

THE MOCK DOCUMENTARY AND ITS POSTMODERN ROOTS

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Abstract: *The aim of the current paper is to prove that the mock documentary genre has its roots in postmodern literature with metafiction as the connection between the two.*

*As a starting point, my study provides a discussion of the common characteristic features of postmodern literature based on contemporary theories of postmodernism. Then, a milestone mock documentary film *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) and the later *Paranormal Activity* (2009) along with *Dyatlov Pass Incident* (2013) are introduced and discussed. A special emphasis is laid on discussing the role of the home in mock documentaries. In addition, effects that the movies' scenes have on the storyline are also reviewed.*

*As a next step, the presentation of the shared traits of mock documentary movies and postmodern literature follows. Finally, John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968) is compared to mock documentaries with respect to their use of metafiction. The comparative study is carried out with the help of Barker and Galasinski's (2001) template for discourse analysis.*

Findings from the study reveal that the discussed mock documentary movies share an impulse with postmodern literature and that there is a direct link between metafiction and mock documentaries.

The results of the study contribute to the understanding and interpretation of mock documentary horror movies and shed new lights on the interpretation of postmodern texts, too. Moreover, they promise to be a valuable tool in familiarizing students with postmodern aesthetic strategies.

Key words: *mock documentary, horror, postmodern literature, metafiction, John Barth, Lost in the Funhouse, The Blair Witch Project, Paranormal Activity, Dyatlov Pass Incident*

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Introduction

A new wave of horror film making is receiving an increased amount of attention: the so-called mock documentary genre, which recycles postmodern literary techniques.

Although Barry Lewis (1998) regards postmodernism as literature's dominant mode in the period between 1960 and 1990, Waugh and Rice define it more broadly by referring to it as the "cultural epoch through which we are living" (Rice & Waugh, p. 325). Nonetheless, it is also an aesthetic practice, and, thirdly, a critique of Enlightened philosophical and political thought's foundationalist assumptions, which has been continued after the 1990s as well but in different media.

The aim of the current work is to prove that mock documentary horror movies¹ have roots in postmodernism since they bare most of postmodern literature's characteristic features.

It also aims to prove that postmodern literary pieces and mock documentaries can successfully be compared from the point of view of their use of metafiction which forms the strongest bond between mock documentaries and postmodern literature.

Furthermore, the current work attempts to shed light on the role of home in mock documentaries. It also presents that whether the movies are set in the characters' home or outside their house has a considerable impact on the storyline.

It employs a multiple research approach. As a starting point, the current work provides a discussion of the common characteristics of postmodern literary pieces. Then, a milestone mock documentary film, *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) and its descendants *Paranormal Activity* (2009) and *Dyatlov Pass Incident* (2013) are introduced and analysed with respect to their shared traits with postmodern literature. Finally, John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*

¹ After the completion of the current research, the genre started to be referred to as found footage movies; therefore, currently, both mock documentary horrors and found footage movies are used in reference to the same genre.

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(1968), a landmark postmodern short story, is compared to mock documentaries as regards to their use of metafiction. The comparative study is carried out with the help of Barker and Galasinski's (2001) template for discourse analysis. The watching of mock documentary films and the reading of background literature served as the primary tool for data collection.

Following the introduction, the first chapter reviews the main features of postmodern literature while the second chapter discusses the fundamental characteristic features of mock documentaries and the role that the home as a location plays in the movies. Then the presentation of the common features between mock documentaries and postmodernism follows. Finally, the fourth chapter elaborates on the role of metafiction in postmodern literature and mock documentaries with the tools of discourse analysis.

This research contributes to the understanding and interpretation of mock documentaries as well as sheds new light on the interpretation of postmodern texts. By accepting that mock documentaries inhabit the same field as postmodern literature does, it is argued that 21th century students' understanding of postmodern literature can be enhanced with the use of mock documentary movies.

1. What is postmodernism?

Barry Lewis (1998) regards postmodernism as literature's dominant mode between 1960 and 1990. He assigns two decisive moments in history, John Fitzgerald Kennedy's assassination and the Berlin Wall's demolition, which he claims to stand for its beginning and end. Lewis (1998) associates the above mentioned thirty years with the commonly known realities of the Cold War a period defined by terrorism, rapid technological change, ideological uncertainties, paranoia, doubt, and suspicion.

Patricia Waugh and Philip Rice adopt John Barth's idea, according to which, postmodernism should be viewed as, on the one hand, modernism's continuation and, on the other hand, its modification. Waugh and Rice do not consider the Berlin Wall's demolition to be the end of the postmodern era; they talk about its breaking out of the bounds of literature in the 1990s. In their

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view, there has been a general shift in the mid-1980s, as a result of which postmodernism from an embracing aesthetic practice, including self-consciousness, parody, irony, self-reflexivity and fragmentation, etc., became a use concentrating on a “pervasive loss of faith in the progressivist and rationalist discourses of Enlightened modernity” (Rice & Waugh, p. 326).

Waugh and Rice refer to postmodernism, first of all, as the “cultural epoch through which we are living” (Rice & Waugh, p. 325), secondly, as an aesthetic practice, and thirdly, as a critique of Enlightened philosophical and political thought’s foundationalist assumptions.

When considering the literary response to the social and political situation as defined by that period, Lewis (1998) mentions Philip Roth and Tom Wolfe, who assert that the increased role of fantasy and self-consciousness could be traced back to the growing absurdness of the daily news. In addition, as Lewis points out, Wolfe’s work represents a cry for returning to realism, since postmodernists hardly paid attention to the representation of the complexity of city life.

It is essential to note that postmodernists were the first generation to grow up in close relation to modern mass media since they were born into the rise of television broadcasting. Creed (2003) holds the view that the emergence of television played an extremely influential role on writers, since, for example, before the spread of TV, it was not considered to be proper to talk about the private sphere. Therefore, postmodernists were affected by the media more intensively than any other representatives of any previous literary period.

What Lewis (1998) misses to talk about in connection with postmodernism in detail, Patricia Waugh (1984) explains during in a whole book. Although, Lewis emphasizes the role of self-consciousness and fantasy in postmodern literature, he does not use the term, metafiction. In trying to define metafiction, Waugh argues that its issue is the exploration of the relationship between reality and fiction. Metafictional works are fictional literary pieces which systematically and self-consciously direct attention to their position as artefacts. In addition to the examination of the underlying structures of narrative fiction, they further aim to explore the fictionality of the outside

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world in which the text was born by “providing a critique of their own methods of construction” (Waugh, 1984, p. 2).

Metafiction partly bases on the uncertainty principle produced by Heisenberg. The principle rests on the idea of the impossibility of describing an objective world since observers always alter the observed. In postmodernist art, this connection results in the recognition of the breakdown of grand narratives.

The central idea of the Heisenbergian uncertainty principle causes a dilemma for metafictional writers concerning the potential impossibility of describing anything at all. Thus it is assumed that if one supposes that the world cannot be represented, literary fiction can only represent the discourses of the world and not the world itself. Therefore, the use of metalanguage, which is a language with the help of which one can refer to another language, becomes necessary.

Lewis (1998) designates William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch* (1962) as a possible benchmark for literary postmodernism. The novel did not only challenge “every norm of narrative unity and decorum” (Lewis, p.121) but was also regarded by The Boston Superior Court as brutish and nasty. To highlight the change of attitudes towards fictional forms, Lewis also adds that when its film adaptation was released in 1992, it did not generate the audience's disgust or resentment at all. At this point, he also expresses that the borders between mainstream and art have gradually merged.

Lewis also refers to the dominance of visual over printed media in the past 50 years. The emergence of television, as a form of media, played an extremely influential role in the shaping of public reception. As media evolved, so did postmodernists start their movement.

Major American postmodern writers were all born into the era when television broadcasting was on the rise. John Barth was born in 1930, so he was only 14 years old when NBC began broadcasting. Donald Barthelme was one year younger thus; he was 13 years old at the launching of NBC. Thomas Pynchon was born in 1937, so he was only 7 years old when regular television broadcast began. The year of Ronald Suckenick's birth was 1932, while Kurt Vonnegut's was 1922. Although, Vonnegut was 22 years old at the time of

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NBC's establishment, he was still very young to belong to a television watching generation.

Despite the lack of unity in the movement of postmodern writers, their works share characteristic features. In addition to the increased role of fantasy and self-consciousness and the practice of metafictional writing, the use of techniques creating temporal disorder is also a reoccurring element of postmodern works. They, as Linda Hutcheon (1988) puts it, reread the art of the past from an ironic and critical point of view; furthermore, they tend to distort history self-consciously.

The distortion of history is usually carried out with the help of apocryphal history, which is a fake account of famous historical events. Anachronism, the adoption of inconsistent detail or setting in a story and the blurring of the borderline between fantasy and history are also characteristic of postmodern writings. In addition, temporal disorder distorts the linearity of the postmodern narrative (Lewis, 1998).

Pastiche, that is, "creating an anagram not of letters, but of components of style" (Lewis, 1998, p. 125) is another feature of postmodern literature. Pastiche roots back to the feeling of frustration caused by the fear that literature is exhausted. In other words, contemporary critics adopted the view that both new styles and words could be invented and the only plausible new writing could arise by combining the already known. (see Barth's /1967/ *Literature of Exhaustion*) So, according to Lewis, instead of creating a novel work of art, "postmodernist writers tend to pluck existing styles higgledy-piggledy from the reservoir of literary history, and match them with little tact" (1998, p. 126).

Postmodernists also tend to turn away from the traditional ways of structuring narratives, thus distorting the completion and wholeness of conventional works. They often resist closure by providing multiple endings for a story or adopt the technique of breaking up their story into several short fragments. Fragmentation can be accomplished by inserting, for example, symbols, numbers, titles or even charts and diagrams into the text.

In postmodernist works, readers are often invited to participate in the composition of the text. Writers contrive formats with the help of which they

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both carry out experiments and transmit their innermost feelings. In B. S. Johnson's *The Unfortunates* (1969), for instance, the reader is instructed "to riffle loose-leaf chapters into any other" (Lewis, 1998, p. 128). In fact, the chapters of this book can be mixed freely except for the first and the last one.

The technique, called cut-up, is also favoured by postmodernists, who lift sentences from different texts, put them into a small container or hat, shake them well, randomly pick out the pieces of papers, and then put them together to create a new text (Lewis, 1998).

Paranoia is another decisive element in postmodern literature. Paranoia constitutes a feeling of threat of being engulfed by a system, which in the era had a direct connection with the climate of the Cold War. Paranoia can be of several different natures, for example, it can be caused by "the distrust of fixity, of being circumscribed by to any one particular place or identity, the conviction of society is conspiring against the individual, and the multiplication of self-made plots to counter the scheming of others" (Lewis, 1998, p. 130).

Plot can have different meanings in postmodern works. First of all, it can refer to a physical place like a piece of ground or a building. In postmodern stories the characters are often confined to plots, for instance, to a mental hospital. Secondly, protagonists of postmodern literary works tend to have a feeling of being trapped in a conspiracy or being part of a secret plan which can constitute another kind of plot. Thirdly, plot can refer to a literary work's plan believed to have a particular shape, which is able to control, and which is thus avoided by many writers.

In connection with postmodern fiction, one can talk about so-called vicious circles as well. While reading postmodern fiction, the reader is often unable to differentiate fact from fiction because the borders between them fade. Postmodernists often write real historical characters into their fictive stories or they even write themselves into their story in order to render the separation of fact from fiction more difficult.

Linda Hutcheon (1986) talks about contemporary postmodernism as an art characterized, on the one hand, by the investigation of nature and, on the other

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hand, by the possibilities and the limits of the discourse or language of art. She emphasizes that postmodernism is concerned only on the surface with the processes through which it is produced and with the parodic connection to the artistic works produced in the past.

She further stresses that parody causes the problem of the aesthetics' relation to history and ideology. In *The Politics of Postmodernism: Parody and History* (1986) Hutcheon examines postmodernism from the point of view of architecture and finds that it is the postmodern works' parodic nature that makes them historical and political. Postmodernism is contradictory, she states, because of the way it relates to conventions: on the one hand, it points to its own provisionality and paradoxes and, on the other hand, it ironically or critically rereads the art of the past.

Hutcheon argues that the role of the past in postmodernist works is not to give a faithful account of historical events or characters. Rather postmodernists both incorporate and modify the past. Parody is in fact a mediator between past and present. Hutcheon defines parody as the "repetition with critical distance" that allows ironic signalling of difference at the very heart of similarity" (Hutcheon, 1986, p. 185).

An architect who does not reject their past and uses the forms of earlier periods and is still open to use new materials and techniques of their age is very likely to be misunderstood as an ironic artist (Hutcheon, 1986); the same is true for postmodern writers or filmmakers: once they rely on the past, they are seen to create a pastiche, but if they decide to place past events and ideas in a new light, they are viewed as ironic.

2. Mock Documentary Horror Movies

A new wave of film making the so-called mock documentary has been gaining more and more popularity recently. A mock documentary horror movie looks like a real documentary film: the scenes are said to have been shot by the main characters themselves who had started to record their perceptions. They die, their footage is found, and their film is edited into its final form by a third person.

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According to Harvey O' Brien (1999), the so-called mock documentary genre has its roots in the film entitled, *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) which he regards as a masterpiece. He further mentions that both the film and the hysteria that the creators of the film achieved with the help of the internet and multimedia are interesting. The movie's promotional gimmickry included the making of a website and other documentaries to back up the myth of the film.

He also predicted that *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) would inspire the creation of further films. His predictions have been realized by the birth of numerous similar works. According to Gergely Szirmay (2011), a whole series of films are built upon it. The producers of *Paranormal Activity* (2009) have already released four episodes, for instance. Typically, both the old and the new representatives of the genre are low budget films made by independent filmmakers.

The Blair Witch Project depicts an exciting story about three students, called Heather, Joshua and Michael, going to Maryland to make a documentary about the legend of the Witch of Blair. Their journey leads them to the huge and dark woods of the surrounding hills. Then, they are insulted several times by somebody or something that they do not know. Probably it is the dreadful witch, who according to a legend – which is still going around within the dwellers of the nearby settlements – was killing children several decades ago.

In fact, *The Blair Witch Project* achieved to create something extraordinary. In 1999, it was high time somebody created something new, since the audience was trained enough and was used to the most shocking and perverse things. Although, by 1999, spectators had already witnessed the cruellest murders and thought that they were geared for everything, the creators of *The Blair Witch Project* by learning about and borrowing a lot of techniques from postmodern literature managed to create a new subgenre within horror, called mock documentary.

2.1 General features of mock documentaries

The Blair Witch Project (1999) inspired several films; the most notable ones are *Paranormal Activity* (2009) and *The Dyatlov Pass Incident* (2013). Next, let us consider the general characteristic features of mock documentaries.

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First of all, the films' main characters are young people. In *Paranormal Activity*, the audience meets a young couple who lives together, while in the other two movies the main characters are university students who go on a journey with the purpose of shooting a documentary film.

Secondly, in *Paranormal Activity*, the main characters start filming because they begin to hear strange noises and decide to record what happens in their home at night. One thing is common in all the three movies, namely, they are recorded by the characters and the process of creating the films is displayed on the screen.

In addition, the characters are mentally tormented for a long time until they all die. In fact, in mock documentaries there is less physical violence than in the classic horrors. Interestingly, the villains are invisible and in *The Blair Witch Project* it is not even obvious if there is a villain in the movie at all.

Furthermore, the investigation of a myth forms the centre of attention. In *The Blair Witch Project* the myth of the Witch of Blair is to be investigated and documented. In *The Dyatlov Pass Incident*, the college students travel to Russia to investigate the myth of nine hikers who got lost fifty years before the movie's creation. In *Paranormal Activity*, the characters are dedicated to find out what causes the unexplainable events in their house.

Moreover, there is always someone who strongly believes in the myth to be investigated and there is always at least one person who rejects it. In *Paranormal Activity* Katie, the female main character is convinced that their home is haunted by a ghost or a demon, while Micah rejects to believe her. On the journeys of the other two movies, the leaders of the groups are overwhelmed by the myth that they are about to investigate but the others are unconvinced.

The above disagreements result in continuous debates between the characters and cause intensifying tension. They blame each other for what is happening to them and the one who is seen to be responsible for their misfortunes is always the person who strongly believes in the myth.

In addition, the characters are warned to stop what they are doing. Local people advise the students in *The Blair Witch Project* to go home and not to deal

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with the Witch of Blair. The students in *The Dyatlov Pass Incident* are told to return to the USA and to forget the myth of Dyatlov Pass. In *Paranormal Activity* the main characters are warned by a demonologist to stop recording, since they are very likely to infuriate the demon which haunts their house.

Last but not least, the characters are warned by others, since, the screened events are not unprecedented. The students in both movies were preceded by others who aimed to investigate the myth and then died. In the second part of *Paranormal Activity* saga, it turns out that the demon got to their house as a result of an exorcism carried out by Katie's brother-in-law.

2.2. The role of the home in mock documentaries

Discussing the importance of the scenes in mock documentaries is likely to result in reaching conclusions which can serve as food for future thoughts.² It is essential to analyse the types of scenes which are typical of the above mentioned mock documentary horror movies

The three examined movies can be grouped into two categories as regards to the locality of their events. *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) and the *Dyatlov Pass Incident* (2013) form the first group together. The events of both movies take place outside the homes of the characters. While the students in *The Blair Witch Project* go to shoot their movie in the dark woods of Maryland, the characters of *Dyatlov Pass Incident* travel to the huge mountains of Russia. So both films are set at places far away from the protagonists' home.

Therefore, it can be said that the two groups of movies differ in one crucial aspect, which is embodied by the location where the events take place. While the movies belonging to the first group are set at a remote place, far away from the characters' home, the events in *Paranormal Activity* happen in the house of the protagonists. At this point, it is essential to examine the effects that the scenes of the movies have on the storyline and to attempt to find a possible

² I plan to further extend my research concerning the importance and the impact of scenes on the plot of mock documentaries.

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explanation for the reasons of why the home of the characters influences the events that happen to them.

The location of the events in *Paranormal Activity* is the home of the main characters, Katie and Micah. During the course of the movie, the young couple rarely leave their home; in addition, Micah, the man protagonist, works at home, so he does not even need to go outside his house on a daily basis. Thus, their house is inevitably a crucial and influential plot organizing force.

According to Gaston Bachelard (1997), the notion of home plays a crucial role in the lives of human beings. He points out in *The Poetics of Space* that the main purpose of one's house is providing a shelter for the person where they can day-dream safely. He further expresses that a house is not simply a building but it makes up our personal part of the world. He further labels one's home as the first universe of the person who lives in it. In addition, he adds that having a home, no matter how humble the place is, automatically creates the feeling of the illusion of protection.

Bachelard (1997) states that the house not only shelters but also protects its dwellers and serves as an integrating force of the dreams, thoughts and memories of its inhabitants and it also plays the role of a cradle for those who live in it. Furthermore, the lack of a home can easily result in transforming human beings into dispersed beings.

In the light of the above mentioned ideas of Bachelard (1997) concerning the part that our home plays in our life, it does not come as a surprise to see that the characters in *Paranormal Activity* seem to be unable to leave their house. The young couple stay in their home even if they have the feeling that the only possible way of terminating the terrible events in their life would be leaving everything behind. Although, it is implied that Katie might be controlled by an evil force, Micah the young and strong man could easily take his girlfriend out of the house by force. While watching the film, the spectator feels the similar anxiety that one experiences when watching a good old horror movie. In earlier horrors the future victims being aware of the presence of a killer in their living room instead of leaving the house immediately decide to run upstairs. The characters' decisions of not leaving their home inevitably

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results in their deaths, and in the light of this it is not surprising that even Katie and Micah are unable to leave their home behind.

It appears that one's home does constitute a certain kind of shelter for the inhabitants and creates the feeling of protection on such a high level that for the dwellers it is almost impossible to leave their house even if they are fully aware of the risks of staying at home. So, the feeling of protection that the characters' home provides inhibits Katie and Micah from escaping the deadly consequences that await them.

The scene of mock documentaries highly influences the road that leads to the final outcome of the events. While in *Paranormal Activity* the protagonists are at home during the course of the events and are incapable of escaping from the evil that torments them, the students in the other two movies try to escape from what is trying to kill them.

As it was mentioned before, *The Blair Witch Project* and the *Dyatlov Pass Incident* are set far away from the main characters' home. Therefore, taking Bachelard's (1997) ideas about the relationship between the home and its inhabitants into consideration, it is not surprising that in the movies belonging to the first category, the protagonists strive to run away from the evil which aims to kill them. In addition, the film makers devote a considerable amount of time to display how the students are trying to flee from the evil and a large focus is put on the process that they have to go through while they are trying to avoid their deaths.

The crucial importance of the characters' house is further underpinned by the fact that in both movies that are set outside the home of the characters, the students, while trying to run away from the entity which is trying to kill them, are continuously attempting to find a shelter which is similar to a house. In *The Blair Witch Project*, the protagonists find protection in their tent and their paranoid feelings peak when they have to leave their shelter.

In *The Dyatlov Pass Incident*, the students in the Russian mountains are also made forced to leave their campsite. For the main characters, the mysterious doors that they find appear to be the only possible way of escaping from what they have to run away. Therefore, it becomes clearly visible that

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they are striving to find something which can create both the feeling of home and protection for them.

Therefore, it can be said that the fact that whether the location of the events in mock documentaries is in or outside the characters' home highly influences the process which leads to the deaths of the characters. In *Paranormal Activity* the protagonists are at home and corresponding to Bachelard's (1997) ideas of the house appearing as a shelter for its inhabitants, Katie and Micah cannot leave their house and therefore the events that lead to their deaths are not characterized by desperate attempts of trying to escape. As opposed to this, the protagonists in the other two movies which are set at places remote from the students' home, probably because of the lack of the home's protecting force, are desperately striving to run away from being murdered. In addition, their agonizing attempts to survive are also characterized by the struggle to find something which could create the feeling of shelter that is the feeling of home for them.

The plot organizing force of the locality of events in mock documentaries can be approached from a different aspect, too. Gaston Bachelard (1997) explains that the home of an inhabitant gradually becomes a part of the dweller. During the time that one spends in their home, the inhabitants get fully aware of every single spot and every single characteristic feature of their house. Sooner or later the inhabitants will be completely familiar with the home and will be able to find their way even in full darkness.

Bachelard further talks about the verticality which is typical of a house. As he puts it, a home is something which is characterized by an upward rising. In fact, the polarity of the house's garret and cellar provides the building's verticality. He also adds that there exists a basic opposition between a house's roof and cellar, while the former constitutes rationality, the latter is rather characterized by irrationality. This opposition is maintained by the feelings that we attach to the roof and the cellar. While, the roof appears as a symbol of protection, something which provides shelter for the building's inhabitants, the cellar is the darkest and most dreadful place of the house.

In fact, in *Paranormal Activity* the tension reaches its peak when the evil force appears in the attic. Although, strange, hardly explainable noises and

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thuds occur in the house and objects move by themselves, in addition, even the evil force seems to be present in the bedroom of the young couple – which is probably the most intimate place in their home – their panic intensifies only at the moment when they realize that the evil force has been in their garret. So, it seems that the most serious threat posed to the inhabitants of a house appears when something happens at the point of the building to which one associates the feeling of protection. Therefore, the appearance of, for instance, something strange, unworldly, evil or a killer in the attic has a huge influence on the plot of a mock documentary or even a conventional horror movie since it makes the characters panic more intensively than anything which takes place in other parts of the house.

All in all, it seems that the scenes of the mock documentary horror movies do have an influence on the storyline of the films. Whether the story is set in the home of the characters or somewhere outside their home affect the way they behave and the way the outcomes are reached. It seems that Gaston Bachelard's (1997) ideas connected to the feeling of shelter provided by one's home can explain the influence that being at or outside home exercises on the storyline of the movies. In addition, the storyline also takes a sudden turn if the polarity of the house is distorted, that is when an evil force appears in the attic, at the place which symbolises protection.

3. Mock documentaries and its roots in postmodern literature?

At this point, let us discuss on what grounds mock documentaries can be considered to derive from postmodernism. If one considers the characteristic features of postmodernism explained by Lewis (1999), Hutcheon (1986 & 1988), Patricia Waugh (1984) and Philip Rice (2001) and analyses mock documentary horror movies, it becomes clearly visible that many of the postmodern characteristic features are present in mock documentaries as well.

Barry Lewis (1998) explains the use of temporal disorder, which results in the distortion of the story's linearity. He also talks about the self-conscious distortion of history which can cause the blurring of the borderline between fantasy and history.

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In *The Dyatlov Pass Incident* (2013) the spectators have to put large efforts into catching up with the storyline. In fact, the audience is being consciously misled by the filmmakers. At this point, the self-consciousness of the filmmakers can be detected. As it was mentioned before, one of the main features of postmodernism is the writers' self-consciousness. The fact that the audience is consciously mislead is obvious since the first seven minutes of the movie are presented as if the events were taking place in the present. The film starts in the United States of America and the audience is introduced to a group of students who want to travel to Russia to shoot a documentary about the mystery of the Dyatlov Pass, where nine hikers were found dead in 1959. The students win a scholarship, thus they can finance their journey and they start preparing for their travelling. In addition, the spectators get an insight into the making of the documentary. Furthermore, earlier interviews are also edited into the film, for example, with a professor who assigned the task for her students to deal with the mystery of the Dyatlov Pass. Therefore, the film provides the distortion of linearity even in the first couple of minutes.

After the seventh minute, it turns out that what the audience has watched so far happened a month ago causing a quite surprising effect on the spectators, since in the movie there have been no signs of the events' taking place in the past and everything is presented as if it were happening in the present. The fact that the students got lost in the Northern Ural Mountains is presented in the form of a news program. So, what is presented in the news happened somewhere in between the first scenes and the actual scenes of the movie. As a result of this, the spectators' sense of time is totally distorted, and it is not obvious when the students disappeared.

In the news program, interviews are broadcast, causing the sense of jumping in time, since they were made in the past, after the beginning of the students' rescue mission. The audience is provided no exact information; they are left in the dark. Experts are guessing and coming up with ideas, for example, they say that a Yeti killed the students. The leader of a local Mansi tribe claims that two worlds collide in the Dyatlov Pass. In addition, it is also announced that somebody gained access to the students' footage and posted it

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on a website and a video extract is broadcast showing the Americans before or after they got lost. After the eleventh minute, the story takes place a month earlier and spectators can watch how the students travelled to Russia.

All in all, in *The Dyatlov Pass Incident*, there is a total distortion of linearity, therefore, it can be considered to be proven that from the point of view of applying temporal distortion, mock documentary horror movies are similar to postmodern literary pieces.

From the point of view of distorting linearity, both *The Blair Witch Project* (1999) and the *Paranormal Activity* (2009) have to be taken into consideration. Since both movies start with the announcement of the events' outcomes, that is, the death of the characters, the linearity of the stories are distorted.

Lewis (1998) also points out the fact that postmodern writers are determined to assign an active role to the audience. Mock documentaries are based on the principle of showing as little as possible. According to Gergely Szirmay (2011), a Hungarian film critic, the most terrifying element in mock documentaries is embodied by the fact that spectators are left in the dark because they know less than the characters do in the film. Therefore, the audience has to participate actively in the composition of meaning and in understanding the story.

In *The Dyatlov Pass Incident* the audience has to put large efforts into the interpretation of the film. There are several elements which inspire the spectators' mind to start working out their alternative ideas concerning the story.

First of all, the task of the American students to imagine themselves in the role of the nine hikers died at the Dyatlov Pass was assigned by one of their professors. One might start thinking about why the professor assigned this task? Why did she not warn the students about the possible dangers of travelling to Russia? Was the professor part of a conspiracy to send somebody to the Dyatlov Pass? Or was she involved in teleportation experiments which needed subjects?

Secondly, the story line's jumping in time also constitutes a challenge for the audience. They have to be active if they really want to follow the story; however, they never get fully familiar with the timing of the events.

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In addition, the theories proposed by experts on the Russian television also inspire one's mind to work out theories concerning, on the hand, the death of the hikers in 1959, and on the other hand, the mysterious disappearance of the young students. The idea of the Yeti's existence seems to be an appealing one because the students found huge footprints in the snow organized as if they were dropped out of the sky but their origins are not revealed in the movie.

Moreover, in the window of the mental hospital, where the students want to make an interview with the only survivor of the Dyatlov Incident, a man is showing a table for them, on which the word, УНОДИТЕ is written. The audience automatically starts to think, on the one hand, about the meaning of the word, and on the other hand, about the person of the man and the reason why he shared this word with them.

In the case of *Paranormal Activity* (2009) and *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), the audience is left in the dark concerning the movies' villain. In *Paranormal Activity* the two main characters Katie and Micah never see the villain and they are not sure whether there is something in their house or not.

In *The Blair Witch Project*, the spectators are provided with even less information and detail about the villain. The characters and the spectators literary see nothing. There is absolutely no evidence to prove that the characters are not being harassed by, for example, local people. O'Brien (1999) comes up with the idea that the villain in *The Blair Witch Project* can only be the product of the three students' imagination or their dreams.

In the above mentioned mock documentaries, being left in the dark about the villain or the source of the problem always results in tension and paranoia among the characters. First, they start blaming each other, especially the leader of the group and then they become aggressive and paranoid.

In *The Dyatlov Pass Incident*, on the first morning of their expedition, the students find big footprints around their tents. The position of the footprints looks like as if they were dropped out of the sky; therefore the students believe that somebody is trying to make fun of them. They start blaming their leader, Holly, and firmly believe that she made the footprints during the night. Later, as they follow the footprints, the students end up at an old weather station, in

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which they find a tongue. Since, one of the hikers who died in 1959 was found with her tongue missing, the students get extremely scared and their paranoid feelings turn them completely against Holly.

In *The Blair Witch Project*, when the students get lost in the forest, they blame their leader, Heather, who is thought to be responsible for the characters' misfortune. Later, the students start fighting with each other and get into a near insane state of mind because of the paranoia they feel. They see nothing and can only hear strange and scary noises and find stones arranged in the shape of cairns. They do not know what is tormenting them, they think that the Witch of Blair is following them, so they become completely paranoid and this feeling makes their situation even worse.

Fragmentation, another characteristic feature of postmodern literature, is also a recurring element in mock documentaries. It is a common element in *The Dyatlov Pass Incident* and in *The Blair Witch Project* since both movies are formatted similarly to documentaries; therefore they contain interviews, which were shot earlier causing a sense of jumping in time. Moreover, a whole Russian news program is edited into *The Dyatlov Pass Incident*. One can consider *Paranormal Activity* also to be fragmented by the replaying of Micah's videos during the scenes presenting the linear course of the characters' life.

Pastiche is also a characteristic feature of postmodern literature. Pastiche involves the creation of works made up of elements from different genres (Lewis, 1998). In fact, mock documentaries embody pastiche since they contain the characteristics of certain genres. In a mock documentary movie, one can find the techniques that are used by classic horror movies. In addition, both *The Blair Witch Project* and *The Dyatlov Pass Incident* can be considered to be thrillers since the two films and *Paranormal Activity* display elements of the genre. Tyler Larsson (n.d.) lists the classic features of thrillers, for example, their concern with the issues of life-and death, their thrilling effect on the audience, the involvement of mysteries, and the endangered protagonists, etc. All discussed movies contain the previously listed features, therefore, it can be said that they borrow from the thriller genre, too.

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Mock documentaries further borrow from the interview genre, since these movies often include interviews with experts or local people made by the main characters following the style of conventional interviews. Mock documentaries inevitably borrow from the documentary genre, too. In documentaries, reality is intended to be presented. In mock documentaries, the characters pretend that they document reality. The above mentioned interviews are also common elements both in documentaries and in mock documentaries. Moreover, the two types of movies are also similar in respect of containing voice narration.

Moreover, postmodernism's often recalled feature, parody, is also a crucial element in the mock documentary genre. Mock documentaries are said to parody certain conventions of documentaries by drawing attention to and even exaggerating the conventions of the genre. Actually, the purpose of early mock documentaries was to provide sheer entertainment. Monty Python was the expert of making funny mock documentaries mainly on fictional sport competitions. (What is a, n.d & Mock Documentary, n.d.)

Furthermore, postmodernists tend to use irony in their works. Irony is a recurring element in mock documentaries as well. Lars Elleström (2002) defines situational irony by calling attention to a contradiction between the result that one expects to be the outcome of a certain situation and the actual result. While watching a mock documentary, spectators expect that even though the characters' death is announced at the beginning of the film, the movie is a documentation of the events happened to the victims and not a horror movie.

Moreover, after the audience realizes that they are watching a horror movie and not a documentary, they expect that the horror will follow the original conventions with a villain who kills the characters. Ironically, what the spectators get is an invisible villain whom nobody sees and whom they and the protagonists only suspect to be present and have no evidence of it.

Vicious circles in postmodernism, according to Lewis (1998), are created by the writers' blurring of the borders between fact and fiction in order to make the audience unable to decide whether they are reading fact or fiction. The above discussed mock documentaries are all created in a way that the film

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makers' aim is to self-consciously mislead the audience. By adapting the style of documentaries, they enhance the movies' sense of reality. In addition, they intend to scare the spectators by creating the illusion of the reality of events. They build on the assumption that their movies become scarier than conventional horrors because the audience believes that what they see is real.

The creators of *The Blair Witch Project* came up with a new promotional technique for enhancing the sense of the movie's reality. They started a promotional gimmickry which included the making of a website and other documentaries to back up the myth of the film. On their official website <http://www.blairwitch.com/>, the real filmmakers organized everything as if the movie was based on real events and the characters were real people. The students are presented as if they were the filmmakers and there are pictures taken on them while they live the life of ordinary college students. The most convincing page of the website includes pictures on the footage which was allegedly found eight months after the students disappeared. In addition, there are also pictures on the students on the website which were allegedly released by the Frederick County Sheriff's office. Even Heather's notebook is found, which is said to have been discovered buried in the woods, and not only pictures but also its content is uploaded to the internet.

4. Metafiction in postmodern literature and in mock documentaries

Having established that mock documentary horrors have roots in postmodernism, the attention should be turned to a practical field of dealing with this fact. It is absolutely worth devoting time to the analysis of how mock documentaries and postmodern literature use metafiction. In fact, metafiction can be considered as the most significant connection between the two previously mentioned fields. The analysis of the use of metafiction in the movies and in literature will be carried out through the comparison of the three above discussed mock documentaries and one of postmodernism's landmark story written by John Barth.

Barth was chosen to be put into the centre of the analysis, since he can be considered as one of postmodernism's most decisive writers. His short story,

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Lost in the Funhouse (1968) carries most of the postmodern features listed by Lewis (1998) which are also characteristic of mock documentaries. In addition, the analysis of the texts will be carried out with the help of the principles of discourse analysis described by Chris Barker and Darius Galasinski (2001).

Waugh (1984) points out, in connection with metafiction, that self-reflexivity and formal uncertainty are central elements in metafictional writing, in which the theory of fiction is explored through practicing the writing of fiction. So, the process of writing, in other words, the creation of the literary work is in the centre of metafiction, which therefore, tends to stress its status as an artefact. In addition, she further emphasises that for using metafiction in literature, the adoption of metalanguage is necessary. The term metalanguage is used in reference to the language which one adopts when they talk about the language with the help of language.

Barker and Galasinski extend the notion of metafiction to a language which is also used to introduce the addressor's point of view in connection with a text and the extra-linguistic reality. Therefore, for instance, if a person is in the situation of having to report what they have read in or heard from a text, they express their opinion and can gain control over the text in question. With the choice of reporting words one uses to retell a narrative, they can even distort a text. So, for example, if one opts for the adoption of the reporting word 'claim', they can undermine the content of the text and express that they consider what the writer of the given text says to be disputable.

4.1. Metafiction in John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse*

John Barth's short story, *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968) can be considered as a perfect model for the representation of how a literary piece rejects to be perceived as presenting reality and is dedicated to draw the attention to the fact that it is an artefact. In fact, the short story does not provide the audience with an eventful plot. Although, the title suggests that somebody is going to get lost in a funhouse, Barth decentralizes the act of the main character's getting lost.

For the enhancement of the work's perception as an artefact, Barth chooses to incorporate the process of the story's writing to the actual events that are

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being depicted. In fact, while reading the short story, the reader becomes a witness of the process through which Barth is writing *Lost in the Funhouse*. The author continuously comments on the parts of the story he has completed, thus by using metalanguage to refer to his own work he becomes self-reflexive. Therefore, the creation of the literary work forms the centre of the short story. In addition, by continuously referring to conventional literary pieces and the degree in which *Lost in the Funhouse* deviates from them, Barth explores the theory of fiction as well. Furthermore, by acknowledging that his work fails to follow the conventional structures and techniques of narratives and by making as if he was trying to find solutions for corresponding to conventional forms, Barth shows formal uncertainty, too, which is also a characteristic feature of metafictional works.

By attempting to analyse *Lost in the Funhouse*, one can find examples easily for the way how Barth uses the techniques of metafiction in his postmodern work. The story starts with the question “For whom is the funhouse fun?” (Barth, 1968, p. 69) which is immediately answered providing an interesting way of beginning a story. Taking Chris Barker and Darius Galasinski’s theories of discourse analysis into consideration, one can immediately see that the reader is not invited to immerse in the story since it does not start with the description of the basic situation. Instead, it starts with a question answered by the author and then the readers find themselves in the situation of having to start thinking about the reason why Barth uses the italics style and why he provides explanations for the questions which arise in the reader. Therefore, it can be said that by choosing this form of addressing the audience, Barth expresses that he expects the audience to participate actively in the composition of the story’s meaning.

Barth continuously provides information about writing by using metalanguage on two levels. On the one hand, he is talking about the way he writes the story, and on the other hand, he is talking about the way literary people were writing their stories in the past.

En route to Ocean City he sat in the back seat of the family car with his brother Peter, age fifteen, and Magda G—‘ age fourteen, (...) who

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lived not far from them on B — Street in the town of D—, Maryland. Initials, blanks or both were often substituted for proper names in nineteenth-century fiction to enhance the illusion of reality. It is as if the author felt it necessary to delete the names for reasons of tact or legal liability. (Barth, 1968, p. 69).

Here, Barth draws a parallel with nineteenth century fiction, by informing the readers that the use of, for example, blanks and initials were tools for the enhancement of the illusion of reality. He implies that while writing the story he adopts the techniques of the writers of fiction in 19th century. By doing so, he acknowledges that he is writing a fictional story as well. So, Barth is writing, on the one hand, about how he is writing his own story, and on the other hand, how 19th century writers wrote their stories.

Barker and Galasinski point out the importance of the discourse that a text has with other texts which preceded it. They further describe the features according to which texts are intertextual. Moreover, they also explain that meanings usually depend on other meanings and texts can form networks, too. Barth makes use of the text's intertextual function since he uses realist texts, James Joyce's ideas and also refers back to his own stories. Therefore, we can talk about a metalanguage which is used on two levels by Barth, because he talks about his own text and the texts of others.

The presence of Barth in the short story can be felt from his choice of referring to Ambrose's family. He refers to the family with the pronoun 'they'. Even if, one accepts that Ambrose also plays a role as a narrator at a certain degree, Barth does not allow Ambrose to take full control in the narration. Barker and Galasinski further points out that discourses are usually sites of power struggles between the participants. If one accepts that Barth is not identical with Ambrose but controls his thoughts, Barth's dominating presence in the text can be considered as explained. Barth is dominating because he is the one who speaks the most and brings in new topics to the text. By using the pronoun, 'they' when the whole family including Ambrose is being referred to, Barth shows that he is also there in the story and while he is engaged in the

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production of the story, therefore is positioned within the story, he still have a bit of view from the outside, too.

Reference, as explained by Barker and Galasinski, is an essential element for achieving a coherent text. In fact, Barth's use of cohesive devices is surprisingly diverse. For example, he refers to the boys' parents and Uncle Carl with the words 'adults,' 'grown-ups,' 'the boys' father' or 'mother' and 'grownups.' For the children, Barth uses words like "the young people *mentioned*" (1968, p.74).

In addition, when Barth writes that "of the author, of the narrator, of this story, *Lost in the Funhouse*" (p. 76), it can be felt that the narrator and the author of the story are identical. Barth often corrects himself or makes up his mind concerning the use of a word or expression. If one considers the numerous instances when Barth modifies the words that he has just written down, it becomes clear that the words with which he replaces the original ones are synonyms or represents more or less the same things. For example, he replaces 'mock' by 'feigned', 'hero' by 'protagonist', 'Ambrose's father' by 'Ambrose's and Peter's father'. All, of the previous words refer to the same thing, therefore, if one considers that Barth replaces 'author' by 'narrator', it is possible that he indicates that the author and the narrator are the same person and thus, he stresses that the story is being written while it is narrated.

After having described the mannerisms and physical appearance of some of the characters, Barth immediately inserts a metafictional comment explaining that this kind of description is a common method used by the writers who write fiction. "Description of physical appearance and mannerisms is one of several standard methods of characterization used by writers of fiction" (1968, p.85). Here again by adopting the techniques of previous writers of fiction Barth acknowledges that he is writing a fiction as well.

At this point, the process of writing and talking about the process of writing is being stressed. After writing a description about the situation in the car, in other words, after producing a stretch of language, Barth starts talking about a specific part of the whole text. So, he uses language for description and then another language for explaining why the given part was written and also referring to the language of texts which also contained descriptions and were

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produced in the past. Therefore, it can be said that Barth uses metalanguage on two levels, since he talks about the language he writes, in other words he provides self-reflection, and moreover, he reflects to the writings of other writers working in fictional genres. In fact, Barth names a modernist author, James Joyce, and presents adjectives that he used in his novel, *Ulysses* (1922) in order to characterise the sea. Therefore, it can be said that Barth uses metalanguage not only to talk about previous texts in general but also to talk about specific texts of specific authors.

Barth goes on by providing more details about the writers' motivation behind using descriptions. He says that it is important to pay attention to exciting more than one sense. He adds that if the writer combines visual and auditory effects, imagination gets more oriented to the scene. It appears that Barth considers this detail about writing techniques to be significant to be understood by the reader, therefore, he gives a real life example for it. Then he continues writing the story by providing two types of description, one about Ambrose's mother's hair on her arm and about the smell of cigar that is felt in the car. So, Barth here crosses visual and olfactory senses. His choice of describing one's hair on their arm is pretty ironic, since many other elements or people on the scene could have been described instead. In addition, describing the smell of cigar along with the description of the ocean's fragrance appears to be ironic, too. So, the reason why Barth intends to make the reader understand the way and reason why writers use description is to make sure that the reader comprehends the ironic reference to the techniques of writers of fiction.

So, Barth uses irony here, which can also be considered as a type of metalanguage. As it was mentioned above, Chris Barker and Darius Galasinski (2001) hold the viewpoint that, the language one uses to introduce their point of view in connection with a text, that is, the choice of reporting verbs when somebody narrates or reports a text can also be considered as elements of metalanguage. Based on this idea, the implied expression of one's opinion about texts can also be considered as metalanguage. So, the writer does not have to explicitly state that he does not agree fully with the use of description by the writers of fiction to use a metalanguage. In fact, to be talking about the

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use of metalanguage is enough for the writer to adopt irony through which he expresses his point of view concerning previous texts of fiction. So, by using irony Barth also uses a metalanguage but this time he does it covertly. Therefore, in addition to the previously discussed two levels of the adoption of metalanguage, Barth adopts a third type of metalanguage, namely the one, which with the help of irony also talks about previous texts in an implied way.

Another instance of Barth's use of irony is observable when he gives the information that the family's car was produced in the year, 1936 and when he writes that on a matchbook cover "U.S. War Bonds and Stamps" (1968, p. 71) are advertised. Moreover, he says about the price Magda wins that it is something which is difficult to get hold of in the time of the story and he further says that in the time when the story takes place everything is very scarce. In addition, the author also writes that Ambrose's mother starts singing a popular song and lifts a quotation from the given song, which contains the word, 'army'. In fact, the song is about the army and if it is regarded as a popular song in that period, it becomes obvious that the story takes place in war time or shortly after a war. Here, Barth introduces the song as "an iambic trimeter couplet" (1968, p.73) and he uses metalanguage again, since he is talking about rhythms of the song, in other words, Barth uses words to talk about a song which also consists of words, therefore, can be considered as a text. From all of the previous information, one easily finds out that the story takes place during World War II.

In fact, the year when the story takes place can be guessed if one considers the information that Barth provides the audience with. So, in the light of the previous argumentation, it can be accepted that the story takes place during World War II. So, it has to take place after USA's entry to the war which was in 1941. By writing that "on account of German U-boats, Ocean city was "browned out": streetlight were shaded on the seaward side; shop-windows and boardwalk amusement places were kept dim, not to silhouette tankers and Liberty ships for torpedoing" (1968, p. 82) Barth reveals that the events must have happened after the Germans reached the USA by U-boats. In 1942 January 13, Germany started a U-boat offensive along the eastern coast of the

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United States (The History Place, 1996). So, Ambrose's story of how he got lost in the funhouse can be located between 1942 and 1945.

Later, Barth writes that the characters get extremely scared when they realize that an air raid is about to begin. At the very beginning of the *Lost in the Funhouse*, the audience is informed that the day when the family travels to Ocean City is Independence Day, which is celebrated on July 4. If one researches the air raids in which the United States was involved and which took place on July 4, they find that the first American bombing mission was conducted on July 4, 1942 (List of air, 2014). Barker and Galasinski's (2001) discourse analysis suggests that a text is to be analysed in the light of the context in which it occurs. *Lost in the Funhouse* occurs in the context of the World War II beyond doubt, so the role of the context has to be taken into consideration when analysing the story. Therefore, motivated, on the one hand, by Barth's above references, and on the other hand, by the emphasis which is laid on the war, it can be concluded that the story presumably takes place in 1942.

At this point, one is likely to pose the questions why Barth was using so many initials and blanks at the beginning of the story while he was trying to emphasise that this is a technique which was used to enhance the sense of reality in 19th century fiction, and why he himself also adopted this technique? By revealing the period and hinting the possible years in which the story takes place he uses irony again. By making as if he followed the technique of realists by which they did not reveal the date of their story and the name of their characters and then by hinting the date of *The Lost in the Funhouse*, Barth uses irony. He suggests an ironic attitude towards the use of initials and blanks by realists, since at the beginning Barth overuses the technique and thus overemphasises the importance of its use and then he suddenly neglects the technique and starts revealing the possible date of the events. As it was mentioned earlier, the use of irony can also be considered as a form of metalanguage, in other words, as a form of implicitly expressing one's opinion.

In fact, after providing information about the date of the story, he makes sure that one draws the proper inferences and starts writing about the role of similes, metaphors and any other figures of speech. He points out that words

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can have meanings other than their immediate, surface meaning, in other words, depending on the situation and the context, words can have secondary meanings. Then Barth continues by saying that the narrator might hint the reader information by using the above mentioned figures of speech. The adoption of Barker and Galasinski's theories concerning discourse analysis can be made use of in case of *Lost in the Funhouse*. They emphasise that the main questions for critical discourse analysis are "what does it mean in this situation? and why is it being said or meant in this situation?" (2001, p. 63) Therefore, Barth invites the reader to analyse his work and to ask the previous questions in order to gain full understanding of the text. In addition, by doing so, Barth do not only invites the reader to play an active role in the composition of meaning but also enhances the text's discourse with its audience.

Furthermore, by drawing attention to the possible secondary meanings of his words he uses metalanguage again since he points out that both the words that he has written down and is going to put down might carry secondary meaning as well.

Barker and Galasinski describe how conjunctions can alternate the meaning of a sentence or a whole sequence of a text. According to them, the use of the conjunctions 'and' or 'but' can result in opposite meanings. If one considers that Barth has previously expressed his intention to hint information for the reader and takes the frequent adoption of the conjunction 'although' in the following sequence of the text, it becomes obvious that Barth is determined to provide the reader with additional information. When Barth says that "Although (Magda) she lived on B – Street she had very good manners and did better than average in school" (1968, p.71). Here, Barth is trying to hint information concerning Magda's place of residence. On the basis of the previous quotation, it can be concluded that Magda is supposedly coming from a low prestige area which has a bad reputation. Furthermore, by choosing the conjunction 'although', Barth also expresses that in the area where Magda lives, children do not behave properly and tend to get poor grades at school. The quotation also suggests that Magda might come from a good family which for some reason lives in a low prestige area.

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Shortly after Ambrose's mother starts singing a song, Barth switches to talking about the story, that is, he begins to use metalanguage again. The author informs the audience about the role of the beginning of stories. In addition, the reader is also notified about the fact that they have been reading the beginning of the story so far and if the writer followed the convention the rising action and the first complication would have been initiated.

Here, the choice of modality described by Barker and Galasinski plays an important role. When Barth writes that "The *beginning* should recount the events between Ambrose's first sight of the funhouse early in the afternoon and his entering it with Magda and Peter in the evening" (1968, p. 74) he expresses that he does not follow the conventions. If we consider the text which stands for the beginning in the "*Lost in the Funhouse*," it becomes clear that Ambrose neither saw nor entered the fun house. Therefore, by using the modal auxiliary 'should', Barth declares his dedication to avoid the conventional way of writing a short story.

According to Barker and Galasinski, the choice of vocabulary also has a meaning alternating function. When Barth says that the account of the characters' journey to Ocean City does not "seem especially relevant" (1968, p. 74) in a work, entitled *Lost in the Funhouse*, he expresses that it can be still relevant. If he wrote that 'it is not relevant', he would express that it is unquestionable whether the account is relevant or not. By writing that "they don't seem especially relevant" (1968, p.74) the author expresses that they can be still considered as relevant. Therefore, by deviating from the conventional way of writing a short story's beginning, instead of producing an improper story the author creates something different, something new. It also has to be noted that while Barth expresses all of his above mentioned thoughts, he uses metalanguage since he talks about his own text and the texts of previous writers in general.

While analysing a text, one has to keep in mind that discourses can be considered as systems of options. Therefore, the participants of a discourse continuously make decisions about which language item to use. (Barker and Galasinski, 2001) While reading *Lost in the Funhouse*, the audience witness

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the process through which the author creates a discourse. Barth's changing of his ideas can be observed in several other places of the text. When referring to the boys' father, Barth says that "Ambrose's father, Ambrose's and Peter's father" (1968, p. 75). It is clearly visible again that Barth is writing the text and is trying to find the most suitable words to put down. First, he writes that the person who is being referred to is Ambrose's father but then he corrects himself and writes that the man is "Ambrose's and Peter's father" (1968, p. 75).

4.2. Metafiction in mock documentaries: a comparison

After the demonstration of metafiction's importance in *Lost in the Funhouse*, it is essential to elaborate on its use in mock documentaries in order to get a clear view about its importance in connecting the films with postmodern literature.

As it was discussed above, in *Lost in the Funhouse*, Barth writes about writing his story by incorporating the presentation of the tools, for instance, initials, blanks, figures of speech that writers use when they create their works. In case of mock documentary horror movies, the creation of the film is in the focus. In fact, the characters who create the movie record the way they shoot their film. Therefore, while in case of *Lost in the Funhouse*, the reader witnesses the writing of the story, in mock documentaries the spectator witnesses the shooting of the film.

Just like *Lost in the Funhouse*, mock documentaries do not have an eventful plot. For example, in *Paranormal Activity* (2009) the protagonists do not even leave their home, except on one occasion, and most of the movie is made up of scenes which show that the main characters are sleeping and an invisible creature makes noises and moves objects in their house. In fact, the same is true for other mock docs, therefore, the creation of the movies is rather emphasised in the films.

In *The Blair Witch Project* (1999), the spectator can get information about the tools of filmmaking. For example, the use and preparation of the take is presented by the young filmmakers in the movie. They open the scenes by using the take. Later, after the students make an interview with Mary, who claims that she met the Witch of Blair, Josh says that he made a mistake when

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he tried to set the sharpness of the camera, so when he was shooting the interview with Mary the sharpness of the camera was not satisfactory. Therefore, when Josh talks about the interview, which they shot, he uses self-reflection and metalanguage. In addition, he further talks about how a camera can be set regarding whether a user wants to shoot in meters or in feet.

In addition, Josh also records how Heather tests a new tape in the camera. After she finishes testing the tape, she says that it works well. Moreover, after Heather reads out from a book in order to shoot an introductory scene, she says that she was reading a bit too fast because the filmmakers had to hurry to the campsite. She adds that, in addition to the camera, she also recorded her voice separately, so she will be able to edit it somehow. Furthermore, after the first day of shooting the film, Josh asks Heather how does she like the process through which the movie was shot. Heather answers that she is totally satisfied with her film maker team and their work.

In *Paranormal Activity* (2009), the young couple who are shooting the film starts with a sound testing and they set their camera up. Moreover, they continue to test their recorder by trying to find the best position from where to record and they also test lighting which is suitable for high quality recording.

When a psychic visits the couple, Micah presents his recording system. He informs the psychic that he has a FireWire which connects the camera to his laptop and also shows him his tripod and lenses, which as Micah describes, are wide angle ones and are able to record the whole room. In addition, Micah also talks about his EVP recorder, which according to him is suitable for catching all kinds of sounds. From the above, it turns out that the spectators can get hold of information concerning the apparatus that is used for recording films.

Self-reflection is an essential part of *Paranormal Activity*. Micah continuously watches the footage which his camera records and comments on the events. For example, one day, he shows Katie a part of the footage which contains a video in which, although, all the windows and doors are closed in the house, the door of their bedroom is moving by itself. In addition, Micah plays a tape recorded by his digital audio recorder. The tape contains a strange noise that the characters are trying to interpret. Micah claims that he has

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already listened to the tape at least fifty times but he is still unable to make sense of the noise. In the above mentioned cases, the characters use metalanguage to talk about the footage they have recorded so far.

In mock documentaries the use of metalanguage occasionally transcends the domain of filmmaking. For example, in *The Dyatlov Pass Incident* (2013) the characters are talking about Kurt Vonnegut's *The Slaughterhouse Five*, in *The Blair Witch Project* the students record their film based on several history books from which Heather reads out and in *Paranormal Activity* while Micah is holding a book about demons in his hands, he is explaining facts he has read in the book. Therefore, mock documentaries behave similarly as Barth's short story in which the author sometimes criticises and sometimes simply comments on his or other's works. In addition, mock documentaries are similar to *Lost in the Funhouse* in the respect that while Barth's short story discusses the way fictional stories are written, the movies explore the techniques with the help of which films are recorded.

Mock documentaries are also similar to *Lost in the Funhouse* with regards to the presence of the creators. While, in the short story, Barth continuously expresses verbally that he is present during the process through which the story is being written, in mock documentaries the filmmakers continuously draw the attention to their presence visually. They simply stand in front of the camera, start talking into it or they move the camera in a way that it records them. Therefore, both the movies and the short story are similar in emphasising the presence of their creators but they are distinct from the aspect that while *Lost in the Funhouse* uses verbal tools, mock documentaries use visual ones to achieve the same effect. As a result, the use of metafiction in Barth's story is rather word bound while in mock documentaries metafiction is created visually.

Mock documentaries are also similar to Barth's short story in the respect that the person of the author, in case of films the creator, is identical with the narrator of the story who narrates the film while they are shooting it.

Barth visualizes metafiction in *Lost in the Funhouse* by writing about the way the funhouse operator's daughter writes a story: "Where she had written in shorthand *Where she had written in shorthand* Where she had written in

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shorthand *Where she et cetera*" (1968, p.92). A similar visualization of metafiction can be observed in *The Dyatlov Pass Incident*. At the end of the movie, the main characters record the moment when they find a camera which turns out to be their own camera. So, with the same camera they record the action of them finding that particular camera. They start playing the video which was recorded with the camera that they found and they watch the video about themselves recording that they find the camera. This act is possible since the characters attempted teleportation and their camera travelled back fifty years in the past and they find it in the present.

Just like in *Lost in the Funhouse*, the way how the spectators are addressed has to be looked at from the point of view suggested by Barker and Galasinski (2001). Mock documentaries also do not aim to achieve the audience's immersion in the story. *The Dyatlov Pass Incident* and *The Blair Witch Project* are fragmented from the very beginning since interviews are screened as part of the story and the continuous changing of the camera's angle from which the events can be followed also hinders full immersion. In addition, mock documentaries tend to turn inward rather than outward. They seem to be engaged in discourse with themselves since – just like *Lost in the Funhouse* – these artefacts are in the process of creating themselves. Moreover, the description of the basic situation is also missing from both the films and the short story. The audience is provided with a very little amount of information about the characters and about the background of the story. Although, *The Blair Witch Project* and *The Dyatlov Pass Incident* begin with the recording of a couple of sentences that the main characters say to explain the reason why they start to shoot a movie, in case of *Paranormal Activity*, the spectators have to find out the basic situation from the dialogue of the characters. The two main characters are talking to each other and the audience has to draw the inferences themselves about the reason why they started recording the movie. *Lost in the Funhouse* is similar to *The Blair Witch Project* and *The Dyatlov Pass Incident* in the respect that the short story also starts with two introductory sentences which tells information about the starting situation succinctly.

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As it was pointed out above, based on Barker and Galasinski's (2001) template for discourse analysis, the notion of metalanguage can be expanded to the use of irony. To be more precise, with the use of irony one also talks about other works but in an implied way. Mock documentaries use irony in the sense that, just like Barth in the *Lost in the Funhouse*, they do not provide information about the characters and they do not describe them. The only information one can receive, for example about Micah, one of *Paranormal Activity*'s main characters, is that he has been together with Katie for 3 years, he is thinking about proposing to her, he is in good health and works as a day trader. No other information is provided about him. The same is true for the main characters of the two other mock documentaries. In fact, the only character about whom the audience receives relatively much information is Katie from *Paranormal Activity* but the description of her life cannot be said too detailed either. By creating a movie in which the characters are not described and the audience know very little information about them, mock documentaries show irony towards movies which concentrate on the development and the presentation of their characters.

Mock documentaries further express irony towards conventional horror movies, in which the spectators are scared to the bones visually through witnessing bloody massacres committed by deformed or masked killers. In fact, there is always a terrifying villain in the centre of attention who is scary because of his physical appearance or because of his psychopathic behaviour but in most cases he is both ugly and psychopathic. Mock documentaries treat conventional horrors ironically, since in mock docs the villains are invisible or cannot be identified. In *The Blair Witch Project* it is not even obvious whether there is a villain or not since neither the spectators nor the characters can see them. Although, many strange things start happening to the characters, for example, somebody makes noises around their tent and starts moving its walls, the villain is not visible during the film. The same is true for *Paranormal Activity*, in which the villain never turns up physically, in addition, its nature is not explained either. There are only theories concerning the villain in both of the previously mentioned movies, but these theories are never proven.

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All in all, mock documentaries also use metalanguage when they express irony towards conventional horror movies. As it was pointed out earlier, metalanguage means talking about works with the help of language but the implied communication of one's thoughts concerning works can also be treated as a form of metalanguage.

Taking the high number of similarities into consideration in the use of metafiction in mock documentaries and postmodern literature presented above, one cannot help but acknowledge that metafiction can be viewed as the element which forms the most significant bond between the two fields. In addition, the examination of similarities deriving from the adoption of metafictional devices further underpins the idea of tracing mock documentaries to postmodern literature.

Conclusion

This chapter includes the presentation of the summary of the research's aims and key findings together with the account of the methodology. In addition, suggestions for the practical adaptations of the results are also outlined along with the assessment of the research's limitations.

The primary aim of the current research was to prove that mock documentary horror movies have their roots in postmodernism, since they bear most of postmodern literature's characteristic features. The secondary objective of the work was to demonstrate that postmodern texts and mock documentaries can be successfully compared with regards to their use of metafiction which forms the strongest bond between the two fields.

A special emphasis was also laid on discussing the role of the home in mock documentaries. In addition, effects that the movies' scenes have on the storyline were also reviewed. The results of the current analysis shed lights on the importance of extending the study of the role of locality in mock documentaries.

The present work employed a multiple research approach. First of all, it provides a discussion of the common characteristic features of postmodern literature. Secondly, mock documentary films are introduced and analysed.

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Then the role of the home in mock documentaries is reviewed. As a next step, the presentation of the traits that mock documentary movies and postmodern literature share follows. Finally, John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968) is compared to mock docs from the point of view of their use of metafiction. The comparative study of the texts is carried out with the help of Barker and Galasinski's (2001) template for discourse analysis.

The analysis of mock documentary movies in the light of the main features of postmodernism justifies the statement that these movies root back to postmodern literature. In addition, the findings of the comparative analysis of John Barth's *Lost in the Funhouse* (1968) and mock documentaries, on the one hand, provided further grounding for the movies' derivation from postmodern literature and, on the other hand, served as a proof for the significance of metafiction in the relationship of the two fields.

The results of the current research contribute to the understanding and interpretation of mock documentaries and shed new lights on the interpretation of postmodern texts, too. In addition, they promise to be a valuable educational tool in familiarizing students with postmodern aesthetic strategies.

In fact, further practical research should be carried out in the future to measure the role that mock docs could play in popularizing reading postmodern works and teaching postmodern literature. Additional research could also be done which would incorporate a deeper analysis of the works above. In addition, their comparative analysis could be extended to the characteristic features of postmodernism other than metafiction.

The current research's most obvious limitation was embodied by the work's length restrictions. Only one postmodern literary piece could be analysed and the movies could not be analysed one by one in great detail. The novelty of the field further limited the research since only a few works have dealt with the topic and only from other aspects.

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