trains or the underground, or even migrate from body to body. David Mitchell wrote parts of the novel modelled after a journey he made himself, and the novel follows this journey from Japan to Ireland quite faithfully. The narrative structure on a whole progresses as this journey, and there are journeys within each of the narratives. Some characters like Quasar, Neal Brose, and Mo flee from places, some like Satoru, the noncorpum and Marco are travelling *towards* places. All the characters however try to escape in some way. Satoru in his jazz music, the Tea Shack Lady in her cave, Margarita Latunsky in her dreams of Switzerland and the ideal life. Many of the characters are seeking a home, and this too is underscored by the fragmented structure of the novel. It mirrors the fragmented lives of the characters themselves.

One way in which reflexivity is achieved is through language, as Sarah Dillon remarks that there is a “repetition of phrases”⁵² present in the novel. Examples of this are specific phrases also mentioned in the article, like “foreign devil” a word Neal Brose applies to himself, and the Tea Shack Lady also uses⁵³. Another is the use of the word ‘quasar’ which is used for the character Quasar and the description Satoru gives of Tomoyo⁵⁴, but also the way

⁴⁹ Mitchell, *Ghostwritten*, 26.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 30.

⁵¹ Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative*, 7.

⁵² Dillon, “Chaotic Narrative”, 140.

⁵³ Mitchell, *Ghostwritten*, 84 and 134.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 41.

the noncorpum describes the minds of people⁵⁵. The locations, too, appear throughout the novel, most of the characters reference on other locations in the story at least once, some even travel between these locations themselves. We also have both Satoru and Neal Brose mentioning the music of John Coltrane, Brose in fact connecting it to Satoru⁵⁶. There are British characters like Neal Brose and Mo's husband and son mentioning James Bond⁵⁷. In a way reflexivity supports structure in this case. Words resonated throughout multiple narratives, just like narrative elements do, and as such the links between the stories are subtly amplified through language.

Reflexivity is not, however, only expressed as these linguistic echoes; it also bears on aspects such as genre. It uses textual form to express awareness about its status as text. The overarching genre of *Ghostwritten* would be something akin to a thriller: the story works its way up to a climax and many of the narratives evoke suspense, or involve action or murder or mystery. Yet if we look at the structure we see these ingredients for one overarching genre divided into narrative segments or subplots, of mystery, love, ghost story, quest etcetera. Alternatively, Mitchell said in his afterword that each story is the answer to the question "why do things happen?"⁵⁸. Each narrative, then, provides a different answer, as it deals with a different theme. Segmenting the novel into separate narratives causes fragmentation of the genre and theme of the novel; it boils them down to a number of narrative elements and subplots. This shows self-awareness as the text does not try to mimic reality, but contrastingly shows the reader a composition. This composition is reflected in the construction of the structure. It is not reflexivity strengthening the narrative structure here, it is the narrative structure highlighting the reflexive quality.

It is evident that at times the narrative structure in *Ghostwritten* serves to strengthen intertextual, metafictional and reflexive aspects of the novel. Yet, this is not *always* the case. The novel does not present the reader with just one type of each aspect; the aspects take on different guises and vary. If the reader does not have this afterword or some other interview with David Mitchell, they might not know how the narrative mirrors his own travels, and would perhaps not put as much emphasis on it. They would also not know that he purposely put the narrative in this structure. We can see, however, that the narrative structure highlights

⁵⁵ Mitchell, *Ghostwritten*, 160.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 72 and 340.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 440.

the use of interconnections and the embedding of characters and events. We can also see that the structure accentuates the metafictional questioning of reality and fictionality. Lastly, the structure serves to make echoes more pronounced. In conclusion, the narrative structure of *Ghostwritten* does strengthen the use of metafiction, reflexivity and intertextuality, *in parts*. Whether this is also the case for *number9dream* will be investigated in the next chapter.

Chapter 3: *number9dream*

This chapter will discuss David Mitchell's second novel *number9dream*, which was published in 2001. *number9dream* was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2001 and was partially adapted to the screen as *The Voorman Problem* in 2013. Besides the novel as primary source, this chapter will also use some secondary sources for the analysis, namely Rose Harris-Birtill's "'A row of screaming Russian dolls': Escaping the Panopticon in David Mitchell's *number9dream*" and David Mitchell's "What use are dreams in fiction?"

While *Ghostwritten* has a structure reminiscent of Mitchell's later work *Cloud Atlas*, *number9dream* does not involve an embedded structure like the other two do. Unlike *Ghostwritten*, Mitchell's second novel also does not have a plethora of different protagonists, it just has one: Eiji Miyake. The novel centres around Eiji's quest to find his father, while dealing with familial issues from the past and present. There are a total of nine chapters called "Panopticon", "Lost Property", "Video Games", "Reclaimed Land", "Study of Tales", "Kai Ten", "Cards", "The Language of Mountains is Rain" and an empty ninth chapter. For the purpose of the analysis I will only refer to the first eight chapters as 'chapters', while the ninth will be discussed separately. Each chapter alternates between two types of narrative. In this thesis these will be referred to as the 'main' narrative and its intertwining 'companion'-narrative. Each chapter focusses on one aspect of the linear 'present' narrative that is Eiji's story, these are the 'main narratives'. Each of these 'main narratives' are then accompanied by a narrative that reflects the themes at play in the present, the 'companion narrative'. The reader is cued in on which side of the narrative, main or companion, they are reading with the use of icons⁵⁹. Again a complex narrative is at work, and before analysing how the concepts metafiction, reflexivity, and intertextuality are supported by this narrative, how the companion and main narrative work within the separate chapters will be explained.

The novel in a sense is a psychological bildungsroman. In "'A row of screaming Russian dolls': Escaping the Panopticon in David Mitchell's *number9dream*" Rose Harris-Birtill relates the structure of the novel to the concept of the *panopticon*, a central motif in the first chapter, aptly named "Panopticon". As Harris-Birtill has already given an in-depth analysis of how the panopticon structure is superimposed on *number9dream*, only the broad outline of this theory and its implications for the analysis of the novel will be presented here. The 'panopticon' is a concept first coined by Jeremy Bentham in 1786. The panopticon was the idea of a reformatory prison. The prison would be circular and the cells transparent, built

⁵⁹ See Appendix, figure 2.

around a central inspection tower. The idea behind this structure was that the prisoners would feel under constant supervision and this should ultimately lead to the internalisation of this watching eye which should put the prisoners under psychological control. This concept was later developed into a larger, societal, scope by Michel Foucault in *Discipline and Punish* (1975). Harris-Birtill states that “multiple overlapping panopticons are created and internalized by its protagonist Eiji”⁶⁰. She also claims that Eiji is surrounded by “viral panoptic structures”⁶¹ which are reinforced throughout the novel and ultimately escaped through Eiji’s “rejection of his quest to find his father”⁶². The reinforcement and resistance of and to the panoptic structure of the novel ultimately creates its fragmented structure. Harris-Birtill argues that this structure resembles “a row of screaming Russian dolls”⁶³ which also appear physically in the first chapter⁶⁴. Each chapter contains a piece of the linear ‘main’ narrative and an intertwining companion-narrative, which encase each other. This particular quality is most important for the metafictional aspect of the novel and will therefore be addressed when the analysis of metafiction is presented.

“Panopticon” details Eiji’s first foray into finding information of his father, the companion narrative consist of action-story like fragments in which he ultimately does not gather information on his father. In this chapter he also meets Ai, a waitress at the Jupiter Café where the reader is first introduced to Eiji. Ai will later become his love interest and girlfriend. “Lost Property” gives an account of his work at the Ueno Station and alternates with memories of his last days with his sister before her death. In “Video Games” Eiji meets Yuzu Daimon, a rich man’s son who takes him on a night through Shibuya, which will later have grave consequences. The main narrative alternates with a number of video games Eiji plays. The consequences become apparent in “Reclaimed Land”, which companion narrative is told in flashback and details how Eiji got involved with the Yakuza. The main narrative spans the events of a night on the ‘reclaimed land’. “Study of Tales” tells us the aftermath of this night, as Eiji is safe and sound in the house of Buntaro’s aunt, a fabulist. A fable narrative

⁶⁰ Rose Harris-Birtill, “‘A row of screaming Russian dolls’: Escaping the Panopticon in David Mitchell’s *number9dream*,” *SubStance* 44, no. 1, (2015), 56.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 60.

⁶⁴ David Mitchell, *number9dream* (Great Britain: Sceptre, 2014), 26.

threads through the main narrative. “Kai Ten” sees Eiji meet his grandfather and learn about his great-uncle through his diary. The action of the main narrative seems to have calmed down at this point and Eiji gets a job at a pizzeria in “Cards”, only to run into the Yakuza again. The penultimate narrative has Eiji reject his quest for his father and in “The Language of Mountains is Rain” Eiji makes amends with Ai and returns home.

As mentioned before, there are two types of narrative in each chapter: the main, linear, plot and a ‘companion’ narrative which gives further depth to Eiji’s experiences. Each companion-narrative embodies “an estate of the mind”⁶⁵ and each chapter centres around a different “perception-based theme”⁶⁶. David Mitchell identifies the narratives as “imagination”, “memory”, “image”⁶⁷, “nightmare, fiction, meaning and dreams”⁶⁸, and later specifies ‘image’ as “moving image”. These estates of mind correspond with the theme of the chapter. Noticeably these are only seven themes and the novel has eight chapters. The chapter missing a categorisation is the penultimate chapter “Cards”. I would argue the theme of this chapter is ‘metaphor’. Throughout the novel each section that concerns Eiji’s main narrative is indicated by a diamond symbol, one of the four main symbols on cards. The chapter itself carries the symbol of the spade, which is the icon for the companion narrative. It, however, only surfaces the one time in the beginning of the chapter. This companion-narrative details the letter Eiji receives from Kozue Yamada, a stranger who has picked Eiji to exact her revenge because he bears the same name as her son. Eiji ends the paragraph by saying he senses “a weird week ahead, one with sharp teeth”⁶⁹. A couple of paragraphs later in the main narrative his co-worker Doi proposes that “the human condition is a card game”, the “hand is dealt in the womb” and we lay and pick up cards throughout our lives⁷⁰. Eiji gets lured in by the Yakuza once again and has to play for his life in an actual card game in which he is ultimately saved by Mama-san, the Queen of Spades proprietor. Like an actual game this chapter sees Eiji making his final moves: he delivers Kozue Yamada’s disc to the world, he meets his father but does not confront him and packs up to meet his mother. Metaphors, too,

⁶⁵ Harris-Birtill, ““A row of screaming Russian dolls””, 59.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Mitchell, *number9dream*, 339.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 351-352.

are ways to understand reality and therefore I think it would be an apt way to describe this chapter. Metaphors are also in essence what the companion narratives are.

The themes of the companion-narratives are reflected in the main narrative of the chapter. This reflection is especially important in analysing the reflexive aspect of the novel. The main narrative echoes the companion narrative, and the companion narrative gives insight into the deeper workings of Eiji's mind. A good example is the chapter "Lost Property". In this chapter the present main narrative is alternated with memories from Eiji's past. Eiji starts working at the lost property department of the Ueno Station. Throughout the chapter there are multiple instances that the motif of "memory" bleeds through the main narrative. There is the time when an old lady comes to the station looking for her "pictures" which according to Mrs Sasaki, Eiji's boss, are not literal pictures but "memories". She then says "all we are is our memories"⁷¹. Another example is when Eiji helps a child who has lost her mother. The little girl says her mother "forever wanders off without [her] permission"⁷² which gives the impression that the mother has a habit of forgetting her daughter. Eiji's supervisor Aoyama gets upset with Eiji for using the intercom system to relay a message to the mother and Aoyama swears that he will not "forget"⁷³ Eiji's digression. This chapter is also the first to feature one of Eiji's letters from his mother, a memory he *wants* to forget. Textually there are many instances of the word "forget", "memory" or "remember". Eiji is haunted by memories of the past and his regret about leaving his sister is a reoccurring theme in the novel, but at no point is it so deeply encased within the narrative as in the "Lost Property" chapter. As we saw with *Ghostwritten* there is a use of linguistic echoes. Yet they are contained within the separate chapters and serve as a reflection of the theme of the chapter rather than a link between narratives.

This is not the only type of linguistic echo that can be found in *number9dream*. There are multiple times when phrases from the main narrative are repeated in its companion-narrative or vice versa. They are often used to anchor ongoings of Eiji's mind in his real-life situation. It is first used in chapter one when we come across the sentences "My, my, I ain't seen rain like this since 1971. Must be the end of the world. I seen it coming on the telly."⁷⁴ by Lao Tzu. The chapter then launches into one of Eiji's imaginations which sees Tokyo

⁷¹ Mitchell, *number9dream*, 62.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 77.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 78.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

flooded by a monstrous rain. The next time it changes to the main narrative the sentence is repeated and followed by “but no sooner has he spoken than the downpour turns itself off”⁷⁵. This technique is also used in the “Video Games” chapter. This chapter alternates the main narrative with video games. In one such companion-narrative Miyake is beaten by Yuzu Daimon and the latter tells him “Poor Miyake. Remember, it’s only a video game”⁷⁶ in-game. The game then takes a turn in Eiji’s favour and the phrase is mirrored in the main narrative but this time around it is not “Poor Miyake” it is “Poor Daimon”. The phrases anchor the narratives onto each other and in this way the two narratives mirror each other despite their fragmentation.

As mentioned in chapter one, reflexivity is most often concerned with form. This can be these linguistic echoes, but it can also be literal ‘form’. A reflexive text exhibits self-awareness by paying attention to *how* a text may look. This is exactly what can be seen in *number9dream*. The novel contains many instances of letter-writing, journal entries (in the “Kai Ten” chapter), and digital lettering (in video games or on ATM machines). These all concern the textual *form*. The novel also uses symbols instead of swear words in “Study of Tales”, and symbols are also used as paratextual elements to indicate the switch of one narrative to another. The reason why using this type of reflexivity in this novel is so suitable is that these are all very visually oriented elements. This mirrors how our minds are flashes of images rather than words. Here again the reflexive elements give the impression that the reader is peaking inside someone’s mind rather than a novel. The reflexive aspect supports the idea that the narrative is structured according to Eiji’s mind. As was the case in *Ghostwritten*, here again it is more the reflexivity strengthening the narrative than the narrative strengthening the reflexivity.

This idea, however, that the novel’s structure reflects the structure of Eiji’s mind, is also expressed through content. This is where the structure supports the metafictional aspects of the novel. If we take another look at the “Lost Property” chapter we can see that even the design of the structure is a past within a past. The companion-narrative is told through flashbacks. The chapter starts off quite abstract with Eiji cutting of the thunder god’s head. It then switches to the present and alternates it with flashbacks of the last days Eiji spent with his twin sister Anju leading up to his leave and her death. This ultimately leads up to the cutting of the thunder god’s head again. This time around the reader knows that the ‘thunder

⁷⁵ Mitchell, *number9dream*, 21.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 109.

god' is a statue at a temple to which Eiji prayed for success. The embedded structure serves as a way to confuse the reader as to what is real and what is not. Even when reading a passage that is clearly marked with the diamond icon the reader can still not be completely sure of the reality of the content, because the narrative often takes twists and turns that seem unreal. To fully comprehend why the reader cannot wholly trust the events of the main narrative, a closer inspection of the "Panopticon" chapter is needed.

In the "Panopticon" chapter Eiji's narrative starts with his first 'imagination', his fantasy of meeting his father. This 'imagination' fails; Eiji is not able to learn his father's identity in this fantasy. Another imagination starts and also ends in failure.

Like Russian dolls, each of Eiji's multiple narrative false starts in *number9dream* forms a new layer of narrative artifice, a 'shell' that the reader must break through in order to engage with the 'real' events within the realm of the novel, moving further towards the metafictional with each unannounced layer of false narrative.⁷⁷

"Panopticon" layers the imaginations that Eiji has on top of not only the main narrative, but also on top of the other 'imaginations'. This raises multiple barriers for the reader to break through before they can establish a sense of reality. The first chapter gives a good impression of the journey Eiji will have to take to learn his father's identity. Although it will not be as fantastical as his imaginations some of the elements such as the yakuza-plot will be reminiscent of the initial story the novel opens with. Time and time again the main novel is disrupted by Eiji's mind, which confines him like a panopticon confines its prisoner. Eiji escapes into memories, dreams, fantasies and fiction, yet he is also imprisoned by them. The reader, too, experiences this. They have to go through the companion-narratives to reach the main narrative. This is reflected in the narrative structure which shells the main narrative. The narrative structure is very disruptive, up to a point that the icons do no longer help in identifying whether the narrative is a fiction of Eiji's mind or his actual experience. This is especially true for the last two narratives in which at times the main narrative and the companion-narrative are almost undistinguishable from each other. Especially the last chapter, which centres around the aspect of dreams, does not adhere to a strict division between dream and reality.

⁷⁷ Harris-Birtill, "A row of screaming Russian dolls", 60.

This is also the chapter in which we learn the meaning behind the novel's title "the ninth dream begins after every ending". There is a ninth chapter in *number9dream*, but it is empty.

Yet this textual ending is another Mitchellian metafiction, an escape from one viral panopticon into another. The eighth chapter's false textual ending stops before the 'real' final paratextual ending: a blank ninth chapter in which Eiji's world disappears entirely. In creating a text with two endings, operating on two levels, *number9dream* prompts a second conclusion.⁷⁸

This ninth chapter is the ninth dream; it gives the idea that the fictional world of Eiji's narrative flows into our world. Because the barriers between dream and reality, companion narrative and main narrative, are not completely clear, it becomes difficult to say which one is fiction and which one is "real". Monkfish, one of the truckers that give Eiji a lift, even says that "[y]ou should trust what you dream. Not what you think"⁷⁹. Mitchell said on the use of dreams in narratives that "plots in dreams are farcical, fragmentary, discontinuous affairs" and "scenes are not coherently ordered A, B, C. Rather, they kick off at K, stall at S, then veer to V"⁸⁰. The plot of *number9dream* is equally fragmented and perhaps therefore the narrative structure underscores the idea that the whole narrative of the novel is a dream, a figment of the protagonist's mind. This also complicates the notion that the ninth chapter is the "ninth dream". It is an empty chapter, a chapter that the reader can fill themselves, or perhaps the point at which the reader's imagination becomes tangled with the novel's narrative. A blending of the 'real' and the fictional world.

It seems to be the case that the novel's structure is supposed to read as an inspection of the human mind. The disruptive, fragmented nature of the structure aligns with the way our heads work: jumping from our own fictions to reality. This is also something the novel does at times through the same companion-narratives that disrupt reality. There are a number of 'external' texts present in the novel: the diary entries in "Kai Ten", the letters sent to Eiji by his mother, stepmother and Kozue Yamada, the ATM messages, the disc-instructions and the

⁷⁸ Harris-Birtill, "A row of screaming Russian dolls", 67-68.

⁷⁹ Mitchell, *number9dream*, 389.

⁸⁰ David Mitchel, "What use are dreams in fiction?" *Journal of European Studies* 28, no. 4 (2005), 433.

video-game simulation. These texts, of course, cannot be seen as a hundred percent reliable, as the narrative present is from a first person viewpoint and therefore everything that is read is read *to us*. Yet they still take on an interesting role. They are external texts internalised by the novel and Eiji. Texts that exist in his reality, outside of his mind, that he interacts with. These texts all focus on the relationship Eiji has with his family, in particular his mother and father. His letters from his mother are about reconciliation. She writes to soothe her conscience at first and to mend their relationship later. The letters from his stepmother and Akiko Kato urge Eiji not to seek out his father. The video-game simulation gives him an opportunity to meet his father and a chance to mediate his feelings towards him. The ATM-messages lure him by saying they are from his 'father'. The diary entries are entries his great-uncle wrote, given to him by his grandfather. The only two that seemingly do not fit this theme are Kozue Yamada's letter and the disc-instructions, but these two belong together and are part of Yamada's revenge for herself and her son, a son who bears Eiji's name. They too centre around familial relationship, a theme central to the novel and Eiji's journey. These 'external' texts act as allusions to a 'real' narrative, undiluted by Eiji's own fantasies.

As seen in chapter two, *Ghostwritten* questions this boundary between the 'real' and fictional world with the use of intertextuality. It would not be a David Mitchell novel if *number9dream* did not do this as well. There are character crossovers between *Ghostwritten* and *number9dream*. In "Reclaimed Land" we learn the 'the Mongolian/Leatherjacket' is in fact Suhbataar, the Mongolian agent from *Ghostwritten*. Despite his rather merciless character in *Ghostwritten* he does not bring harm to Eiji but actually tries to warn him. This is a connection between the global underworld that is presented in *Ghostwritten* and the Japanese Yakuza underworld presented in *number9dream*. There is another link to the more sinister side of Mitchell's fictional world in the presence of the 'Texan' in the "Cards" chapter, a character that both Mo Muntervary and Suga, Eiji's ex-coworker, encounter. The Texan recruits Suga for the same project he hunts Mo for. The Goatwriter character in "Study of Tales" reminds the reader of the word 'ghostwriter', 'ghostwritten'. The use of cross-over characters in *number9dream* has the same implications as the use of cross-over characters in *Ghostwritten*: they imply that the novels exist in the same fictional world. Yet *number9dream*'s structure does not facilitate the type of interlinking that can be seen in *Ghostwritten*, it only follows one protagonist, one narrative. The structure of the novel does not strengthen this type of intertextuality.

Intertextuality is also present in its traditional form: references and allusions to the 'real' world, and 'real' texts. *number9dream* puts a spotlight on two writers: John Lennon and

Haruki Murakami. In this case, however, it is arguable that the intertextual references and allusions are, like the aspect of reflexivity, a way to support the reading of the structure as the mind. After all, people's minds are littered with references and allusions to the texts they have come into contact with throughout their lives. "'#9dream' is a descendant of 'Norwegian Wood'"⁸¹, and so is *number9dream*. The novel is peppered with references to Haruki Murakami. Eiji has a half-finished copy of *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle*, and during the simulation of his encounter with his father in "Video Games" his 'mother' hums "snatches of 'Norwegian Wood'"⁸². Some aspects of the plot are also similar to aspects found in Haruki Murakami novels. *Norwegian Wood* (1987) is a similar coming-of-age story about a young Japanese man, told in flashbacks. This story also involves a mountain retreat and a talented piano player. In both novels the protagonist meets a (rich) friend who takes him to bars to pick up girls. John Lennon features in the dream-narratives of the last chapter, and there are a number of references to his songs, amongst others 'Norwegian Wood', '#9dream' and "a muzak version of 'Imagine'"⁸³. Beatles music also features in *Ghostwritten*, Bat Segundo plays "A beaut of a Lennon number"⁸⁴ and 'Blackbird' is mentioned by Neal Brose⁸⁵. There are other allusions to *Ghostwritten*, for instance the job that Eiji has in "Kai Ten", a video store clerk, which is similar to Satoru's job as a music store clerk.

number9dream reads like the recording of a person's mind. The structure is built to resemble the actual workings of someone's mind. On another level this mind-like structure promotes the aspect of metafiction, the questioning of reality, fiction and our own minds. Reflexivity is used to further convey this idea of a mind-like structure. The reader has a visual experience reading the novel because of the different textual forms it uses. Intertextuality helps the reader see beyond what goes on in Eiji's mind with the help of external texts within the novel and references to those outside of the novel. Yet the narrative structure does not strengthen these aspects; these aspects strengthen the concept behind the narrative structure.

⁸¹ Mitchell, *number9dream*, 398.

⁸² Ibid., 128.

⁸³ Ibid., 5.

⁸⁴ David Mitchel, *Ghostwritten*, 405.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 99.

Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to examine the interaction between narrative structure and three postmodern concepts in David Mitchell's *Ghostwritten* and *number9dream*. These concepts are metafiction, reflexivity and intertextuality and were first defined in chapter one. It was clear that these concepts had a number of guises and applications. Metafiction is concerned with the questioning of the boundary between fiction and reality, but it can also have a *historiographic* application with which the nature of historic and fictional narratives can be aligned. Reflexivity, as seen in chapter one, relates to textual form. Yet form can be expressed in different ways: there is genre or linguistic form for instance. Intertextuality is the reference and allusion to popular culture but also to other texts, within a literary tradition, a canon or even an author's own work.

Two novels by David Mitchell were chosen as case studies, because critics have categorised his overall work as postmodern and complex in narrative structure. I decided not to analyse his most well-known work *Cloud Atlas* because it had been done before many times and his first two novels were not as exhaustively considered as they perhaps should have. After all, they too have complex narrative structures and the structure of *Cloud Atlas*, an embedded Russian nesting doll, was first experimented with in these first novels. The embedded narrative is one we find in *Ghostwritten* and the encasing Russian dolls are present in *number9dream*.

The hypothesis of this thesis was that metafiction, reflexivity and intertextuality are strengthened by the narrative structures of the novels. Yet when I actually analysed and started to write down my findings I noticed that the complexity of these concepts also caused a more fractured answer to my research question. I found that in some ways my expectations were correct, but because there are many layers to these concepts, not all layers neatly fit in with the predictions that were in place. Some levels of the concepts turned the question around: at times reflexivity, for instance, strengthens the structure instead of the structure strengthening the effect of the reflexive element. This outcome definitely reveals both how complex concepts like these are and how differently they can appear depending on the novels they are used in and how they are combined with other elements.

The narrative in *Ghostwritten* centres around nine protagonists whose stories are interlinked in various ways. The narrative structure is one that embeds these stories into one another, yet keeps them separate as well. Metafiction, reflexivity and intertextuality appear in different manners. Metafiction materialised in two ways. On the one hand the reality of the narrative is questioned by splitting up Quasar's narrative into the first and last chapter. On the

other it can be seen in the juxtaposition between the ‘fictional’ and ‘real’ histories that background the narratives. Real events get fictionalised in a novel and fictional events may appear as real within this context. The first instance of metafiction in the novel is amplified by its structure, but the second one is not affected by it. A similar trend can be observed with the other two concepts. Reflexivity is found in both the use of different genres, a fragmentation which is also reflected in the structure, and in the use of linguistic echoes which in their turn connect the narratives and in that way strengthen the use of the embedded structure.

Intertextuality manifested itself in three ways: between the narratives, between David Mitchell novels and between the novels and external texts. Only the first one is supported by the fragmentation of the narrative. There does not seem to be a relation between narrative structure and the other two. It also seems to be the case that certain paratextual information can influence the reader’s understanding of the text and therefore the reader’s awareness of the connection between the concepts and the narrative structure.

There are similar conclusions to be drawn for *number9dream*. The concepts manifest themselves in multiple ways and not all of these ways are supported by or even related to the narrative structure. Narrative structure seemed to strengthen only the concept of metafiction and not reflexivity and intertextuality. These two actually strengthen the structure. It seems to be this way because the narrative structure is supposed to reflect the mind, which is at the same time one of the ways it promotes a metafictional reading. The structure in this case enhances this reading. Reflexivity and intertextuality are then seemingly employed to strengthen this effect. The distinct difference in the structure of the narratives between the two novels might explain why in one novel the concepts are all in at least part amplified by their respective structure and in the other novel only one seems to be supported by it.

It seems to be the case that there are interactions between narrative structure and concepts like metafiction, reflexivity and intertextuality in the two novels that were analysed. It is, however, not a clear cut relationship. The structure may influence the concept, yet the concept may also influence the structure. Sometimes there is no strong link between narrative structure and concept.

This is not a ‘bad’ outcome. The results imply that in some novels concepts like these are more complex or varied than initially expected. This is something that is important to take in consideration for future research. If a novel is complex in structure it might be more intricately linked to concepts like these, as was the case for this thesis. The research has shown that examining Mitchell’s work from different angles and with lesser known novels as case studies could perhaps be a new topic of interest for academic research.

There has been research into the theoretical tradition of Mitchell's work, some considering it 'post-postmodern'⁸⁶. In this thesis I worked from a postmodern point of view, but of course there are many ways to examine his work. I think it would for instance also be feasible to take a relatively new theoretical approach to his work like post-humanist theory, especially if we look at the more futuristic aspects of some of his novels, or if we consider his character networks. Post-humanist theory involves for example network theory or theories on the cyborg; how technology is merging with biology. This is for instance present in *Ghostwritten*, in particular in the last chapter on the Zookeeper, or *number9dream*, as Eiji often uses the word 'bioborg' and some of the companion-narratives involve technology. There are many layers in a David Mitchell novel and they can be interpreted in different ways. A post-humanist approach is relatively new⁸⁷ in literary studies and literary criticism so for a BA thesis it might be too much of an adventure.

There is a lack of research into the first two novels David Mitchell produced if we consider the amount of research that has been done on *Cloud Atlas*. Some of his newer novels might be too 'fresh' to be considered yet, but I think there definitely could be some more academic attention for his earlier work. They are just as complex in structure and themes as *Cloud Atlas* and we have seen that he has experimented throughout his career. It could also be interesting to look at themes and elements that are present throughout his overall body of work; how they are depicted and used across novels. David Mitchell writes novels that are very interconnected, within but also between novels, the latter being something which has not gotten as much consideration as other aspects of his novels. We can also see that certain thematic plotlines are well-researched and some are quite obscure. Take for instance the discrepancy between research from an ecocritical point of view versus that from a cosmopolitan point of view. Again, I cannot stress the importance of also reviewing an author's earlier work, as it does create a foundation and often a direction for later novels.

In conclusion the research results conformed with the results that were expected, but not as much or in the manner as anticipated. The concepts that were used in this thesis are very complex in nature and therefore manifest differently in the two novels. Sometimes they

⁸⁶ The topic of Maria Beville's "Getting Past the 'Post-': History and Time in the Fiction of David Mitchell," (*Dis)placements* no. 1 (2015).

⁸⁷ Post-human theory has been around for approximately twenty years, but that is relatively "new" if we consider that we are in the so-called "post-human" era right now and it takes time for literary criticism to actually be applied to the literature written.

are intensified by a novel's structure, and sometimes they intensify the structure itself.

Academic research into David Mitchell's work can still be expanded and there are plenty of paths yet to be explored.

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Appendix

Crowd Atlas

A surely incomplete accounting of where Mitchell's characters keep popping up.

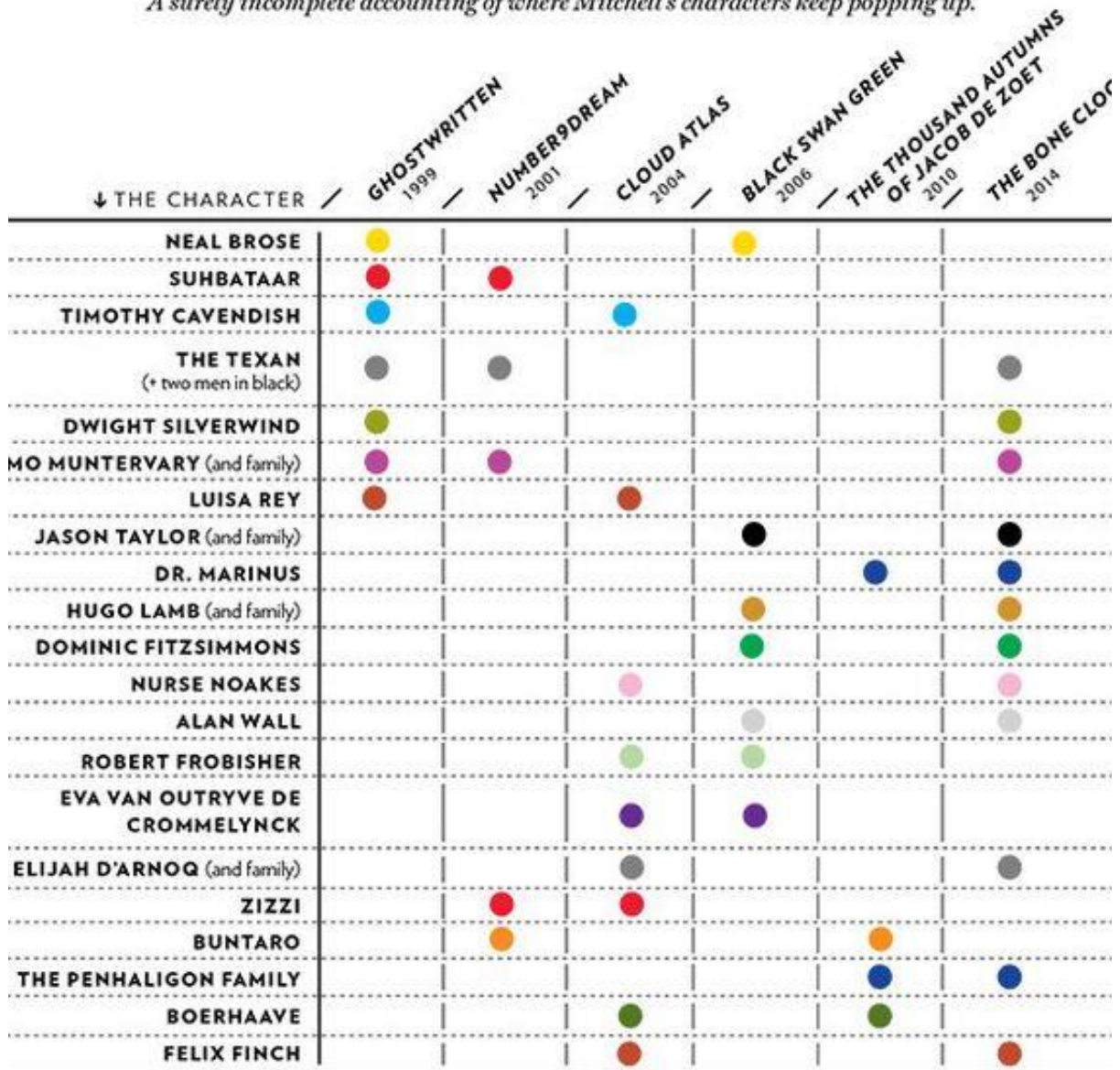


Figure 1. A figure detailing which David Mitchell characters appear in which novels, it is not complete.

Chapter	Icon
One “Panopticon”	□
Two “Lost Property”	❖
Three “Video Games”	☮
Four “Reclaimed Land”	☯
Five “Study of Tales”	♃
Six “Kai Ten”	♄
Seven “Cards”	♠
Eight “The Language of Mountains is Rain”	♠
Nine	---
Main narrative	◆

Figure 2. A figure detailing the icons used per chapter.