Kazuo Ishiguro and Max Frisch:
Bending Facts in Unreliable and Unnatural Narration

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Introduction

Since I started examining unreliable narrators in fiction, I have heard numerous jokes from friends and other people about the subject of my research, often along the lines of "so you're writing about me" or "you should have a good look at [a friend's name]." People have also shared with me their speculations about what this thing called unreliable narrator might be. These reactions probably result from the fact that the terms *unreliable narrator* and *unreliable narration* make use of common words widely used in everyday language. Compared to the concepts of, say, homodiegesis or focalization, unreliable narration is much more likely to elicit ideas about its meaning in people who do not engage in literary studies. Such ideas, however, often fail to fully coincide with how theorists of narrative understand this concept. This situation is not so surprising and provides no reason to be alarmed. However, the terminological ambiguity is repeated on a smaller scale even among students and critics of literature: I have had to learn to differentiate between the wider and narrower senses in which the term unreliable narrator is used.

It is the narrower sense that interests me in this book: unreliable narration as described by narratology. *The living handbook of narratology* defines this concept in the following way: "In its narratological sense, unreliability is a feature of narratorial discourse. If a narrator misreports, -interprets or -evaluates, or if she/he underreports, -interprets or -evaluates, this narrator is unreliable or untrustworthy" (Shen, "Unreliability" par. 1). However, this definition raises further questions. What does the narrator report, interpret, or evaluate? How do I know if the narrator mis- or underreports, mis- or underinterprets, or mis- or underevaluates? If we read on in the entry on unreliability in *the living handbook*, we find out about several approaches to these questions. No single and universally accepted explanation of the concept of unreliability exists. Even within the narrower, narratological sense, there are multiple ways in which the term *unreliable narrator* is used.

This realization brings me to the first aim of this monograph: to formulate a definition of unreliable narration that will help me examine the boundaries of the concept. I feel that too wide a range of narrative techniques are sometimes subsumed under the heading of narrative unreliability. More specifically, I am concerned with the overuse of the concept on experimental works portraying a reality incompatible with the extratextual world—when an antimimetic narrative

technique is confused with the narrator's faulty perspective.[1] In short, one of the goals of this book is to differentiate between unreliable narration proper and related, yet different, forms of distorting (fictional) reality. I will contrast unreliable narration with narratorial fact-bending in unnatural or antimimetic narration.[2] In the type of unnatural narrative that I examine, the fictional world adopts the narrator's subjective perspective so that nothing within that fictional world contradicts the narrator's version of the story. This narrative strategy thus differs considerably from unreliable narration in which the reader discovers an implicit correct version of what happened.

The first part of this book deals with differentiating between bending facts in unreliable and unnatural narration on the theoretical level. I subsequently apply my approach to selected novels by Kazuo Ishiguro and Max Frisch. Hence, the second goal of this book, which is related to the first, is to explore the way these two authors employ unreliable narration and move beyond its borders. The theoretical and analytical parts work in collaboration: the theoretical concepts explored allow for new insights into Ishiguro's and Frisch's writings while the examinations of the novels help refine the theoretical findings. In addition, the presented analysis of the distinctive and innovative features of the two writers' narrative strategies can enhance our understanding of other works that employ unreliable narration and related techniques.

The third goal of this study is comparing Ishiguro's and Frisch's novels and thus drawing attention to a fascinating parallel in their development as novelists. Both authors consistently focus on exploring the psychology of their narrating characters. While they do so by using unreliable narration in their early novels, in their later fictional works they move beyond the limits of this concept: they

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1 See, for example, Ansgar Nünning's list of literary works with unreliable narrators in his edited monograph *Unreliable Narration: Studien zur Theorie und Praxis unglaubwürdigen Erzählens in der englischsprachigen Erzählliteratur* (287–90). Apart from Kazuo Ishiguro's *The Unconsoled* and Max Frisch's *Gantenbein*, examined in this book, other such experimental texts include, for example, Martin Amis's *Time's Arrow or The Nature of Offense*, Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds*, Jeanette Winterson's *The Passion*, John Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Hermann Hesse's *Der Steppenwolf* (*Steppenwolf*), and Franz Kafka's *Die Verwandlung* (*The Metamorphosis*).

2 My use of these terms is based on the work of scholars in the Unnatural Narratology research group based at Aarhus University. See http://projects.au.dk/narratiresearchlab/unnatural/ for more details. Cf. also Alber and Heinze, and Richardson, "What." This book only deals with one particular kind of unnatural narrative (a homodiegetic narrator changing the fictional reality), not unnatural narration in general.

leave the realm of realist representation in pursuit of an even more profound depiction of the psychological condition of their narrators. Despite the huge amount of scholarly and critical writing on Ishiguro and Frisch separately, to my knowledge no study comparing the two has been published to date. Due to the considerable resemblance between the two writers' narrative techniques, I believe such a comparison to be a worthwhile undertaking.

By the way, there is something to the jokes I mentioned at the beginning of this introduction, jokes about real-world unreliable narrators. They reflect the fact that unreliable narration is a narrative technique largely derived from real-world situations. Works featuring unreliability often focus on the psychology of their narrating characters, which are to a great extent modelled after real-world people. It is true that unlike real-world untrustworthiness or inaccuracy, narrative unreliability in fiction resides in the structure of the text and amounts to a secret designed to be exposed by the reader: someone has created the unreliable narrator for the reader to discover. However, the reader's attempts at sorting out the narrator's distortions from what really happened in the fictional world resemble our endeavours to distinguish between fact and fabrication in a real-world person's stories. Whether these endeavours can ever be successful is another question, a question to which there is no simple answer. A number of literary works use unreliable narration to illustrate the difficulty, if not impossibility, of accurately reconstructing past events, even ones we have experienced ourselves. Still, we intuitively insist on the existence of some kind of objective past even if it is epistemologically inaccessible to us. This belief corresponds to the existence of a plane of fictional reality in works with an unreliable narrator: it is this fictional reality that the narrator mis- or underreports, mis- or underinterprets, or mis- or underevaluates.

By contrast, in works that project a fictional world that adopts the narrator's perspective, no independent plane of fictional reality exists; hence, there is nothing for the narrators to misrepresent. Such works break with the realistic illusion and challenge our faith in an objective reality. Their narrators are not founded on real-world models, at least not in an obvious, mimetic way. When we reconstruct the fictional world, our possibilities of relating it to the way things work in the extratextual world are limited. No one looks for such narrators among the flesh-and-bone people they know.

Therefore, my friends do have a point: we are likely to encounter real-world people bending facts in a manner similar to that of fictional unreliable narrators. In fact, most of the time we ourselves act at least a little bit like such narrators. Yet we will never meet a fact-bending unnatural narrator in real life. This contrast corroborates the need for differentiating between these two concepts.

The Worlds of Ishiguro and Frisch

This study draws theoretical inspiration from both classical and postclassical narratology; one of its aspirations is to demonstrate that rather than discarding older theories and starting from scratch, it proves fruitful to combine structuralist insights with more recent developments in narrative theory. Apart from reviewing, commenting on, and drawing from existing theories of unreliable narration, I also place unreliable narration within the context of possible-world theory as applied in literary studies. To both refine my definition of unreliable narration and to contrast this phenomenon with a different kind of bending facts in fiction, I draw on the findings of unnatural narratology, albeit in a less comprehensive manner than I approach unreliable narration. In addition, my understanding of the theoretical issues in question largely owes to my close readings of Frisch's and Ishiguro's novels that reveal the two authors' innovative use of unreliable narration and related strategies. As the psychology of the character narrators is central to all the works analysed in this book as well as to their use of unreliable and unnatural narration, my interpretations also make use of philosophical, psychological, and psychoanalytical concepts, such as self-deception, narrative identity, and repression. By employing such concepts I do not wish to imply that fictional characters are straightforward images of real-world people; nevertheless, I do believe real-world theories of the human mind can enhance our understanding of fictional characters, and, what is more, fictional characters can tell us a great deal about the way our minds work. This two-way enrichment proves particularly productive in the case of Ishiguro and Frisch as both are excellent observers of human nature.

Kazuo Ishiguro

Kazuo Ishiguro, who was born to Japanese parents in Nagasaki in 1954, has lived in the United Kingdom since 1960, writes in English, and is considered a British author. To date he has published eight books as well as several short stories early in his career; he has also written four original screenplays (the best-known are *The Saddest Music in the World* and *The White Countess*). In this study I focus primarily on three novels: *An Artist of the Floating World* (1986), *The Unconsoled* (1995), and *When We Were Orphans* (2000).

An Artist of the Floating World (further *Artist*), Ishiguro's second novel, is an entry in what has sometimes been referred to as "a trilogy of aging protagonists reflecting upon disappointing pasts and disillusioned presents" (Shaffer and Wong xi). The other two books in this series are *A Pale View of Hills* (1982, further *Pale*) and *The Remains of the Day* (1989, further *Remains*). The narrators of these three works look back over their past in an attempt to tell the story of their life. However,

their accounts cannot be taken at face value: there is always something the narrators try to hide and omit, or at least leave untouched. But they also need to go through these memories in order to explain away the results of some of their actions. Consequently, they are attracted to the very territory they have marked as forbidden. In other words, the narrators select and modify their memories according to a certain aim that they—often unconsciously—follow. The goals of Ishiguro's narrators differ in their particularities, but in general these narrators strive to come to terms with some aspects of their past. As Cynthia Wong puts it, "For all three narrators, the return to the past is prompted by an intense and personal emotion in the present moment of narration [...] which the reader will identify as their shame about the past. Each returns to a past which might atone for the present" ("Shame" 131). Their uncomfortable feelings about the past compel them to try to reconstruct their life in order to justify their role in the past on the one hand, and on the other to suppress certain pieces of information that might let their shame and feeling of guilt strike with full force. To reconcile these two contradictory aims, they "employ one or more psychological defense mechanisms—in particular, repression—to keep certain unwelcome memories or intolerable desires at bay" (Shaffer 9). This kind of motivation on the part of the narrators gives rise to gaps in the narrative. The reader can find material to fill in the gaps within the narrator's discourse, but this material is transformed and displaced into other elements of the story. Therefore, an alternative account of what the narrator explicitly conveys is hidden in the text: all three narrators are unreliable.

Ishiguro's fourth novel, *The Unconsoled* (further *Unconsoled*), marks a radical break with the form of his retrospective trilogy. Right from the beginning, readers need to adjust their expectations of what is possible, for the fictional world of this novel departs far from the real, extratextual world, defying some of its basic rules. Unlike his predecessors in Ishiguro's earlier novels, the narrator, Ryder, does not look back over his distant past but recounts recent events. Yet it is gradually revealed that Ryder's memories, though not related by him, are present in the text; more precisely, they are staged as his actions, as the other characters and their actions, and as other situations or objects. Thus, the scenario familiar from Ishiguro's first three novels, that is, the character narrators' preoccupation with the past, recurs in *Unconsoled*, where, however, it is represented by significantly different means.

The theme of the narrator's struggle with his own past thematically reappears in Ishiguro's fifth novel, *When We Were Orphans* (further *Orphans*). Here the struggle transpires in the memories of the narrator, Banks, who recalls a series of traumatic events in his childhood, but it also affects the novel's setting, events, and other characters. At the level of form, therefore, this narrative combines the modes used in the first three novels on the one hand and in *Unconsoled* on the

other. While Banks functions as an unreliable narrator, his psychological condition and subjective perspective are also enacted in other aspects of the narrative.

In his sixth novel, *Never Let Me Go* (2005), Ishiguro's innovativeness resides mainly in the chosen topic: the story is set in a society that allows breeding cloned individuals for spare parts and is narrated by a clone. Nevertheless, apart from these fantastical elements, the fictional world follows the rules of our extratextual world. The narrator, Kathy, can be anthropomorphized; although her situation is unusual (she watches her old friends die after their vital organs are removed to be donated and calmly expects the same destiny), her emotions and sensations are not incompatible with the way human beings feel and experience. It is precisely this humanlike character of the clones that makes the narrative a chilling warning about the dangers of technological progress. Kathy comes close to the narrators of the retrospective trilogy as she, too, strives hard to reconstruct the past and faces gaps and haziness in her memories. Yet she is a much more reliable narrator: rather than hiding aspects of her past from herself, she reliably reports her past self's avoidance of unwelcome knowledge, repression of undesired emotions, and illusory hopes. The lack of clarity in some of her memories only emphasizes her humanlike quality and her strenuous effort to render as precise a picture as possible of her and her fellow clones' past.

Ishiguro's seventh book, *Nocturnes: Five Stories of Music and Nightfall* (2009), is a collection of short stories. These stories move away from the strong focus on the narrating character manifested in his previous works: in these stories not only the narrator but also some of the other characters and their idiosyncrasies are at the centre of interest. Similarly to *Unconsoled*, music plays an important role in the lives of the characters and in their relationships with other people. Often it mediates a sense of nostalgia for the past. Ishiguro thus develops the topic of remembering days gone by in this collection of stories as well. The writer's most recent published work is the novel *The Buried Giant* (2015), in which he once again explores the issues of memory and forgetting and combines them with fantastical elements, such as ogres and a dragon, in an Arthurian setting.

Max Frisch

Max Frisch, who was born in Zurich in 1911 and died in the same city in 1991, was a Swiss German writer writing in standard German.[3] He was a very prolific

3 An interesting parallel exists between Frisch's and Ishiguro's relation to the language in which they write. Strictly speaking, neither of them uses their mother tongue for writing: Frisch writes in German and not in Swiss German while Ishiguro uses English

playwright, novelist, and essayist;he also produced numerous short prose pieces, many of which appeared in his two fictionalized diaries, or sketchbooks, *Tagebuch 1946–1949* (*Sketchbook 1946–1949*) and *Tagebuch 1966–1971* (*Sketchbook 1966–1971*). In this book I analyse three novels by Frisch: *Homo faber. Ein Bericht* (1957; *Homo faber. A Report*), *Stiller* (1955; *I'm Not Stiller*), and *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* (1964; originally published in English as *A Wilderness of Mirrors*, later *Gantenbein*).

All English quotations from the three analysed novels by Frisch are taken from Michael Bullock's translations: *Homo Faber*, *I'm Not Stiller*, and *Gantenbein*. All quotations from Frisch's *Tagebuch 1946–1949* come from Geoffrey Skelton's translation, *Sketchbook 1946–1949*. All other translations are mine unless stated otherwise. When a published translation is cited, the page numbers in the parentheses indicate the location of the quotation in the English version. When the translation is mine, the page numbers in the parentheses indicate the location of the original quotation. The original quotations are cited in footnotes.

Before choosing a life as a full-time writer, Frisch worked as a journalist and as an architect: his most tangible work in the literal sense is not a piece of writing but the open-air swimming pool now called Max-Frisch-Bad in Zurich. His hesitation between becoming an architect or a writer led to a dilemma: he had to decide between a bourgeois life and an artistic existence. This dilemma is reflected in how Frisch's characters oscillate between a conventionally convenient and dangerously authentic life (cf. Hage 36). Max Frisch's prose and drama centre around issues of personal authenticity[4] and the problem of the epistemological inaccessibility of reality, especially of one's inner reality, of what the characters perceive as the core of their personality, which is, however, obscured by the role they play in society. Frisch's works expose the dichotomy between "on the one hand, the 'True,' 'Essential,' 'Actual,' which stays intangible and unutterable, a secret—and on the other hand, the 'Surface,' the concrete, already completed existence, that is, the mask, the role that one plays"[5] (Stromšík 127). They depict authentic existence as desirable yet difficult to achieve.

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instead of Japanese. Moreover, both writers have talked about the advantages of self-consciousness in language use and of "not being too fluent in the language in which you write" (Ishiguro, "Interview: David Sexton" 27; for Frisch cf. Hage 94–95).

4 I use this term in the sense of Charles Lindholm's definition: "Persons are authentic if they are true to their roots or if their lives are a direct and immediate expression of their essence" (2).

5 "einerseits ist hier das 'Wahre,' 'Wesentliche,' 'Eigentliche,' das unfaßbar und unsagbar, ein Geheimnis bleibt—andererseits die 'Oberfläche,' die konkrete, schon vollendete Existenz, d. h. die Maske, Rolle, die man spielt."

Frisch portrays people caught in a life of deadening repetition as described by one of his characters, Count Oederland, in the eponymous play: "Work as virtue. Virtue as substitute for joy. And the other substitute, because virtue does not suffice: leisure after work, weekend, the adventure on the screen–"[6] (*Graf* 9). Michael Butler speaks in this context about eccentricity: the characters are "eccentric individuals in that they are shown as living at odds with an environment which, far from exerting any central stabilising power, has itself a void at its core. The frightening nature of this void is disguised from the apparently centric majority only by habit and the repetitive shape of everyday routine" (10). People who live in the illusion of authenticity are protected by seemingly meaningful repetition and by the mind's defence mechanisms, such as repression, which enable them to keep a safe distance from their real desires and emotions. Those who recognize the superficiality of a life in compliance with society experience a sense of alienation from themselves and from others: they do not belong. Still, this condition is portrayed in Frisch's works as preferable to the blindness of contented conformity. Thus, what Iris Murdoch notes about Jean-Paul Sartre could be said about Frisch, too: he "prizes sincerity, the ability to see through shams, both social shams and the devices of one's own heart" (77). To sum up, in Frisch's work, individuality and depth of experience, however painful, stand above the convenience of conventionality and superficial experience.

In *Homo faber* (further *Faber*) the topic of authenticity couples with unreliable narration. The narrator, Faber, sees himself as a completely rational man only interested in work and technology. However, he is forced to reassess his self-image following a journey, both physical and mental, and to acknowledge that he has lived a self-alienated life masked by the illusion of authenticity. Furthermore, he must cope with feelings of guilt for the death of his daughter. As a way of mitigating these feelings, he does not go far enough in his interpretation of why things happened as they did. Therefore, although he manages to extricate himself from his inauthentic way of life, he fails to understand the full implications of his story.

Stiller begins where *Faber* ends: with the character narrator's awareness of his life in dissonance with his true self. The narrator, Stiller (who calls himself White), wants to achieve an authentic existence by breaking free from his past; emancipating himself, however, turns out to be a more demanding task than he expected. His efforts are wrecked by other people's unwillingness or inability to

6 "Arbeit als Tugend. Tugend als Ersatz für die Freude. Und der andere Ersatz, da die Tugend nicht ausreicht, ist das Vergnügen: Feierabend, Wochenende, das Abenteuer auf der Leinwand–"

acknowledge that he has radically changed—that he *is not Stiller*. The narrator's unreliability then stems from his inability to convince the reader that he is currently living in accordance with his authentic identity.

Apart from the topic of authenticity, Frisch's fiction, drama, and sketchbooks often thematize the impossibility of expressing oneself precisely. Stiller/White's frequently quoted remark encapsulates this feeling of verbal impotence: "I have no words for reality"[7] (72). Frisch thus emphasizes that one can only express the truth through stories, but the stories themselves are not true. This idea already appears in *Stiller*, but it culminates in *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* (further *Gantenbein*). Nothing "really" happens in the narrative, but still the truth about the narrator is conveyed by way of a detour: through fictional stories that illustrate his experience.

Frisch also thematizes the difficulty of capturing one's self and life in his autobiographical narrative, *Montauk* (1975), a work that might also raise questions of narrative unreliability. It is difficult to position the book on either side of the fictional-factual border: it combines properties of fiction and autobiography. However, mixing fact and fiction cannot be seen as evading the truth; on the contrary, this book is an attempt to mediate the author's life as sincerely as possible and simultaneously serves as a commentary on the difficulty of achieving just that. Max Frisch appears in the book in two separate roles: as the narrator and as a character called "Max Frisch," who is referred to in the third person. In this complex narrative structure, Frisch seems to prefigure recent theories of autobiography, in which autobiographical writing is considered a performative act of self-creation (cf. Smith and Watson 357). Flouting the intuition that autobiography is a reflection of a pre-existing self, *Montauk* stages the performative act of self-creation by creating a character "Max Frisch" that represents the narrator's own *I* in his memory. Rather than deceiving its readers or being unreliable, the narrative suggests that fictionalized stories might actually be a more suitable method of telling one's own story than pure autobiography. The mode of metafictional autobiography (cf. Nünning, "Metaautobiographien") thus becomes another medium for Frisch's recurring topic of the fleeting nature of reality and the impossibility of capturing people in their complexity.

A survey of the vast existing criticism on the examined authors brings an interesting contrast into view. In writings on Ishiguro the term *unreliable narrator* is commonplace, almost as if it was a duty of the critic to mention this concept when writing about this author. Indeed, Ishiguro's novel *The Unconsoled*

7 "Ich habe keine Sprache für die Wirklichkeit" (84).

is a case in point of the aforementioned overuse of the term. To my knowledge, Elke D'hoker's excellent paper "Unreliability between Mimesis and Metaphor: The Works of Kazuo Ishiguro" is the only scholarly work pointing out the significant differences in Ishiguro's narrative techniques in his first three novels, which use mimetic (though unreliable) narration, and his two subsequent works (*The Unconsoled* and *When We Were Orphans*), which use antimimetic techniques that complicate a clear judgment of the narrator as unreliable.

On the other hand, the concept of unreliable narration has been rarely applied in studies of Frisch's oeuvre. This absence, however, seems to stem from the low popularity of the concept in German literary studies rather than any fundamental difference in overall reading. Critics and scholars writing on *Faber* often hint at the implicit message under the surface of the narrator's discourse. Butler argues that "Faber's language catches him out, i.e. the discrepancy between what he says and what he thinks he says becomes increasingly evident" (106); others talk about a "tension between the objective event and subjective interpretation of the event"[8] (Jurgensen 158), "the discrepancy between the narrator and the matter"[9] (Henze 279), or the narrator's "subjective perspective"[10] (Kaiser 268). Christa Thomassen actually defines the unreliable narrator (without ever mentioning the term) in her description of the novel's impact on its readers: "We recipients perceive Walter Faber differently than he perceives himself. We do not believe everything he says. We read a 'subtext' under the text written by Faber [...]. When reading, we notice the difference between Faber's and our own perspective"[11] (45). Frisch himself has said about the protagonist of his novel: "When compared to his actions, we can see that his self-interpretation is wrong"[12] (qtd. in Schmitz 17). I could only find one instance where the narrator of *Faber* was explicitly designated unreliable: Amit Marcus, a scholar who does not have a German studies background, does so in *Self-Deception in Literature and Philosophy*. I hope to demonstrate in my interpretations of *Faber* and *Stiller*

8 "Spannung zwischen objektivem Ereignis und subjektiver Interpretation des Ereignisses"

9 "die Diskrepanz zwischen Erzähler und Stoff"

10 "subjektive Perspektive"

11 "Wir Rezipienten nehmen Walter Faber anders wahr als er sich selbst. Wir 'glauben' ihm nicht alles. Wir lesen einen 'Subtext' unter dem Text, den Faber schreibt [...]. Wir bemerken die Differenz zwischen der Sichtweise Fabers und unserer eigenen beim Lesen."

12 "Wir sehen im Vergleich zu seinen Handlungen, daß er sich falsch interpretiert."

that the concept of unreliable narration is relevant to Frisch and can bring us deeper insights into his works.

Notes on Terminology

This book examines novels that portray different kinds of fictional worlds. The term *fictional reality* is crucial in this context: I use it to designate the sum of events, states, and characters that the reader identifies as existing or happening in the world she reconstructs based on the text. The narrator's discourse may or may not be congruent with the fictional reality. For the purposes of distinguishing between different strategies of depicting the fictional reality, I introduce José Antonio Álvarez Amorós's typology of textual representations of the world. Amorós distinguishes between three types of world models. Type 1 constitutes representations of "what really happens in our real world," representations which "can be verified empirically"; this type thus only involves nonfictional texts (44). Type 2 consists of occurrences in "the domain of what is fictional but verisimilar," which means that this model's "rules are not the same as those that hold in our real world, but they are congruent with them" (44). This type of world model is typically projected by realist fiction; the fictional worlds of Ishiguro's first three novels and of Frisch's *Faber* and *Stiller* fall into this category. Type 3 comprises what occurs in the domain of the "fictional and nonverisimilar," whose rules "are not only different from those that apply in our real world, but also violate them" (44). This type of fictional world is created by *Unconsoled* and *Gantenbein*, where things incompatible with the extratextual actual world come about, such as the character narrator reading other people's minds in Ishiguro's book or a character standing for several people in Frisch's novel.[13] I use the terms *verisimilar* and *nonverisimilar* based on Amorós's classification of textual worlds. Additionally, I use the terms *unnatural* and *antimimetic* to refer to narratives and narrative strategies that give rise to nonverisimilar worlds, that is, worlds that defy the rules of the extratextual world.[14]

I call fiction that projects a verisimilar fictional world *realist*. By this term, I do not refer to the literary movement of the nineteenth century but, similarly to

13 The type of fictional world in *Orphans* cannot be classified as one of these types that easily. See chapter 2.3 for further details.

14 Cf. Richardson: "Mimetic narratives typically try to conceal their constructedness and appear to resemble nonfictional narratives, while antimimetic narratives flaunt their artificiality and break the ontological boundaries that mimetic works so carefully preserve" ("Authors" 31).

Monika Fludernik, to works that achieve a "mimetic evocation of reality both from a sociological and psychological perspective. Verisimilitude and realism in fact correlate very closely. *Realism* refers to a realistic portrayal of the fictional world in the sense that secular non-fantastic explanations can be provided for the plot and seemingly fantastic experiences are eventually explained in 'realistic' terms" (*Towards* 37). Importantly, the text itself must contain an explanation of the "seemingly fantastic experiences" in order for the work to qualify as realist. For example, Ian McEwan's short story "Dead as They Come" is realist even though its narrator seems to have a love relationship with a dummy that appears to be able to express its feelings and even have an affair with the narrator's driver. But the narrative makes it clear that the narrator only imagines this relationship; there is nothing nonrealist about the story as the narrator's point of view is contradicted by a verisimilar fictional reality, and thus the story could happen in the reader's real world. This criterion proves important in connection with novels such as *Orphans* or even *Unconsoled*, which include nonverisimilar elements that cannot be explained as a mere product of a character's mind and that make the story impossible in the real world.

In the analysed novels the narrator's bending of facts that leads to either unreliable or unnatural narration is crucial to the overall interpretation of the work. The key aspect of each narrative is not what happens but how the narrator tells what happens. In this way, the novels challenge the traditional division of narrative into story and discourse.[15] As Fludernik argues in connection with the twentieth-century novel, "Although all (post)modern texts most certainly have *discourse* reference (with or without a teller figure), what precisely (if anything) is their *story* (or plot) frequently cannot be delineated with any clarity. Events and stories are simply no longer central to the focus of what these texts are about" (*Towards* 335). This observation often applies to unreliable narration, in which the narrator's subjective view of events and what this view betrays about the narrator's state of mind often get more attention than the events of the story. As Rebecca Walkowitz contends, "[U]nlike the 'reliable' narrator, the unreliable narrator is perceived as being the story rather than merely having one" (1067). The worlds of *Unconsoled*, *Orphans*, and *Gantenbein* push the experiment even further: they merge the narrator's wishes, fears, and memories—that is, what is normally conveyed on the level of the discourse— with what actually happens in the fictional world. Consequently, such innovative narratives render an

15 See, for example, Chatman's *Story and Discourse*.

unmistakable distinction between story and discourse impossible. Both unreliable and unnatural narration illustrate the limited validity of this dichotomy.

As Dorothee Birke points out, the dichotomy between story and discourse is also connected to a distinction first proposed by Leo Spitzer—between "*erzählendes Ich* (narrating self) and *erlebendes Ich* (experiencing self)" (Birke 54). Ishiguro's and Frisch's novels often feature a narrator who recalls his earlier self—this earlier self traditionally corresponds to the experiencing self. Yet the main focus is not on the experiences of the earlier self but on the way the narrator experiences both his past and present at the time of narrating. In this sense the narrating self is simultaneously the experiencing self. For this reason I adopt Birke's terms *present self* and *past self*, her substitutes for the terms encompassed in Spitzer's division (74). However, in my interpretation of *Gantenbein*, I come back to the original dichotomy since it proves useful with respect to this novel.

Synopsis of Chapters

This book consists of three main parts: one theoretical and two analytical parts. Part 1, "Establishing Fictional Facts," deals with unreliable narration and its borders at the theoretical level. With one ambiguous exception (*Gantenbein*), all the novels examined in the analytical parts feature clearly autodiegetic narrators.[16] Therefore, the theoretical part focuses primarily on unreliable homodiegetic narrators and bordering phenomena; I discuss unreliability in heterodiegetic narration only briefly.

In chapter 1.1 I review and critically evaluate the chief approaches, developments, and controversial points in the theory of unreliable narration. I introduce and comment on the rhetorical approach, represented mainly by Wayne Booth and James Phelan, the reader-oriented theory, especially as developed by Ansgar Nünning, and the communicative model devised by Tamar Yacobi. Drawing on these approaches, I formulate the theory of unreliable narration that is used throughout this study: I consider a narrator unreliable when her account differs from an implicit version of the story that the reader identifies as fictional reality

16 I use the following terms as introduced by Gérard Genette: a *heterodiegetic* narrator is "absent from the story he tells," a *homodiegetic* narrator is "present as a character in the story he tells," and an *autodiegetic* narrator is a homodiegetic narrator who is simultaneously the main character of the story (*Narrative Discourse. An Essay* 244–45). I also use the terms *character narrator* and *narrating character* to refer to a homodiegetic narrator when discussing the narrator as a character (e.g., when examining his actions or state of mind).

on the basis of information contained in the text. The narrator's own discourse thus lets the reader infer things that the narrator is not aware of or is trying to hide from the narratee. Hence, one of the effects of unreliable narration is that the reader knows more than the narrator. The chapter further discusses potential indicators of narrative unreliability discernible in the text and various types of unreliable narrators and unreliable narration. It introduces the *self-deceived narrating character* as the type prevailing in Ishiguro's and Frisch's novels.

Chapter 1.2 contains my refined definition of unreliable narration, in which this narrative strategy is presented in light of possible-world theory, mainly as it is applied to literature in the works of Marie-Laure Ryan, Lubomír Doležel, Ruth Ronen, Thomas Pavel, and other scholars. I argue that in the modal system of an unreliable narrative's fictional world, the narrator's version of what happens corresponds to the narrator's private world that is at odds with the fictional reality (the textual actual world) of the work. With aid of this definition, I contrast unreliable narration with a related technique that is present in Ishiguro's and Frisch's later novels: narration by what I call a *world-constructing homodiegetic narrator*, in which the narrator's subjective perspective is not contradicted but blends with the fictional reality.

Chapter 1.3 introduces the notion of self-deception and selected psychoanalytical and psychological concepts that prove relevant to my analyses of the novels in parts two and three. These concepts include repression and narrative construction of identity. I also discuss research into human memory, with emphasis on the influence the remembering subject's present state of mind has on her memories of the past, and how these findings can affect our perception of unreliable narrators in fiction.

Part 2, "The Retold and Relived Identities of Kazuo Ishiguro's Narrators," comprises three chapters concentrating on novels by Ishiguro: each presents a close reading of one novel with an analysis of the narrative strategies employed and their relation to narratorial unreliability.

Chapter 2.1 deals with unreliable narration in *An Artist of the Floating World*, occasionally drawing parallels to *A Pale View of Hills* and *The Remains of the Day*. I focus on *Artist* rather than *Pale* or *Remains* because *Artist* strikes a balance between traditional and innovative use of unreliable narration. Furthermore, this novel has received considerably less treatment than *Remains*, which has become something like a model unreliable narrative. In my study of *Artist*, I look into the ways in which the narrator, Ono, tries to come to terms with both the present and the past, more specifically, with the change in his social status from a propaganda artist praised for his paintings to a nonentity with a shameful past. He does so primarily by bending the facts of his life story: he aptly selects

and omits certain parts of his past so that his story yields a favourable image of himself. Yet the text is constructed in such a way that the reader is able to put together a different picture of Ono. However, the reader's delight in her superior knowledge decreases at the end of the novel when she is faced with irreconcilable information and left without a clue as to whom to trust. I relate this uncertainty to the narrative's breaches of some traditional aspects of unreliable narration, mainly the convention that the reader can trust the mimetic components of an unreliable narrator's discourse.

Chapter 2.2 examines Ishiguro's highly experimental novel *The Unconsoled*. The analysis shows that even though the narrator's view of his life is highly idiosyncratic, the novel does not offer any alternative version to Ryder's narration. In other words, the narrator's perspective affects the fictional reality to the point that it merges with it; therefore, the narrator's state of mind is imprinted in the fictional world itself, not just in his rendering of it. As no plane of fictional reality independent of the narrator's perspective exists in the world of the novel, the reader cannot reconstruct a story contradicting the narrator's version. Therefore, *Unconsoled* transcends the borders of unreliable narration towards unnatural narration. The nonverisimilarity of the fictional world also limits the reader's use of real-world frames of reference when reconstructing this world. Only when subsequently trying to make sense of the work do we associate the weirdness of the fictional world with real-world concerns: the novel calls for a metaphorical reading.

Chapter 2.3 focuses on *When We Were Orphans*, which employs both unreliable and unnatural narration and thus amounts to a sort of synthesis of the two novels analysed in the preceding two chapters. Like each of his predecessors, the narrator, Banks, is concerned with the past, but his obsession is depicted by both mimetic and antimimetic techniques. Some constituents of the fictional reality assume the narrator's slanted perspective: these elements are determined by Banks's point of view, which is not contradicted by any other version. However, other parts of the novel represent the fictional reality in a more traditional manner: here, the conflict between Banks's account and the one implicitly contained in the text reveals him to be unreliable. The narrator's misreading of some of the events he reports lets the reader infer an image of Banks that differs from the one that he desperately tries to convey and that he believes in. In contrast to *Unconsoled*, the unnatural elements of *Orphans* do not prevent the reader from reconstructing a plane of fictional reality that contradicts the narrator's account.

Part 3, "The Invented Identities of Max Frisch's Narrators," focuses on analysing three novels by Max Frisch. Moreover, each analysis is followed by a comparative section that points out similarities and differences between the particular narrative and Ishiguro's novels discussed in part 2. I have decided against

following a chronological order—the chapter on *Homo faber* precedes the one on the earlier *Stiller*—because the use of the unreliable narrator in *Faber* is more traditional and more similar to Ishiguro's first three novels than *Stiller*. Both *Faber* and *Stiller* project a verisimilar world; for this reason, they are treated before *Gantenbein*, which is the most experimental of the three.

Chapter 3.1 is a study of unreliable narration in *Homo faber*. I pinpoint the two main causes of narrative unreliability in the novel. First, the narrator's misinterpretation of himself, which rests on his false self-image, stems from his wish to mask his avoidance of authentic emotions and experience. Second, Faber's explanation of recent developments (which involve his sexual relationship with his daughter) as a chain of coincidences is contradicted by his role in these episodes as he reports them: despite the important part coincidence played in the events, it becomes clear that Faber's unconscious motivation to achieve a more authentic existence was the decisive factor in their occurring. In order to mitigate his sense of guilt for his daughter's death, Faber self-deceivingly posits an external reason—coincidence—as the main cause of the events preceding her death. Whereas the narrator gradually abandons his false self-image and thus becomes more reliable in this respect, he remains self-deceived about the role of coincidence in his story. Thus, each aspect of the narrator's unreliability produces a different effect on the reader, who then hesitates between empathy for and estrangement from the narrator.

Chapter 3.2 deals with *Stiller* and its convoluted perspectival structure that reflects the narrator's double identity. I identify a literal and a metaphorical level of meaning in this novel. At the literal-meaning level, Stiller/White seems to be obviously unreliable as a narrator. However, a complex understanding of the work indicates that to content oneself with this judgement of the narrator would mean to misread his endeavour. We need to turn to the metaphorical meaning of the novel to shed new light on the narrator's (un)reliability. Stiller/White's struggle against the stubbornness of some of the other characters in the book and against society is likely to win him the reader's sympathy and trust. Yet I reason that some aspects of this struggle betray that Stiller/White disregards some crucial facts that make his mission impossible from the very start. To elucidate this neglect on the part of the narrator, I bring up the topic of social roles and role distance and also analyse the ways in which the text contradicts the narrator's interpretation of himself, his actions, and his surroundings. This investigation reveals that, despite the initial signs to the contrary, the narrator turns out to be unreliable even at the metaphorical-meaning level.

Chapter 3.3 examines the narrative strategy of *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*. I argue that, strictly speaking, no plane of fictional reality exists in this novel

because the narrated stories are not fictionally real but merely possible. This feature speaks against using the unreliable narrator as an interpretive strategy although the stories constituting the plot are invented by the narrator. The novel violates the rules of the extratextual world as well as literary conventions: the narrator represents a human being, yet it is he who creates the entire fictional world. Furthermore, although he stands outside of the fictional world as its creator, he also materializes within this world in the form of some of the characters that function separately from him at other times. These characters correspond to sketches of his self, and none of them is fictionally real. The narrator's occasional appearance in the fictional world and his partial loss of control over his own narration allow the reader to discern the narrator's vain attempt to escape from his habitual experience and his simultaneous desire to get to know himself better. A comparison of the attitude to reality expressed in *Gantenbein* and in *Unconsoled* then leads me to associate Frisch's and Ishiguro's experiments with literary modernism and postmodernism, respectively.

Finally, in the conclusion of the book, I review the various parallels between the individual narrators, focusing on their common feature: their self-deception concerning their self-image. I recapitulate the different methods of depicting this self-deception in the novels, once again highlighting the difference between bending facts in unreliable and unnatural narration. Further, I look into Ishiguro's and Frisch's techniques of eliciting the reader's empathy with the narrators despite the narrators' unreliability or incompatibility with real-world actualities. I also point out different reading strategies encouraged by the narrative strategies employed in the analysed novels.

Part One: Establishing Fictional Facts

It flashed on me that it was also the smile that Conchis sometimes wore; as if he sat before the head and practiced it. At the same time I realized exactly what I disliked about it. It was above all the smile of dramatic irony, of those who have privileged information.
John Fowles, *The Magus* (150)

"Sie erzählen lauter Erfindungen."
"Ich erlebe lauter Erfindungen."
Max Frisch, *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* (283)

1.1 Bending Facts in Unreliable Narration

Since its first use in 1961, the notion of the unreliable narrator has repeatedly been a subject of dispute among narratologists. It came into the centre of attention in the late 1990s and early 2000s in particular, when discussions concentrated largely on the controversial concept of the implied author. In the following, I do not attempt to solve the debate once and for all. Rather, I attempt to weigh the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches in order to arrive at a definition that can facilitate the practice of interpretation.

In this chapter I provide a brief overview of how the definition of the unreliable narrator has developed and critically examine more recent debates concerning this concept. I focus primarily on three approaches to unreliable narration that gained considerable attention around the turn of the twenty-first century—namely, the rhetorical approach represented chiefly by James Phelan, the reader-oriented (cognitive) theory exemplified by Ansgar Nünning's approach, and Tamar Yacobi's communicative model. My discussion of these approaches lays the foundation for the theory of unreliable narration that I introduce in this chapter and apply in the analyses in parts 2 and 3. In section 1.1.1 I discuss the potential textual signals of unreliable narration and thus survey the various manifestations of unreliable narration in literature. In section 1.1.2 I discuss the possibilities of classifying unreliable narration: I address the issue of the mimetic and interpretative authority of the narrator as well as unreliability in heterodiegetic narration. I also introduce the self-deceived narrating character.

The Genesis of the Controversy: Booth and Chatman

The first definition of the unreliable narrator appeared in Wayne Booth's *The Rhetoric of Fiction* in 1961: "For lack of better terms, I have called a narrator reliable when he speaks for or acts in accordance with the norms of the work (which is to say, the implied author's norms), unreliable when he does not" (158–59). In Booth's view, the implied author is the real author's "second self" or "official scribe" and the carrier of the norms proposed by the work (71). Booth employs this concept so as to distinguish the author's version relevant for a specific work from the real person who has written the text. This differentiation is necessary because different texts by the same author contain "different versions, different ideal combinations of norms [...], depending on the needs of particular works" (71). In unreliable narration "the author and reader are secretly in collusion, behind the speaker's back, agreeing upon the standard by which he is found wanting" (304). The narrator thus becomes "the butt of the ironic point" (304). However, Booth does not explain how the reader finds out about the implied author's norms: as "[t]he author may wink and nudge, but may not speak" (300), it is not clear how the author conveys the secret message to the reader or where exactly the difference between the implied author and the empirical author actually lies (cf. Kindt and Müller 58). Booth's definition was adopted by many critics in their writings on narratology (e.g., Stanzel and Prince[17]). The term *implied author* has come into wide use although some scholars have refused it altogether as unnecessary or too vaguely defined (e.g., Killham and Nünning[18]) or have tried to modify its definition in order to reconcile some of the concept's paradoxes (e.g., Diengott and Rimmon-Kenan[19]).

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17 See Prince, whose definition of the unreliable narrator is taken from Booth (101), and Stanzel, who, adopting Booth's definition, does mention the potential impossibility of determining the implied author's norms but does not elaborate on this topic (201). Cf. also Riggan on Fowles's *The Collector*: "that projection of [Fowles] which implicitly informs the novel with a set of values contradictory to Clegg's and more approaching normalcy, namely the implied author of the work" (5).

18 Cf. Killham's radical refusal of the concept: "[W]hat cannot be admitted is that there is such a creature as an implied author. The term must be utterly banished and extinguished, exorcized from the house of criticism by constant repetition of the single statement that every work has or had a real (flesh and blood) author" (280). I discuss Nünning's suggestion later in this chapter. Cf. also Genette, *Narrative Discourse Revisited* 135–54.

19 These two scholars regard the implied author as a textual phenomenon and refuse the connection to the empirical author. Cf. Rimmon-Kenan, who states that the implied author is "a construct inferred and assembled by the reader from all the components

Seymour Chatman is one of the well-known scholars who have dealt with the unreliable narrator on the theoretical level; Chatman draws on Booth's theory and uses Booth's term *implied author*. In *Story and Discourse* Chatman presents a narrative communication diagram consisting of the real author, the implied author, and the narrator on the sender side and the narratee, the implied reader, and the real reader on the receiving side (151). The real author and the real reader stand outside the narrative; the implied reader is "the audience presupposed by the narrative itself" (150). According to Chatman, a text featuring an unreliable narrator contains two messages: an implicit, credible one (transmitted from the implied author to the implied reader) and a direct one that is not to be taken at face value (transmitted by the narrator) (233–34). In these kinds of texts "[t]he implied author has established a secret communication with the implied reader" and indirectly conveys to the implied reader information that differs from the narrator's version and thus discloses the narrator's unreliability (233).

However, as Ansgar Nünning argues in his article calling for the elimination of the implied author, this concept is not defined consistently and logically in Chatman's theory ("Deconstructing" 99–104). At one point Chatman argues that the implied author "has no voice, no direct means of communicating" (*Story* 148). How then can the implied author "establish a secret communication with the implied reader" if "it"[20] is not capable of voicing "its" views? Chatman explains this by equating the views of the implied author with "the design of the whole" (*Story* 148) or "the text itself" (*Coming* 85). Yet he also ascribes to the implied author the function of "put[ting] into the narrator's mouth the language that tells or shows" (*Coming* 85). Consequently, the implied author seems to be paradoxically "both the originator of the text" (and inventor of the narrator) and the text itself (Nünning, "Deconstructing" 97).

Furthermore, if the implied author is the equivalent of the text itself, then the concept loses its utility: one could just as well talk about the text, as indeed Chatman concedes in his later book *Coming to Terms*:

> For readers who feel uncomfortable about using the term "implied author" to refer to this concept, I am perfectly willing to substitute the phrase "text implication" or "text instance" or "text design" or even simply "text intent"—always on the understanding that

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of the text" (87), and Diengott, who claims that the implied author "is definitely not an agent in narrative transmission" ("The Implied" 73). Cf. also Diengott, "Reliability." These ideas roughly correspond to Ansgar Nünning's suggestion to substitute the implied author with the textual whole, discussed below.

20 Chatman shifts in referring to the implied author from *he* to *it* (*Story* 148).

> "intent" is used to mean not what was in the mind of the real author bent over a desk but what is *in* the text. (86)

Moreover, Chatman sees the implied author as being "reconstructed by the reader from the narrative" (148). Particularly in *Coming to Terms* does he explicitly distance himself from Booth's notion of the implied author as the real author's second self and endorses "the anti-intentionalist view that a published text *is* in fact a self-existing thing" (81). In his approach the implied author corresponds to the intent of the text. It is the reader who creates the meaning of the text by reconstructing its intent (81–82). Furthermore, Chatman alternates between the terms *implied author* and *inferred author*, suggesting that this entity is projected by the reader (84). In Chatman's version the term implied author ceases to be connected with authorial intentions, and thus his theory of narratorial unreliability is rendered closer to Nünning's cognitive approach than it might seem merely on the basis of their different terminology.[21]

Looking for the Yardstick: Recent Theories

The implied author—and its use in the theory of unreliable narration—has recently been a much-debated topic. The debate primarily involves two approaches: the rhetorical approach and the reader-oriented approach, also called the cognitive approach. The rhetorical stream of criticism consists largely of Booth's followers and conceives of literature as a form of communication from the author to the reader. If a reader is able to detect the meaning inserted into a text by an author, this reader has interpreted the text correctly. By contrast, reader-oriented theorists see literary texts as works of art independent of their authors that are open to diverse interpretations on the part of the recipients; these theorists regard the indeterminacy of texts as one of the charms of literature. In this latter approach individual flesh-and-blood readers become, through their interpretative activity, co-creators of the meaning of the text. While the former approach attempts to restrain readers' interpretations by ruling out arbitrary readings that do not adhere to the text and promotes the ideal of writers and readers sharing meanings, the latter approach reflects the range of possible interpretations and the impossibility of verifying the correctness of one's reading. This diversity becomes especially visible when examining some literary works that have, famously, been subject to irreconcilable readings by various readers, such as Henry

21 As will be shown later, Greta Olson discusses in her article on unreliability similarities between Nünning's and Booth's models, arguing that Nünning "ignores the structural similarities between his and Booth's models" (93).

James's *The Turn of the Screw* or Leo Tolstoy's *The Kreutzer Sonata* (cf. Yacobi, "Authorial"). For critics to welcome a plurality of interpretations also reflects the epistemological uncertainty typical of postmodernity and postmodernism.[22]

The Rhetorical Approach

The scholars representing the rhetorical approach to literature[23] distinguish between four to five different types of audiences.[24] The *authorial audience* is one such type, and it corresponds to the ideal reader who understands the work as intended by the author (and hence interprets the work correctly); the aim of "the flesh and blood or actual reader" is to become a member of the authorial audience (Phelan, "Rhetoric/ethics" 210; Phelan and Martin 108). The implied author communicates a message to the reader, more specifically to the ideal reader or the authorial audience. In unreliable narration this message differs from the narrator's statements. In *Living to Tell About It* James Phelan redefines the implied author as "*a streamlined version of the real author, an actual or purported subset of the real author's capacities, traits, attitudes, beliefs, values, and other properties that play an active role in the construction of the particular text*," where "'streamlined' indicates that the implied author is a partial representation of the real author and 'version' indicates that the implied author is a construction by the real

22 The phenomenon of unreliable narration actually highlights this impossibility of finding out the incontestable truth, especially in works in which both the narrator and the reader fail to arrive at the one correct version of the story (such as, Graham Swift's novels *Waterland*, *Ever After*, and *Shuttlecock*, among many other contemporary works). See Zerweck, "Boy" 252. See also chapter 1.3 of this book.

23 I use the term *rhetorical* to refer to the approach operating with the concept of the implied author (Phelan; Booth). See Martens for a modified rhetorical theory focusing on stylistic features of the discourse rather than authorial intention.

24 The distinction between various types of audiences is introduced by Peter J. Rabinowitz. He distinguishes between four basic audience types: the *actual audience* (flesh-and-blood readers), the *authorial audience* (the hypothetical audience for which the author designs the work), the *narrative audience* (the imaginary audience for which the narrator writes and whose role the reader assumes to follow the narrative), and the *ideal narrative audience* (the imaginary audience that believes everything the narrator says) (126–34). To understand a work, according to Rabinowitz, the reader should try to become a member of the authorial audience (126). Phelan adds one more type of audience to this model, the *narratee*. This term stands for "the audience addressed by the narrator" as opposed to the narrative audience that involves the "observer position" of the real reader in the fictional world (resulting in the reader's pretended belief that the characters and events of the narrative are real) (Phelan, "Rhetorics/Ethics" 210).

author" (45). Therefore, "a continuity without identity between the real and the implied author" (Nünning, "Reconceptualizing" 99) exists.

In a recent article Booth, endorsing Phelan, argues that real authors create implied authors (they can be and usually are different in individual texts by the same writer) in that real authors "wipe out those selves that [they] don't like, or that seem inappropriate" ("Resurrection" 77). In other words, the implied author is consciously created by the real author. This supposition seems to support the view of those critics of the implied author who point out that this concept offers an opportunity to take the author into account and at the same time avoid accusations of falling into the trap of the intentional fallacy (cf. Kindt and Müller 73; Killham 279–80). Phelan does not try to hide this fact: he sees "[a]uthorial intention (as realized in textual phenomena) as an important component of interpretation" (*Living* 47). One could object that what is "realized in textual phenomena" cannot be safely claimed to be the author's intention; it could just as well be an unintended effect of the author's writing. An inspection of Phelan's point that "because the implied author is a version of a real author, an implied author has a version of the real author's unconscious" reveals that he actually suggests that not even the author necessarily knows what meaning she puts into the text and why (47). This conclusion seems to speak against the use of the implied author (and authorial intention) in interpretation: If the author herself might not be aware of the properties of her "second self," then how can readers claim to be reconstructing it?

Phelan's redefinition of the concept of the implied author has removed some of its earlier ambiguity, but the paradox of the implied author being a projection by the reader and simultaneously a part of the author guiding the reader's interpretation remains. In *Living to Tell About It* Phelan uses *Angela's Ashes*, an autobiographical novel by Frank McCourt, as an example to prove the existence of the implied author. Phelan recognizes that in this memoir McCourt as the author does not directly communicate with the reader but that the story is told via a mediator: "Rather than speaking in his own voice at the time of the telling, McCourt uses the historical present tense and speaks in the voice of his former self, whom I call Frankie, at the time of the action" (67). In a quoted extract Frankie discloses his belief that his and his mates' prayers influenced the deaths of the members of his friend Mickey's family. Frankie fails to be touched by this dreadful series of losses; instead, he emphasizes the advantages he can gain from these deaths (Phelan, *Living* 69–70). Phelan presents his interpretation of the passage, an interpretation that is inevitably influenced by his own understanding of the world and his own system of norms, and then equates it with the implied author's stance. For example, he concludes that "[w]here Frankie clings to the

concepts of days off from school [after a member of the family has deceased] and getting taught a lesson [i.e., Mickey dies during the summer holidays, and thus Frankie does not get a week off school], McCourt and his audience recognize that Mickey's death renders these concepts irrelevant" (70–71). In short, Phelan sees in the text a "juxtaposition of Frankie's explicit interpretations and evaluations and McCourt's implicit ones" (71). How can Phelan know what McCourt's implicit interpretations and evaluations are? He assumes them from the text, using his own general knowledge: hence, although Phelan passes them off as McCourt's, these interpretations and evaluations are the result of his own interpretative activity.[25]

Dan Shen and Dejin Xu draw attention to the "would" in Phelan's claim that "a character narrator is 'unreliable' when he or she offers an account of some event, person, thought, thing, or other object in the narrative world that deviates from the account the implied author *would* offer" (Phelan, *Living* 49; emphasis added). Shen and Xu rightly argue:

> [I]n homodiegetic narration, the text only contains the first-person narrator's account, and [...] what the implied author "would" offer can only be a matter of readers' inference and judgment. [...] Accordingly, if different readers or critics, each claiming or assuming to be in the position of the "implied" or "authorial" audience, come up with divergent readings, the case would become problematic for the rhetorical stance, since presumably there is only one. (51)

The objective meaning rhetorical narratologists strive for can be marred by the fact that a certain degree of subjectivity is always present in interpretation and that there is no way of proving the correctness of one's reading.

Furthermore, Booth admits that "[o]f course the IA [implied author] I recreate by reading the text *now* is not identical with the IA I would have recreated 40 or 20 years ago" ("Resurrection" 86). This assertion contains an implicit acknowledgement that it is the reader who constructs the implied author and that, although this is supposed to happen by discovering the self the real author has implanted into the text, different readers can create different implied authors based on their own experience and knowledge. In this context Booth's claim that "we recreate the work as intended" implies that he postulates himself as one who is able to decipher the correct meaning of the text as encoded by the author,

25 Cf. David Herman, who rejects the concepts of the implied author and implied reader as "a reification or hypostatization of what is better characterized as a stage in an inferential process" (50).

discarding other interpretations as misreadings ("Resurrection" 86).[26] However, he cannot prove in any way that he is right. The problematic point of the rhetorical approach, therefore, lies in its claim that there exists an objective meaning of literary works, which is incongruous with the impossibility of verifying the correctness of the meaning.

The Reader-Oriented Approach

In the edited volume *Unreliable Narration: Studien zur Theorie und Praxis unglaubwürdigen Erzählens in der englischsprachigen Erzählliteratur* (1998), Nünning's research group[27] responds to the widespread uncritical adoption of Booth's definition of the unreliable narrator by introducing a reader-oriented theory. This reconceptualization of the concept shifts the principle for assessing the narrator's reliability from the implied author to the actual reader and explains unreliable narration as an interpretative strategy rather than a text-immanent feature: "[A]n unreliable narrator is to be understood as a projection of the reader, who in this way eliminates the discrepancies within the text and between the fictional world and his own model of reality"[28] (Nünning, "*Unreliable Narration*" 5). According to this conception, assessing the narrator as unreliable is an interpretative move the reader employs (as one of more available options) to account for incongruities in the narrative.

This approach works with the "naturalization" process readers employ in reading literature as described by Jonathan Culler in his *Structuralist Poetics*. Culler reasons that if a literary work is to communicate a message to the reader, the reader has to make the text understandable to himself: "The strange, the

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26 Similarly, Phelan in his article on types of unreliability associated with *Lolita* writes that certain groups of readers of the novel "seem to me to be misreading" it ("Estranging" 236). Then he concludes that "both Nabokov and his readers bear some responsibility for the misreadings, just as both bear some responsibility for the more successful communication" (236). This not only reflects the conviction of rhetorical-approach scholars that one can determine a correct interpretation but also highlights the fact that these critics regard literature as communication between the flesh-and-blood author and the flesh-and-blood reader and consider ambiguity of meaning a failure, unless intended by the author. The cognitive approach, on the other hand, accepts plurality of readings as one of the specifics of literature.

27 To name but a few, Bruno Zerweck, Manfred Jahn, Gaby Allrath, and Vera Nünning collaborated with Ansgar Nünning on the project.

28 "[E]in *unreliable narrator* [ist] als eine Projektion des Lesers zu verstehen [...], der Widersprüche innerhalb des Textes und zwischen dem [sic] fiktiven Welt des Textes und seinem eigenen Wirklichkeitsmodell auf diese Weise auflöst"

formal, the fictional, must be recuperated or naturalized, brought within our ken, if we do not want to remain gaping before monumental inscriptions" (134). The reader naturalizes a text in that he "bring[s] it into relation with a type of discourse or model which is already, in some sense, natural and legible" (138). In other words, the reader applies his own knowledge, attitudes, and experience to the text and interprets the text's input in this context. Thus, the reader connects the fictional with the ordinary to form an interpretative strategy that helps him make sense of the given literary work (144).

As Fludernik points out, this process resembles how people make sense of situations that they encounter in their lives: "Readers actively construct meanings and impose frames on their interpretations of texts just as people have to interpret real-life experience in terms of available schemata" (*Towards* 12). In the case of unreliable narration, the reader deals with "disharmony in the text by way of positing an unreliable narrator and thereby attributing textual inconsistencies to the mediator's unreliability" (Zerweck, "Historicizing" 154). Differences in the narrator's and the reader's views of the story and the narrator's account are naturalized in that "the reader constructs the narrator as a scapegoat responsible for that incompatibility" (Fludernik, "Defining" 75). The unreliable narrator hence corresponds to a means of explaining inconsistencies in the text.

Although the reader-oriented theory postulates that the reader is the decisive factor in assigning unreliability to a narrator, it also imposes restrictions on this interpretation: the text must contain certain features that lead the reader to conceive of the narrator as unreliable. One of the conditions of unreliable narration is considered to be a humanlike personalized narrator; the reader can thus apply her real-life knowledge when assessing such a narrator: "[O]therwise there is no (fictional) cognitive center to which unreliability can be attributed" (Zerweck, "Historicizing" 156). Another important condition, as Bruno Zerweck points out, is "the unintentional self-incrimination of the personalized narrator" (155). This implies that in unreliable narration two versions of the story are present: one on the surface, which the narrator presents directly, and one that he reveals inadvertently (Nünning, "*Unreliable Narration*" 6). Narrators "unintentionally give themselves away" through indirect information, such as various contradictions and inconsistencies (Zerweck, "Historicizing" 155). In this way, they provide clues that throw suspicion on the veracity of their account. Such self-revelation leads to the reader having an "aha experience"[29] upon realizing the unreliability (Fludernik, "*Unreliability*" 40). Nünning presents a list of the textual

29 "Aha-Erlebnis"

signals of unreliable narration—clues that help the reader detect unreliability.[30] Therefore, there are, according to Nünning and his team, potential indicators of the narrator's unreliability planted in the text, and whether the narration will be considered unreliable or not depends on the way the reader naturalizes the inconsistencies evoked by these signals.

Put differently, the reader's judgement of the narrator's reliability depends on the interaction of the textual signals with "the contextual information available to the reader" (Zerweck, "Historicizing" 153). Nünning divides the contextual frameworks of the reader into two general groups: real-world frames and literary frames ("*Unreliable Narration*" 30–31). Real-world frames comprise readers' general knowledge about the world and their conception of reality—that is, the way they define what is real, natural, and normal. In addition, other real-world frames encompass readers' individual norms, values, and moral and ethical standards as well as those shared in the society in which they live, and the psychological theories they take into consideration (which define, for instance, what is seen as normal and what is seen as insane). According to Nünning, literary frames (taken as a whole) amount to literary competence[31] ("*Unreliable Narration*" 30). This set of frames includes readers' knowledge of literary and genre conventions and their familiarity with other literary works and established character types. Readers' knowledge of these conventions influences their choice of a certain interpretative strategy, but it also enables them to spot deviations from usual practices (for example, in a particular genre). The knowledge of other literary works helps them recognize possible allusions and intertextual devices in the text.

These frames direct the way the reader naturalizes the textual signals of unreliability, and therefore they play a role in the reader's decision of whether to consider the narrator unreliable and to what extent, or to employ a different interpretive strategy. Accordingly, different readers might render different interpretations of the same text. As some real-world frames tend to be shared by a majority of people with a common cultural background, their way of naturalizing a text is likely to be similar. Thus, proponents of the reader-oriented theory are led to claim that unreliable narration is determined by the cultural and historical context of the reader (rather than that of the author or the work itself) (Zerweck, "Historicizing" 157).[32] In other words, since narrative unreliability is

30 I deal with the potential signals of unreliable narration in section 1.1.1.

31 The notion of literary competence was originally proposed by Culler in *Structuralist Poetics* (131–52).

32 Paradoxically, Vera Nünning, in her paper originally published in Ansgar Nünning's volume (the paper was reprinted in English in 2004), while intending to support this

seen as the result of the reception of a specific text, it is also regarded as variable from period to period and from culture to culture.

Although Nünning considers his theory of unreliable narration to be radically opposed to Booth's view, Greta Olson has pointed out that these two scholars' approaches are in fact rather similar. Both use a tripartite structure of different points of view. In Booth's version the three elements are the narrator, the implied author, and the reader; in Nünning's approach the narrator and the reader remain, but he proposes "the fictional world created by the totality of textual signals" as the third constituent (Olson 99). For unreliability to be detected, in Booth's model the reader must find "divergences of value, opinion, perception, and forms of expression between the narrator and the implied author," or in Nünning's theory between the narrator and "the fictional world created by the totality of textual signals" (Olson 99). Consequently, these two theories differ mainly in their assumptions about whether one can objectively identify the narrator as unreliable: whereas Booth considers unreliability unambiguously ascertainable in the text, Nünning's model proposes that assigning unreliability is a subjective decision that depends on the textual clues as construed by individual readers (Olson 99).

Besides making this comparison, Olson points to an inconsistency in Nünning's approach: "the paradoxical moment in Nünning's argument" (Olson 97). Nünning's list of textual signals of unreliable narration contradicts his belief that unreliability is not immanent in the text but a reading strategy: "[I]f detecting unreliability functions as a quality of individual reader response, how can stable textual signals exist to typify the phenomenon of unreliability?" (97).[33] Yet this incongruity can also be seen as a merely formal deficiency: the enumerated signals only constitute the likely or possible triggers for the reader's suspicion about the narrator's unreliability—they are not absolute indicators—and therefore the term *signals* might be misleading. For example, a work can include many reader addresses without affecting the narrator's reliability and without signalling unreliability even though reader addresses are listed as textual signals. Therefore, it remains

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assumption, actually reprimands critics for using their own norms as the yardstick of unreliable narration: "A responsible use of the concept of unreliable narration should, therefore, be based on the value systems prevalent at the time in which a text was written" (246).

33 Nünning's list of literary works containing an unreliable narrator at the end of the edited volume *Unreliable Narration: Studien zur Theorie und Praxis unglaubwürdigen Erzählens in der englischsprachigen Erzähllliteratur* presents a similar case of incompatibility with the proposed ideas.

true that Nünning's model posits unreliability not as inherent in the text but as emerging on the level of the reader's interaction with the text.

Olson's comparison of Booth's and Nünning's theories can be linked with my earlier exposition of Chatman's notion of the implied author and its function in unreliable narration as not dissimilar from Nünning's concept of the structural whole. Therefore, whether the term *implied author* is used or not is less important than the way in which one actually recognizes the narrator's (un)reliability and this concept's demarcation from other phenomena.[34] Neither Booth's nor Nünning's models offer a solution to this problem. Booth regards the implied author as a sufficient point of reference for narratorial unreliability and does not take into account the potential difficulties in arriving at the implied author's norms. Nünning, on the other hand, describes the process of how readers naturalize texts but fails to pinpoint the decisive factors involved in judging the narrator as reliable or unreliable.

The Question of the Reader's Norms

Nünning proposes substituting the concept of the implied author with the textual whole as the guideline for interpretation ("Deconstructing" 110). This textual whole, which he calls *Level N3*, encompasses the literary work and its structure: "[T]he characteristics of this structural level cannot be found in a particular place in the text but are immanent in the novel as a whole" (112).[35] Following this reconceptualization, Nünning sees the device of the unreliable narrator as a result of dramatic irony in prose, which involves "a contrast between the narrator's view of the fictional world and the contrary state of affairs which the reader can grasp" (Nünning, "Unreliable, Compared" 58–59).[36] However, this "state of affairs which the reader can grasp" is not only inferred from the text but is also

34 Furthermore, I endorse Susan Lanser's view that "the implied author is essentially a matter of belief" as its "existence is the effect of particular reading practices in which some but not all readers believe and engage" ("(Im)plying" 154–55).

35 Nünning's structural whole resembles Benjamin Harshaw Hrushovski's concept of the "*Internal Field of Reference* (IFR)," which is "a whole network of interrelated referents of various kinds: characters, events, situations, ideas, dialogues, etc. The language of the text contributes to the establishment of this Internal Field and refers to it at the same time" (230). As "the text is not identical to the IFR," it is possible to judge the potential deviations of the narrator's discourse from what is true in the IFR (235).

36 Cf. Manfred Pfister's description of dramatic irony in drama: "[D]ramatic irony arises from the discrepancy between the figure's intended meaning and the actual interpretation of it by the audience" (57).

influenced by the reader's contextual frameworks described above. As a consequence, in Nünning's theory "unreliable narrators are those whose perspective is in contradiction to the value and norm system of the whole text *or to that of the reader*" ("Unreliable, Compared" 59; emphasis added). This claim partly abandons the role of the textual whole in unreliable narration as it posits the divergence in the narrator's and the reader's norms as sufficient for the narrator to be determined unreliable.

As a result, the reader-oriented approach seems to be overestimating the significance of the reader's participation in unreliable narration. Using *Lolita* as an example, Nünning supports his argument that the reader's norms determine the narrator's (un)reliability by stating that a paedophile will not find the narrator unreliable ("Unreliable, Compared" 61). This statement is rendered invalid if we insist that a condition for unreliability is a conflict of the narrator's perspective with the message of the whole text as the reader constructs it.

It is true, though, that in some cases the norms and other frameworks of the reader are crucial to the process of constructing the concealed message. For example, the reader of Ring Lardner's short story "Haircut" detects the narrator's perspective as fallible if the reader does not share the narrator's enthusiasm about the described character of Jim—that is, if the reader has a different notion of a person who "certainly was a character" (24). The brief anecdotes that the narrator tells to picture Jim as a funny and amiable person will then have an opposite effect on the reader. The following incident involving Jim's wife, who has tried to spend some money on their children before Jim has had the time to waste it all on gin, is an example: "They was a time when she would go to whoever [Jim] was workin' for and ask them to give her his wages, but after she done this once or twice, he beat her to it by borrowin' most of his pay in advance. He told it all around town, how he had outfoxed his Missus. He certainly was a caution!" (25). The reader is likely to sympathize with Jim's wife rather than with Jim, thus disagreeing with the narrator's point of view. In other words, the reader's interpretation of the reported situations differs from the narrator's evaluation of them. The reported actions of the other characters in the story do not conflict with the fictional world that has been reconstructed according to the reader's norms and ideas on how the world works. Therefore, most readers will perceive the discordance between the narrator's characterization of Jim and the description of Jim's actions. The narrator's unreliability is then confirmed by the reader's superior knowledge that develops at the end of the story when the narrator fails to recognize the purposefulness in one of the character's act of shooting Jim. The narrator believes that "it was a plain case of accidental shooting" while the reader knows otherwise (33).

Likewise, in Edgar Alan Poe's short story "The Tell-Tale Heart," the narrator's unreliability stems from the incompatibility of his insistence on his own sanity and the description of his actions (together with verbal markers of madness), which will be perceived by most readers on the basis of their notion of sanity.[37] However, the narrator's unreliability is not based on the fact that he holds the values of a murderer and that these differ from the reader's normative system. As he does not deny his deed, the narrator does not contradict the version of the fictional world that the reader constructs: his being a murderer alone thus does not make him an unreliable narrator. Therefore, as Birke puts it:

> [A] narrator who confronts us with a (according to our own standards) morally dubious version of events can only be called unreliable if we perceive other factors *within the novel* (including the novel's "moral universe" which is of course always to a degree constructed according to the reader's own norms and values) which question the validity of his or her stance. (81)

To sum up, the readers' frames of reference might influence their reconstruction of the fictional world of the text but as such are not a sufficient criterion of narratorial unreliability.

In the case of *Lolita*, the situation is somewhat different. When the narrator Humbert Humbert explains his theory of nymphets, he does not openly say that he is talking about paedophilia. He does not, however, withhold the fact that "bewitched travelers" share many common features with paedophiles although he does not explicitly speak about this connection:

> *Between the age limits of nine and fourteen* there occur maidens who, to certain bewitched travellers, *twice or many times older than they*, reveal their true nature [...]. [T]*here must be a gap of several years, never less than ten* I should say, and as many as ninety in a few known cases, between maiden and man to enable the latter to come under a nymphet's spell. It is a question [...] of a certain distance that [...] the mind perceives with a gasp of *perverse delight*. (16–17; emphasis added)

Humbert may be reliably describing his feelings towards young girls. That this attitude is unacceptable in terms of most readers' moral standards makes him a morally flawed character but not necessarily an unreliable narrator. The unreliability of Humbert the narrator stems mainly from the contradictions in his story, especially, as Ronny Bläss argues, from his mistaken beliefs about Dolores's feelings. Bläss observes

37 Another signal of the narrator's unreliability is the contrast between his conviction that he can hear the heart beating and the officers' lack of action.

> a discrepancy between the repeatedly verbalized intention to provide Dolores, alias Lolita, with a superb life [...], the assurances that they had spent a wonderful time together [...], and his erroneous belief that he is a talented father and tutor [...] on the one hand, and the actual situation, in which we meet Dolores as an intimidated, abused, and exploited child.[38] (223)

An attentive reader will detect this contradiction in the story regardless of whether or not the reader is a paedophile.

The narrator of Patrick McGrath's *The Grotesque* can serve as another example. Most readers will probably not share Sir Hugo's system of norms, which manifests itself mainly in his recklessness towards other people's feelings. Yet Hugo's unreliability does not stem from differences between his and the reader's norms but from the discrepancies in his discourse. Hugo, paralyzed and unable to communicate with his surroundings, narrates the events that followed the disappearance of his daughter's boyfriend, Sidney, and describes the circumstances of his own domestic life and paleontological work. He seems to be convinced that Sidney was murdered by Hugo's butler, Fledge, whom he portrays in a very negative light. He suspects Fledge of homosexuality and at the same time of carrying on a passionate affair with his wife, Harriet. Furthermore, although Hugo denies any erotic desire on his part for Doris Fledge, the butler's wife, this denial is contradicted by his erotic dream and by his later advances towards her. In addition, as Heinz Antor points out, "Hugo's attempt at placing himself within a certain scientific tradition," namely Darwinism, contrasts with his aversion to the unknown (374–75). Again, a perceptive reader will notice these inconsistencies regardless of whether she diverges from or shares the norms of the narrator.

Similarly, the reader probably does not question the narrator's reliability in Alan Sillitoe's *The Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner* or in Jeannette Winterson's *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* even if the reader disagrees with the narrator Smith's attitude to life and law in the former or with the narrator Jeanette's fusion of religiousness and homosexuality in the latter. Reliability is not in doubt because there are no indicators in the texts themselves that contradict the narrators' viewpoints. In short, if one of the narrating character's personal traits is

38 "Diskrepanz zwischen dem immer wieder verbalisierten Vorsatz, Dolores alias Lolita ein großartiges Leben zu bieten [...], den Beteuerungen, sie hätten eine wundervolle Zeit miteinander verbracht [...], und seinem Irrglauben, er sei ein talentierter Vater und Erzieher [...] auf der einen Seite, und der tatsächlichen Situation, in der uns Dolores als ein verängstigtes, misshandeltes und ausgenutztes Kind begegnet."

unreliability or if the reader disagrees with the narrator's norms, this does not automatically entail narratorial unreliability.[39]

Nünning replies to the criticism levelled at his theory (particularly by Phelan) by attempting a synthesis of the cognitive and rhetorical approaches in his paper "Reconceptualizing Unreliable Narration: Synthesizing Cognitive and Rhetorical Approaches." He admits that the cognitive theory of unreliable narration does not pay enough attention to the restrictions on interpretation posed by the text and exaggerates the reader's share in creating the meaning of the text, more specifically in determining the narrator's (un)reliability. Nünning widens his original theory in that he claims that "[t]he concept of unreliable narration presupposes the existence of a constructive agent who builds into the text explicit signals and tacit assumptions for the authorial or hypothetical ideal audience in order to draw readers' attention to an unreliable narrator's unwitting self-exposure or unintentional betrayal of personal shortcomings" ("Reconceptualizing" 100). In other words, his new approach indicates that the narrator's unreliability is the result of someone's conscious action. He leaves open whether this "constructive agent" amounts to the implied author or the real author ("Reconceptualizing" 100).

Nünning's attempt at synthesising the two approaches is unsuccessful. As Shen and Xu point out, "the two approaches are essentially incompatible [...], and any attempt to synthesize them is bound to favor one at the expense of the other" (54). In Nünning's modified theory the rhetorical approach is favoured as can be seen in his analysis of McEwan's short story "Dead as They Come." The analysis follows the explication of first the cognitive and then the rhetoric stance—and these two descriptions appear to be juxtaposed rather than synthesized. This failure at synthesis manifests itself, for instance, in the following argument: "Right from the very beginning the implied author leaves the reader in no doubt that the narrator's view of the world is radically separated from any sane reader's world-knowledge" (Nünning, "Reconceptualizing" 101). This claim is incompatible with Nünning's previous criticism of scholars' presuppositions of a universal standard of normalcy (96).

Moreover, Nünning's analysis of McEwan's short story does not make clear why the concept of the implied author is important for interpreting the work. In the short story the narrator recounts his "relationship" with a dummy that he has taken home from a shop and that he calls Helen. He talks about the dummy

39 Cf. Fludernik's comment that "readers [are not] necessarily constrained to reject a narrator's ideological stance even if they disagree with it and believe in incompatible philosophical world views" ("Defining" 77).

as if she were alive; later he even suspects her of having an affair with his driver, and in the end he "kills" her. His idiosyncratic world-view is gradually revealed; he also provides implicit self-characterization that does not always accord with his explicitly expressed ideas about himself. Nünning sees the narrator's unreliability as a result of "the discrepancy between the highly unusual intentions and questionable value system of the narrator and the general world-knowledge, values, and norms of the average reader" combined with textual signals of unreliability put into the text by the implied author ("Reconceptualizing" 102). For example, he says that the narrator reliably describes how the shop assistants react to his wish to buy the dummy,[40] "but he completely fails to interpret [their reaction] correctly"[41] (103). Nünning presents this incident as evidence that "the implied author has furnished the story with many [...] textual signals of unreliability" (103). Yet it can just as well be said that recognizing the gap between the narrator's report and commentary results from the reader's different interpretation of the situation, based on his general knowledge of the world and standards of normalcy.

Nünning further asserts that "[r]hetorical approaches to narrative remind us that the projection of an unreliable narrator, far from being hit or miss, presupposes the existence of a creative agent who furnishes the text and the narrator with a wide range of explicit signals and inference invitations in order to draw readers' attention to a narrator's unwitting self-exposure and unreliability" ("Reconceptualizing" 104). However, Nünning does not offer a convincing reason why this creator is the implied author rather than the real author. Nor does he explain how this creative agent guides the reader's interpretation of the narrator to prevent this interpretation from "being hit or miss." The reader does not have access to the author's mind at the time of writing the text and cannot know what the author's intentions were or to what degree the author succeeded in projecting her intentions into the text. Therefore, the implied author or author that the reader might use as a gauge of (un)reliability does not correspond to the real creator of the text but rather to the creator as inferred by the reader on the basis of the text—which brings us back to the textual whole as a criterion of unreliable narration. Nevertheless, I will come back to the reader's assumptions of the author's intentions both in the explication of Yacobi's theory that follows and in my own approach afterwards.

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40 "They smiled, they glanced at each other. They risked glancing into my eyes" (McEwan, "Dead" 65).

41 "They lived through the thrill of a birthday surprise. [...] What a kind husband was this! They became, each one, my wife" (McEwan, "Dead" 65).

Yacobi's Communicative Model

Tamar Yacobi is another scholar whose views concerning the unreliable narrator have become well-known. Her approach employs the implied author as a participant in literary communication but at the same time views unreliable narration as an interpretative strategy. Yacobi regards the unreliable narrator as one of "a wide variety of reconciling and integrating measures" that the reader can apply when confronted with inconsistencies in the text ("Fictional" 114). Unreliability is thus not a fixed feature of the narrator but one of the possible strategies the reader can use to make sense of the text (120–21): Yacobi argues strongly against making any stereotyped linkage between (un)reliability and other features of the narrator, such as assumed connections between homodiegesis and unreliability or between omniscience and reliability ("Package" 225).

Yacobi names five integration mechanisms that the reader can employ to make sense of a text: the genetic, the generic, the existential, the functional, and the perspectival. The genetic principle attributes textual inconsistencies to "the production of the text" ("Authorial" 111), especially to the author of the work (who is seen as mistaken or diverging in his world-view from the standard, such as the Marquis de Sade) ("Fictional" 114). The generic principle regards incongruities as a result of a text pertaining to a certain genre (for example, the contradictory nature of the figure of Gulliver in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* can be resolved as a function of satire) ("Fictional" 115–16). The existential principle, which often operates together with one of the other mechanisms, "refers incongruities to the level of the fictive world, notably to canons of probability that deviate from those of reality" ("Authorial" 110). Thus, Kafka's "Metamorphosis" presents a world in which it is possible for a person to turn into an insect ("Fictional" 116–17). The functional principle sees inconsistencies as induced by "[t]he work's aesthetic, thematic and persuasive goals," such as Oscar's successful refusal to grow in Günter Grass's *The Tin Drum* ("Fictional" 118).[42]

Finally, the perspectival principle corresponds to an assumption of an unreliable narrator, which helps the reader reconcile incongruities by "attributing them, in whole or in part, to the peculiarities and circumstances of the observer through whom the world is to be refracted" ("Fictional" 118). According to this last principle, the reader's interpretation of a text incorporates the supposition of "the existence of an implied (and by definition reliable) author who manipulates his creature [the narrator] for his own purposes" (Yacobi, "Fictional" 123). This

42 For a thorough analysis and criticism of Yacobi's system, see Diengott, "Reliability."

assumption illustrates Yacobi's view of literature as a communicative act between the author and the reader. As such communication is only possible indirectly through a mediator—the narrator—"the reliability-judgments performed by the reader are nothing but a hypothesis about the *relations* between the text's explicit and implicit (mediating and mediated) communication" (Yacobi, "Narrative" 22). If the reader considers the narrator unreliable, he perceives a gap between these two forms of communication (22).

Yacobi incorporates the (implied) author in her theory of unreliable narration, but unlike Phelan and Booth, she acknowledges the impossibility of arriving at an objective judgement about the narrator's (un)reliability since "reliability is determined neither by some objective truth (of fact or idea) or poetic rule ('artistry') [...], but in relation, concordant or conflictual, to the *hypothesized* norms and goals of the author" ("Authorial" 121; emphasis added). Moreover, she does not see this as a problem because she is concerned with the theory and not the practice of textual interpretation ("Narrative" 32).

The Approach Used in This Book

On the basis of the theories discussed earlier in this chapter, it seems that the rhetorical approach, too, describes the hypothetical ideal case of how the reader decodes the author's intended message. However, when rhetorical scholars try to use their theory as a basis for the actual interpretation of literary works, problems arise because the reality of reading is such that the author's intended meaning is inaccessible or at least cannot be proved and advertised as objective. Therefore, the merit of the rhetorical approach lies mainly in its depiction of the ideal transmission of meaning from the real author to the real reader, that is, what most readers (and some writers) attempt to achieve. However, as there are no means of ensuring communication this perfect, the rhetorical theory does not provide a tool for determining unreliable narration while interpreting a literary work.

Another possible approach could involve keeping Booth's definition of the unreliable narrator but understanding the implied author not as a communicative agent but rather in the sense of an *inferred author*, that is, the image of the author relevant to the given text ("a self-consistent textual intent" [Chatman, *Coming* 84]) constructed by the reader on the basis of the text and possibly its context, including information about the real author. Michael Toolan summarizes this concept as "the mental picture of the author that a reader constructs on the basis of the text in its entirety" (65). If it is true that readers develop such a picture of the author while reading, as Toolan argues, the view of unreliable narration as the narrator's divergence from the implied-as-inferred author's version of the

story describes the actual process of interpreting a text as unreliable narration. Yet to be able to confirm this hypothesis, one would need to conduct empirical research investigating the process of reading (cf. Kindt and Müller 154). What is more, this theory, even if confirmed, would still tell us nothing about the decisive factors in recognizing an unreliable narrator.

In my approach, narratorial unreliability stems from the difference between the reader's reconstruction of the fictional world (the events, the characters, and the narrator) and the narrator's rendering of it. This difference arises from various discrepancies in the narrator's discourse: the text as a whole does not yield one consistent version of the story. A condition of unreliable narration is the existence of a hidden version of the story that does not accord with the manifest version, that is, the narrator's account, and that can be constructed with the help of the hints that the narrator unwittingly provides.[43] As Fludernik says, "for unreliability to be present in the text, there needs to exist a secret, a figure in the carpet, that the reader has to uncover behind (and against) the narrator's discourse" ("Defining" 92–93). This hidden version of the story does not have to be definite though: even if the reader cannot grasp the real state of affairs in the fictional world, but realizes that it contradicts the narrator's report, the narrator can be seen as unreliable.

To assign unreliability to the narrator, the reader also needs to conclude that the occurrence of multiple versions of the story is the text's intent (rather than a coincidence or the author's mistake): "We are led not simply to disagree with what the narrator says [...], but to see this disagreement as strategically planned by the author" (Fludernik, "Fiction" 100). David Herman's cognitive approach to narrative can help clarify this: Herman claims that when reading, we ascribe communicative intentions to the (real) author of the narrative (46). When reading a homodiegetic narrative, the intention-ascription is double: it "requires navigating a nested structure of reasons within reasons, whereby readers frame inferences about [the narrator's] intentions and other attitudes by grounding them in inferences about [the author's] reasons for creating [the narrating character] as a fictional person who has such attitudes" (48). Using this theory makes it possible, on the one hand, to avoid making the actual intentions of the flesh-and-blood author the yardstick of unreliability, and thus to evade the trap of the rhetorical theory, as the intentions referred to here are hypothesized in the text-based interpretation process. On the other hand, including the text's intent as a

43 Cf. Martínez and Scheffel, who talk about an explicit and an implicit message in unreliable narration (100).

condition of unreliable narration narrows down the view of unreliability as an interpretative strategy as it excludes the reader's ideas of what might be the case in the fictional world that are not rooted in the text.

The reader's discovery of the hidden version of the story in the narrative results in dramatic irony as the reader gains superior knowledge over the narrator.[44] This superior knowledge can include the reader's awareness of the facts of the fictional world that the narrator is mistaken about but can equally be restricted to the reader's comprehension of the fact that the narrator is either intentionally lying (while the narrator thinks he has tricked the reader) or unintentionally distorting fictional reality, without the reader finding out what (exactly) constitutes the fictional reality. By contrast, a narrator who owns up to not knowing the facts of the fictional world is not unreliable. For example, the narrator of Henry James's short story "The Figure in the Carpet" describes his inability to find out the secret meaning contained in a novelist's writing that this novelist refers to but does not divulge, and the narrator of W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* never manages to reconstruct Austerlitz's life in its entirety. However, these two narrators do not pretend to know the fictional reality; rather, they reliably report their lack of information that, indeed, is objectively unavailable to them.[45] The reader, who knows no more about the facts of the fictional world or the narrator's rendering of them, does not possess superior knowledge. The situation is different with narrators whose lack of knowledge is caused by their own self-deception and who thus hide information from themselves and—strictly speaking—also from the reader, and the reader finds out about this self-deception.

Although in some cases—as shown above—the reader's contextual frameworks determine the assessment of the narrator's reliability, this assessment "needs to be based on criteria which are intersubjectively convincing, which give the reader the idea that there is a more creditable version, which is distinct from the narrator's" (Birke 82). Booth's comments on recognizing irony in a text can be extended to unreliable narration (which, after all, is a kind of irony): "I do not claim to know something that is implacably and totally private or idiosyncratic; I know only those convictions that I think are at least potentially shareable because they can be soundly argued for" (*Rhetoric of Irony* 16). In short, the reader's interpretation of the narrator as unreliable must arise from evidence in

44 Cf. Fludernik for a distinction between "knowing" and "unknowing" irony ("Unreliability" 56). I work with this distinction in my analysis of *Stiller* in chapter 3.2.

45 Cf. Olson on narrators in many mystery novels: "[They] have restricted visions of the action. Yet because [they] report with factual accuracy and are in accord with the values of their narratives, I regard them [...] as reliable" (101).

the text that will be spotted by more than the odd reader. Although the text can also incorporate ambiguous features that may cause readings to vary (as is the case with *The Turn of the Screw*), a mere divergence of the narrator's values and norms from those of the reader does not necessarily lead to a projection of an unreliable narrator.

It is also important to note that unreliability is a matter of the narrator's discourse and not character: it concerns the narrator's rendering of the fictional world. This does not mean that unreliability has to concern the "hard facts" of the story. On the contrary, narrators often turn out to be unreliable in their interpretation of (reliably reported) events:[46] they misinterpret or misevaluate the situation. This misevaluation can be influenced by the narrator's characteristics as a person, such as immorality or madness. But contrary to Gaby Allrath's claim (*Engendering* 86),[47] I argue that these characteristics do not suffice as an indication of narratorial unreliability because they guide the reader's assessment of the narrator as a character and not as a narrating instance.

To return to the examples discussed above, both Humbert Humbert's and Sir Hugo's unreliability is connected to their unreliable character, but their personality itself does not render them unreliable as narrators. It is rather the contradictions between these narrators' self-characterization and their real personalities as manifested in the text that convince the reader of their narrative unreliability. Therefore, the narrator's diverging world-view does influence his (un)reliability but only insofar as it gives rise to a different version of the story.

In chapter 1.2 I demonstrate this point using the theory of possible worlds. Before that, however, I concern myself with the potential indicators of unreliability in the text and with different types of unreliable narration.

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46 Cf. Lanser: "[A] narrator may be quite trustworthy in reporting events but not competent in interpreting them, or may confuse certain facts but have a good understanding of their implications" (*Narrative* 171). I discuss this topic in greater detail in the section on signals of unreliable narration (1.1.1) and in the section on types of unreliable narration (1.1.2).

47 Allrath is "convinced that the attribution of trustworthiness to a narrator depends among other things, exactly on the narrator's personality, i.e. on the question whether the reader is likely to create a mental image of the narrator as 'a person who can be trusted'" (*Engendering* 86). Many examples can be found that refute this argument such as Alex, the narrator in Anthony Burgess's *A Clockwork Orange*. Alex is anything but "a person who can be trusted," yet his narration shows none of the signals of unreliability as he does not try to hide anything he does or that happens to him, nor does he strive to excuse his actions by positing them as good or natural (as, for example, Clegg in *The Collector* does).

1.1.1 Potential Textual Signals of Unreliable Narration

This section discusses textual features that may under certain circumstances function as clues leading the reader to an interpretation of the narrator as unreliable. Nevertheless, it is important to bear in mind that unreliability is a matter of the work's whole structure and that textual signals are neither sufficient nor necessary indicators of unreliability; these signals constitute "merely a by-product of the deeper pragmatic forces at work in the discourse" (Heyd 239). These elements of the text might make the reader question the narrator's account and disagree with the narrator's perspective, but the same elements can just as well fulfil a different function (cf. Yacobi, "Package"). Liesbeth Korthals Altes explains this phenomenon in terms of the hermeneutic circle: while textual features guide readers' hypotheses about the narrator and the intent of the text, "readers also *pick* textual elements as clues on the basis of such hypotheses, into which have gone all kinds of textual information, personal values and extra-textual knowledge [...] The same clues can often be used for very different demonstrations" (119). Still, an examination of frequent textual manifestations of unreliability helps explain how unreliable narration works, the forms it often takes, and how readers recognize and process it.

I largely base my treatment of potential indicators of unreliability on the observations made by the contributors to *Unreliable Narration: Studien zur Theorie und Praxis unglaubwürdigen Erzählens in der englischsprachigen Erzählliteratur* edited by Ansgar Nünning. Focusing mainly on observations from Nünning himself and Gaby Allrath, I concentrate primarily on the textual signals that are most relevant to the novels examined in the analytical part of this book.

As Zerweck contends, most textual signals correspond to the "self-incrimination" by which narrators expose their unreliability ("Historicizing" 156). Allrath divides the textual signals of narrative unreliability into three groups according to the textual level on which they occur: the story level, the discourse level, and the structural level (*Engendering* 22). I discuss some of the potential indicators of unreliability in each of these three groups, providing examples with the aim of demonstrating how these clues influence the reader's interpretation of the work in question.

The Story Level

At the story level signals often take the form of various inconsistencies in the narrator's account. Among the most common types of such inconsistency is a discrepancy between description and interpretation—as Félix Martínez-Bonati puts it, "a perceptible difference between the impression of the events derived by

the reader solely from the mimetic moments of the basic narrator's discourse, and the view of the same events present in the non-mimetic components of the same discourse (that is, in the narrator's general judgements, commentaries, expressions of feelings, etc.)" (*Fictive* 35). For example, one of the narrators of John Fowles's *The Collector*, Clegg, reliably depicts what happens in the fictional world, but his evaluation of the events is contradicted not only by the other narrator's—his victim Miranda's—account but also by the events themselves as described by Clegg. Typically, he says about the day when he kidnapped Miranda: "I can only say that evening I was very happy, as I said above, and it was more like I had done something very daring, like climbing Everest or doing something in enemy territory. My feelings were very happy because *my intentions were of the best*. It was what she never understood" (31; emphasis added). Clegg's evaluation of his actions clashes with the descriptions of these deeds: the reader will hardly believe in the benignity of Clegg's intentions when his harsh treatment of Miranda comes to light (for instance, he uses chloroform to kidnap her, he puts a gag into her mouth while she is vomiting, and, above all, he holds her captive in a cellar in spite of her desire for freedom). Rather than showing comprehension for Clegg, the reader will share Miranda's lack of understanding. Later, Clegg mentions that he applied on Miranda a tactic developed by the Gestapo: isolating the prisoners from the outer world, which "broke them down" (43). However, he regards his actions not as torture but as "almost a kindness" (43). Situations such as this produce the effect of dramatic irony as the narrator is not aware of the impression he makes on the reader, the impression being actually the opposite of the one he intends to create. The narrator's other statements such as "if more people were like me, in my opinion, the world would be better" (13) or "I knew my love was worthy of her" (31) are then read ironically—the reader knows better than the narrator.[48]

Another story-level contradiction appears when there is a difference between the narrator's descriptions and explanations of events or other characters' utterances (as reliably reported by the narrator) concerning the same events or people. In Nabokov's *Despair*, the narrator, Hermann, speaks about what he considers to be a perfect plan to collect insurance money after he has murdered Felix, a man whom he met by coincidence and to whom he refers as to his double throughout the whole narration. Hermann's conviction about his striking similarity to Felix is contested by the lack of any such conviction on Felix's part. This inconsistency casts doubt not only on the alleged perfectness of Hermann's

48 See also my treatment of *Lolita* above.

plan but also on the narrator's ability of objective perception. Towards the end of the novel, the reader's scepticism is confirmed by the statement made by the police and by the newspaper that there was no resemblance between Hermann and Felix.

Often this kind of discrepancy takes the form of "divergences between the self-characterization of the narrator and the characterization of the narrator by other characters"[49] (Nünning, "*Unreliable*" 27). The narrator's notion of herself (or at least the one she is trying to impose on the reader) contrasts with and is corrected by another figure's utterances concerning the character of the narrator. An especially pronounced form of this kind of corrective through another character occurs in Markus Werner's novel *Am Hang*, in which most of the story is revealed in a dialogue between the narrating character Clarin and an elderly man who introduces himself as Loos and whom Clarin meets every day in a hotel café. While Clarin reveals some events of his own life and how he interprets them, Loos's commentary provides a contradictory perspective. This correcting perspective not only confuses the narrator, who has never questioned his self-interpretation before, but also helps the reader make different, deeper inferences than the narrator.

Yet another interesting example of a discrepancy between the narrator's self-characterization and her characterization through another character appears in Margaret Drabble's novel *The Millstone*, in which the narrator Rosamund, a single mother and literary scholar, reads a manuscript about herself written by her friend Lydia. According to Lydia, Rosamund is fascinated with academic research because it is "an escape route, an attempt to evade the personal crises of her life and the realities of life in general" (108); Rosamund, however, protests against this view. The discrepancy between the narrator's own idea of herself and another character's opinion alerts the reader to the possibility that Rosamund is misrepresenting herself. This impression is reinforced by the narrator's own descriptions of her actions: often when something unpleasant happens, she escapes to a pile of books and gets satisfaction from her work instead of thinking about the problem. Characteristically, when she finds out about her unwanted pregnancy, she reports that "after some time I found myself really attending [to the poems of Sir Walter Raleigh]: my mind, bent from its true obsession with what seemed at first intolerable strain, began to revert almost of its own accord to its more accustomed preoccupations,

49 "Divergenzen zwischen der Selbstcharakterisierung des Erzählers und der Fremdcharakterisierung durch andere Figuren"

and by the end of the morning I had covered exactly as much as I planned. It gave me much satisfaction, this fact" (39). Thus, the contrast between how the narrator sees herself and how she is seen by another character is combined with another signal of unreliable narration: a discrepancy between the narrator's actions and opinions about herself. On the other hand, this example also shows that the corrective provided by another character does not necessarily correspond to the truthful version of the story or of the narrator's personality: while Lydia's opinion confirms the reader's suspicion that Rosamund flees from "real life" to literary scholarship, there is no reason to believe that, as Lydia writes in her book, escape is the only or the main reason for Rosamund's academic career.

Other possible indicators of narrative unreliability at the story level are situations in which the narrator makes contradictory statements at different points throughout the narrative. The narrator of Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love*, Joe, reports ordering and receiving a dessert in a restaurant that he, however, does not have time to eat before a shooting occurs: "I already had a spoon in my hand but I hadn't used it" (171). Nevertheless, later, when interviewed by the police, Joe insists that he "remember[s] eating a couple of spoonfuls" of his ice cream (181). The discrepancy can be explained by Joe's shock caused by what he believes to be an attempted assault on his person, yet it may also raise the reader's suspicion that the narrator is mistaken about or has invented parts of the story, primarily those concerning a madman pursuing him.

Often, similar inconsistencies occur when narrators change their interpretation or grope for the truth, such as when the narrator of Thomas Bernhard's *Der Untergeher* (*The Loser*) keeps changing the reason he assumes his friend Wertheimer committed suicide. The narrator's changing interpretation can be explained by his desperate search for an objective reason for the suicide that would enable him to deny any possible guilt for his friend's unhappiness, as he concedes indirectly in an inconspicuous sentence in the middle of the book: "I always only hampered Wertheimer, I thought, and as long as I live I won't be able to clear my head of this self-reproach, I thought" (*Loser* 103). In another example Stevens in Ishiguro's *Remains* remembers hearing Miss Kenton crying but confounds the circumstances of this incident; this confusion follows from the narrator's reluctance to acknowledge Miss Kenton's feelings towards him. Importantly, in such cases the narrator's contradictions need to be interpreted as being intended by the author, in contrast to unintentional mistakes attributed to the author (based on the genetic principle in Yacobi's model). Also, one has to keep in mind the genre of the work as in some genres internal inconsistencies do not violate the rules of the fictional reality.

The Discourse Level

At the discourse level the narrator's unreliability might be hinted at by his metanarrative comments on the limits of his narration and his reflections about the deficiency of memory (either the narrator's own memory or human memory in general) (Nünning, "*Unreliable*" 28). There is a trend in contemporary British literature towards thematizing the constructed nature of life stories and of history. This stream of literature highlights the distorting influence of one's present situation on one's view of the past, the unreliability of memory, and the unclear boundary between history and fiction. These characteristics and ideas can be found in works by Graham Swift, Julian Barnes, Salman Rushdie, Jeanette Winterson, Penelope Lively, and many other contemporary authors. In contemporary German literature similar features can be detected in works by Christoph Hein, Thomas Bernhard, W. G. Sebald, Uwe Johnson, Christa Wolf, Marcel Beyer, and others. The emphasis on this theme often manifests itself in the narrators' reflections on their restricted capacity of depicting the story as it really happened (in the fictional world), reflections which then contribute to the reader's doubts about the reliability of the narrator.[50]

These epistemological issues can be addressed directly, such as in Hein's novel *Horns Ende*, where one of the narrators makes the following observation about the nature of human memory:

> Our memories are no sober recordings, no film shots. Our consciousness works with a thousand mirrors, each of which is broken a thousand times. We perceive and remember according to the genetically conditioned number of these mirrors and their fractures and angles. Before anything comes into our memories and is caught there, it has been considerably changed. What we record is a distortion appropriate to our genes. We do not store a happening, but our awareness of and our thinking about an event.[51] (279–80)

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50 Some critics, though, do not regard these kinds of narrators as unreliable. Zerweck contends that "within a culture that doubts even the existence of an unambiguously perceptible reality, unreliable narration could be argued as the norm rather than the exception. [...] It could be argued that the representation of narrators' illusions and difficulties of 'making sense' of their fictional worlds is not unreliable at all, but a reliable presentation of the highly problematic human position with regard to cognitive, epistemological, and even ontological certainties" ("Historicizing" 163). Cf. also my response to this argument in chapter 1.3.

51 "Unsere Erinnerungen sind eben keine nüchternen Aufzeichnungen, keine Filmaufnahmen. Unser Bewusstsein arbeitet mit tausend Spiegeln, von denen jeder tausendfach gebrochen ist. Wir nehmen wahr und erinnern uns nach der genetisch bedingten Zahl dieser Spiegel und ihrer Brüche und Winkel. Bevor etwas in unsere

However, metanarrative statements can also be encoded into metaphors, such as the following contemplation about the difficulty of seizing the past uttered by the narrator of Barnes's novel *Flaubert's Parrot*:

> How do we seize the past? Can we ever do so? When I was a medical student some pranksters at an end-of-term dance released into the hall a piglet which had been smeared with grease. It squirmed between legs, evaded capture, squealed a lot. People fell over trying to grasp it, and were made to look ridiculous in the process. The past often seems to behave like that piglet. (14)

The metanarrative remarks contained in a work in a way instruct the reader how to interpret it: they make the reader aware of a possible alternative version of the story and trigger her to start looking for other inconsistencies or gaps in the narrative and try constructing this hidden version.

Frequently, metanarrative remarks fulfil an additional function: they "provide the recipient with information about the narrator's perspective at the time of narrating,"[52] which is of significance for the (re)constructed past (Allrath, "But" 68). Consequently, these reflections might sometimes aid the reader in interpreting some crucial aspects of the narration. In Ishiguro's *Pale* the narrator, Etsuko, admits early on that her elder daughter Keiko's recent suicide has stayed on her mind against her will: "[A]lthough we [she and her younger daughter Niki] never dwelt long on the subject of Keiko's death, it was never far away, hovering over us whenever we talked" (10). Such are the circumstances in which Etsuko remembers her past; she later emphasizes that "[m]emory, I realize, can be an unreliable thing; often it is heavily coloured by the circumstances in which one remembers, and no doubt this applies to certain of the recollections I have gathered here" (156). Through the two quoted comments, Etsuko is indirectly disclosing that her memories are influenced by her dead daughter's presence in her mind. The strange feeling Etsuko has concerning Keiko's old room further reinforces the impression that it is her deceased daughter that she is thinking about: Etsuko is in a way attracted to this room and fancies hearing sounds from within. To sum up, although Etsuko has "no great wish to dwell on Keiko now" and does not talk about her openly, her discourse reveals that her dead daughter is present in her thoughts and thus finds a way into the narrative too (11). This revelation is partly

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Erinnerungen eingeht und festgehalten wird, wurde es eingreifend verändert. Was wir aufzeichnen, ist eine unseren Genen gemäße Verzerrung. Wir speichern nicht ein Geschehen, sondern unser Bewusstsein, unser Denken über ein Ereignis."

52 "derartige Reflexionen des Erzählers [geben] dem Rezipienten Aufschluß über dessen Perspektive zum Zeitpunkt des Erzählens"

the result of her commentary on the nature of memory, which simultaneously functions as a metanarrative alert to the narrator's distorted perspective.

Narrators may further signal unreliability by repeatedly digressing from the main thread of the narrative. This pattern can hint at preoccupations narrators may have with certain topics that they do not openly admit to the reader and often not even to themselves. Sometimes digressions are more important than what appears to be the main story. As Allrath points out, "[I]t is often these parts of discourse that do not serve the purpose of telling the story which thematize those aspects of the narrator's system of values that clearly reveal its deficits"[53] ("But" 66). The narrator often unwittingly conveys crucial information in such digressions.

In Swift's *Waterland*, history teacher Henry Crick departs from his main narrative to present what he considers general truths, which indicates his endeavour to make sense of his life by constructing a story out of it: "Children, only animals live entirely in the Here and Now. Only nature knows neither memory nor history. But man – let me offer you a definition – is the story-telling animal. [...] He has to go on telling stories, he has to keep on making them up. As long as there's a story, it's all right" (62–63). His attempt to understand and come to terms with the facts of his life causes him to "keep making up stories," not all of which are trustworthy. This observation is therefore simultaneously a metanarrative comment warning the reader about the type of narrator he is confronted with.

In some cases digressions mark the narrator's reluctance to tell the story. The (conscious or unconscious) evasion of a theme that the reader perceives as vital corresponds to what Yacobi calls "exegetical deflection" ("Narrative" 34). In this situation "incongruity arises more from the speaker's misfocusing than from any direct misjudgment on his part: the issue most central or relevant [...] is passed over in silence throughout the mediator's discourse, while side-issues receive liberal commentary" (Yacobi, "Narrative" 34). In *Flaubert's Parrot* the narrator, Geoffrey, postpones his treatment of the subject that is on his mind throughout his entire narration—his marriage and his wife's death—until a very short chapter deals with this topic. Thus, the narrator spends fourteen chapters on Flaubert and only one on a personal topic. This one chapter ("Pure Story") does not provide the reader with much information anyway as the narrator himself stays in the dark about many things. However, it becomes clear that Geoffrey's wife

53 "[O]ft gerade in diesen nicht der Wiedergabe einer Geschichte dienenden Sprechanteilen [werden] diejenigen Aspekte des Voraussetzungssystems des Erzählers thematisiert [...], die seine Defizite deutlich herausstellen."

cheated on him during the marriage. These infidelities on the part of the wife call to mind a resemblance to Emma and Charles's relationship in *Madame Bovary*. As David Higdon observes, "Geoffrey displaces his [doubts] onto Flaubert and creates a literary investigation to escape his own fears of having been already inscribed or scripted by Flaubert" (180). This extreme case of exegetical deflection therefore not only shows the narrator's avoidance of a painful issue but also provides unintended and indirect self-characterization.

The discourse-level signals of unreliability can also involve the narrator's peculiar use of language. They include the narrator's employment of language expressing subjectivity and "a high degree of emotional involvement,"[54] such as exclamations and unfinished sentences (Nünning, "*Unreliable*" 28). The narrator's frantic narration towards the end of Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart" is a typical example of a narrative style that betrays intense emotions:

> O God! what *could* I do? I foamed—I raved—I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder—louder—*louder*! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no? **They** heard!—**they** suspected!—**they** *knew!—they* were making a mockery of my horror!—**this** I thought, and **this** I think. But **anything** was better than this agony! **Anything** was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die!—and now—again—hark! louder! louder! louder! *louder!* (271–72; italics in original, emphasis in bold added)

All but two sentences in this extract end with an exclamation mark or a question mark, the syntax has broken down (note the use of many dashes marking unfinished sentences, the omission of capital letters at the beginning of sentences, and the very short sentences lacking a verb), some words are italicized to highlight their importance, and there is much repetition (marked in bold).[55] These features reduce the narration to a set of excited cries that give away the narrator's rage and loss of sanity. In contrast, language can also echo the narrator's repression of emotions. Considerable restraint in language use may signal to the reader that the narrator is hiding something, a circumstance that might be part of an unreliability scenario.

Another pattern of speech that can signal unreliability is the specific use of certain words or invented neologisms, which Wall calls "the verbal habits of the

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54 "einen hohen Grad an emotionaler Involviertheit"

55 As Fludernik argues, "Repetition of sentence constituents, anaphorically related or not, very commonly constitutes a sign of rhetorical and emotive discourse" (*Fictions* 236). In Poe's short story, too, repetition signals the narrator's emotional involvement.

narrator" (20). As Wall points out, Stevens in *Remains* often uses *one* instead of *I*, usually "when distance from a feeling or a judging self is operating, or when Stevens feels a need to erase some part of himself" (23).[56] A common verbal habit of unreliable narrators is their frequent reader or narratee addresses even if there is no specific narratee in the text; such attempts at interaction often indicate "the narrator's conscious attempts at manipulating the reception"[57] (Nünning, "*Unreliable*" 28) and "the narrator's compulsion to self-justify"[58] (Zerweck, "Boy" 234). For example, one of the narrators of Barnes's *Talking It Over*, Oliver, often addresses the audience in an attempt to convince readers of his innocence in the business of wooing away his best friend's wife. Similar endeavours to justify one's own behaviour on the part of a narrator might involve a distortion of reality intended to mitigate the negative aspects of such behaviour.

Theresa Heyd offers an inspiring perspective on the stylistic markers of unreliability in that she links some of them with politeness strategies, such as hedges, euphemisms, and meta-discursive statements (237). She also notes that unreliable narration often includes indicators of orality, such as typographic markers (as in the extract from Poe's story above), the above-mentioned addresses to the reader or narratee, and syntactic features that imitate oral discourse (238–39). Simulating orality helps generate closeness and can therefore be "attributed to narrators who have the more or less conscious psychological motivation of steering the audience's sympathy" (238). Regarding textual clues as either politeness strategies that are part of the narrator's face-management or orality markers promoting closeness may enrich one's interpretation of both the motivation guiding the narrator's discourse and the work as a whole.

The Structural Level

At the structural level unreliability may be signalled by paratextual elements, such as when the title, prologue, or epigraph, forewarn the reader against taking the narrative at face value (see Nünning, "*Unreliable*" 28; Allrath, "But" 75). Such signals are abundant in literature: a case in point is the introductory epigraph in Swift's *Waterland* that warns the reader about the blurring of boundaries between history and fictional stories that occurs in the novel: "*Historia, -ae*, f. **1.** inquiry, investigation, learning. **2.** a) a narrative of past events, history. b) any kind

56 In chapter 2.1 I will discuss some of Stevens's other verbal habits: his use of the words "dignity" and "great butler."

57 "[bewusste Versuche] der Rezeptionslenkung durch den Erzähler"

58 "Rechtfertigungszwang des Erzählers"

of narrative: account, tale, story." By the same token, the title of Eva Figes's *Nelly's Version* signals that the narrator Nelly's account is just one possible rendering of the story—and not necessarily the truth.

The aforementioned disparity between the narrator's and the other characters' points of view can also appear in a modified form in multiperspective narration: in this case the perspective of each speaker is confronted with the perspectives of the other narrators. Unreliability then stems from a "contrast of perspectives that cannot be synthetized"[59] (Allrath, "But" 73). Sometimes, certain perspectives seem to be more reliable, or, on the other hand, more unreliable than others: Clegg's narration in *The Collector* provides the reader with many signals of unreliability, and Miranda's more reliable perspective (expressed in her diary) only confirms and reinforces Clegg's untrustworthiness (cf. Allrath, "But" 73–74). Although Miranda's account contains signs of unreliability (she herself at one point concedes that writing a diary entails self-embellishment), the novel produces what Phelan identifies as "*bonding through optimistic comparison,*" which "occurs when the narration juxtaposes clearly estranging unreliability to something far less estranging" ("Estranging" 232). The reader is likely to pay less attention to Miranda's unreliability as she gains sympathy by being obviously more reliable than Clegg.

However, it is often difficult or impossible to decide which perspective is the (most) correct one: in Swift's *Out of This World*, the two main narrators—Harry and his daughter Sophie—present irreconcilable views on the complicated relationships in their family, notably views of Harry's father, whom Sophie loved and Harry hated. Both narrators have their reasons for feeling the way they do, and therefore it is impossible to objectively favour one of their positions over the other. In a sense they could be both seen as reliable because their differing experiences have led them to disparate perspectives on their family. In this and many other cases, multiperspective structure is used to highlight the subjectivity of one's point of view and the difficulty of arriving at one single truth.

This use becomes especially conspicuous in Hein's *Horns Ende*, in which various inhabitants of a small town reconstruct the events that preceded the suicide of Herr Horn, an outsider who had come to work there as a museum director. The narratives of the individual speakers reveal various hostilities among members of the community but fail to show the actual reason for Horn's death and who is to blame for it. Although it is likely that the narrators partly distort reality in their attempts at self-justification (which involves self-deception), not a single

59 "Kontrastierung von Perspektiven, die nicht synthetisierbar sind"

version of the story provides enough evidence to "convict" any of the speakers of unreliability. The impossibility of finding out an absolute version of the story in this novel is further thematized by the above-mentioned metanarrative comments about memory. This combination of multiple signals of narrative unreliability (such as various contradictions or multiple perspectives and metanarrative remarks) with no definite alternative to the narrator's version is typical for postmodern works challenging the notion of a single truth.[60]

It should be mentioned, though, that not all multi-perspective narratives necessarily involve unreliable narration. For example, in Heinrich Böll's novel *Und sagte kein einziges Wort* (*And Never Said a Word*), the two perspectives of the husband and wife complement rather than negate each other—the different difficulties each of these narrating characters face underscore the suffering they are both subject to because of their poverty and desperate housing situation. Analogically, Birke in her analysis of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, a book in which the same events are presented from the point of view of various focalizers, concludes that "[t]he complementary memories of Clarissa and Peter [...] highlight different aspects and thus emphasize the subjectivity of memory, but nevertheless they do add up to a coherent image" (118). To sum up, a diversity of perspectives, even if it might reveal the subjectivity of perception, does not automatically entail unreliable narration (or a fallible filter).[61]

1.1.2 Types of Unreliable Narration

Many scholars have attempted to classify different types of unreliable narrators. This section briefly introduces some of the possible classifications. First, I deal with the distinction between unreliability in the narrator's descriptions, interpretations, and moral judgements. Then I discuss the issue of unreliability in heterodiegetic narration, mentioning a borderline case of unreliable narration:

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60 An interesting case of multiple perspectives in one work is a point of view of a different character artificially fabricated by the narrator. In McEwan's *Enduring Love* the narrator, Joe, writes one chapter as if from the perspective of his partner Clarissa—yet since her perspective is merely imagined by Joe, it shows Joe's effort to understand Clarissa rather than her actual point of view (which she later partly reveals in a letter). In another novel by McEwan, *Atonement*, the reader learns about the perspectives of different characters as the focalizer changes from chapter to chapter. However, the final revelation that the novel is a *mise en abyme* and the whole story is a book written by one of the characters, Briony, informs the reader that what has appeared to be a genuine multiperspective structure was actually created by one narrator.

61 For an explanation of the term *fallible filter*, see section 1.1.2.

confusing heterodiegetic narration. Finally, I introduce the self-deceived narrator—the type of unreliable narrator that appears in the novels analysed in parts 2 and 3.

Description vs. Commentary

Attempts at distinguishing types of unreliable narration frequently involve the difference between what Jahn calls the "mimetic" and "interpretative" authority of the narrator: unreliability in the mimetic components of the narration (the narrator's depiction of "circumstances and events of the story"[62]) on the one hand and in interpretation of events and facts on the other hand (82–83). Nünning, drawing on Hof and Lanser (*Narrative*), suggests a distinction between truly "unreliable" narrators "whose rendering of the story the reader has reasons to suspect" and "untrustworthy narrators [...] whose commentary does not accord with conventional notions of sound judgment" ("Unreliable" 57). Along similar lines Dorrit Cohn distinguishes between "a factual kind of unreliability" and "an ideological kind," which she calls "discordant narration" (307). Fludernik recognizes three categories: "factual contradiction, lack of objectivity and [...] ideological unreliability" ("Defining" 75). While these distinctions usefully draw attention to different aspects of unreliability, aspects that may in some cases be crucial for the interpretation of the narrating character's personality, it should also be noted that these distinctions are not always clear cut.[63]

The same pertains to Olson's division between "fallible" and "untrustworthy" narrators, which is based on Booth's descriptions of different types of narrators. In Olson's taxonomy "fallible" narrators "are mistaken about their judgments or perceptions or are biased," and their unreliability can be seen as "situationally motivated": external circumstances rather than the narrators' intrinsic faults cause unreliability (101–02). By contrast, "untrustworthy" narrators are unreliable as a result of their "ingrained behavioral traits or some current self-interest": their unreliability is motivated "dispositionally" (Olson 102). This distinction proves very significant with regard to ethical judgements about the narrating characters and hence to the interpretation of the work in which these narrators appear. Yet I think a sharp line between these two types of narrators might sometimes be misleading or hard to determine. Consider, for example, the narrator of *Nelly's Version* whose unreliability stems from her amnesia—yet this amnesia

62 "die Sachverhalte und Ereignisse der Story"

63 See chapter 2.1 where I exemplify this point in my analysis of Ishiguro's *An Artist of the Floating World*.

can be seen as a result of her wish to escape her role as a mother and wife. Is it then possible to draw a clear boundary between the narrator's self-interest and external circumstances?

James Phelan and Patricia Martin usefully identify three axes on which narrative unreliability occurs: "the axis of facts/events" ("unreliable reporting"), "the axis of ethics/evaluation" ("unreliable evaluating"), and "the axis of knowledge/perception" ("unreliable reading") (94). In my analyses I refer to these three axes as well as to the six kinds of unreliability that Phelan and Martin distinguish: misreporting, misreading, misregarding, underreporting, underreading, and underregarding. Misreporting involves inaccurate representation of events and other facts, misreading corresponds to the narrator's wrong interpretations of facts, and misregarding concerns the narrator's ethically problematical judgements (95). Underreporting "occurs when the narrator tells us less than s/he knows," underreading is at play "when the narrator's lack of knowledge, perceptiveness, or sophistication yields an insufficient interpretation of an event, character, or situation," and underregarding stems from the narrator's evaluation that "does not go far enough" (95–96). Importantly, Phelan and Martin do not discuss types of unreliable narrators but different ways in which unreliability occurs.

The advantage of working with kinds of unreliable narration rather than types of unreliable narrators is that the former allows for the occurrence of more than one type of unreliability in the same narrator. Phelan and Martin point out that the kinds of unreliability they define hardly ever appear individually isolated; moreover, as they contend, these kinds underscore the fact that (un)reliability is not an absolute quality of a narrator but that various degrees and stages of unreliability exist both inter- and intratextually (96).

Homodiegesis vs. Heterodiegesis

Another classification of unreliable narrators copies the distinction between homodiegetic and heterodiegetic narrators. Before I delve into this issue, it is necessary to distinguish between narrative unreliability and the limited perspective of a focal character (a *reflector figure* in Stanzel's terminology). Chatman calls the latter a "fallible filter" and defines it as a focal character whose "perceptions and conceptions of the story events, the traits of the other characters, and so on, seem at odds with what the narrator is telling or showing" (*Coming* 149).[64]

64 See Fludernik, "Unreliability" 53–55 for an example of the unreliability of a reflector figure (a fallible filter as the target of irony) in Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's "The Disappearance."

As for the issue of heterodiegetic unreliable narrators, some scholars argue that unreliability only occurs in homodiegetic narration[65] or that heterodiegetic unreliable narrators are extremely exceptional.[66] In contrast, others have identified unreliability in heterodiegetic narration: for example, Cohn sees the narrator of Thomas Mann's *Der Tod in Venedig* (*Death in Venice*), who morally condemns the main character Aschenbach's submission to love, as unreliable on account of the difference between the narrator's and the author's views. She argues that "Mann would not have charged Aschenbach's erotic experience with nearly as much metaphysical, aesthetic, and mythical significance if he had not meant to involve the reader in far more complex and diversified responses than those provided by the narrator" (Cohn 311). Leaving aside the question of the validity of authorial intentions in interpretations (as Cohn bases her argument largely on the text), Cohn's contention leads to the conclusion that unreliability of heterodiegetic narrators is possible on the basis of the narrators' slanted perspective. More precisely, her argument proves that heterodiegetic narrators can be "discordant," to use Cohn's term for narrators who are "biased or confused, inducing one to look behind the story he or she tells, for a different meaning from the one he himself or she herself provides" (307). In other words, heterodiegetic narrators can be unreliable in their interpretations and judgements but not in the mimetic components of the narrative.

More recently, Gunther Martens has argued for the inclusion of overt heterodiegetic narrators as relevant to unreliability, refuting the narrator's embodiment as a condition of unreliable narration. Similarly to Cohn, he views this kind of unreliability as an aspect of "the performance of discourse internally (e.g. marked stylistic or attributive incoherence), rather than the (in)coherence between discourse and story" (88). Unreliability, then, is not necessarily a function of exposing the narrating character's psychology; it may rest in faults in the narrator's argumentation, including "excessive self-legitimations" (Martens 99). As such, it can occur in both homodiegetic and overt heterodiegetic narration (as well as in narratives that oscillate between homo- and heterodiegesis).

It remains an open question, though, whether heterodiegetic narrators can be factually unreliable—that is, whether they can be unreliable in the mimetic moments of their narration. In the next chapter, I discuss the relation of heterodiegetic narrators to the fictional world: as the fictional world actually comes into

65 See, for example, Allrath, *Engendering* 76 and Zerweck, "Historicizing" 155. See chapter 1.2. for Doležel's and Ryan's views.

66 See Jahn 95–103.

existence through their enunciation, it might seem necessary for the narrators to be reliable. However, some narrative works call this hypothesis into question by featuring a heterodiegetic narrator who does not convey certain facts about the fictional world that either become clear later or can be surmised although they are not known.

Matias Martinez and Michael Scheffel, in their exposition of the category of mimetically unreliable narration, mention Leo Perutz's *Zwischen neun und neun* (*Between Nine and Nine*), where the reader learns at the end of the novel that what the heterodiegetic narrator has narrated is not fictional reality but the main character Demba's fantasy (Martinez and Scheffel 102). The narrator does not explicitly say that the narrated actions have only occurred in the character's mind, as is the case for instance in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, but provides a narrative fact that contradicts the whole narration up to that point: whereas the book depicts twelve hours (from nine in the morning till nine in the evening) in the life of Demba after he has jumped out of a window, at the end of the novel, the police find him dying as a result of his jump while it is still nine in the morning. The reader then naturalizes the "unresolved discrepancy between the majority of the text and the end of the novel"[67] by assigning the main part to Demba's delirious mind (Martinez and Scheffel 103). Strictly speaking, then, most of the narration does not convey fictional truth, for the narrator presents the events as fictionally real while they are in fact products of the main character's mind.

A similar, more confusing occurrence of a potentially unreliable heterodiegetic narrator comes up in Willem Frederik Hermans's *De donkere kamer van Damocles* (*The Darkroom of Damocles*). In this novel, set in the German-occupied Netherlands during World War II, the narrator depicts the main character Osewoudt's actions with the anti-German resistance: Osewoudt, risking his life, follows the orders given to him by Lieutenant Dorbeck. But at the end of the war Osewoudt is imprisoned as a traitor. His efforts to prove that he worked against the occupiers are in vain: he cannot even provide evidence for the fact that Dorbeck ever existed. Some fictional facts support the hypothesis that a great part of the narration is the product of Osewoudt's fantasy: no trace of Dorbeck can be found (and by a suspicious coincidence, a purported photograph of the two together is the only one that cannot be developed from a roll of film), and thus the reader is tempted to reinterpret Osewoudt's admiration for Dorbeck. Osewoudt, probably fighting his inferiority complex after having been rejected by the army on account of his insufficient height, might have invented Dorbeck, who is very

67 "ein unaufgelöster Widerspruch zwischen dem Hauptteil und dem Schluß des Romans"

similar in looks to Osewoudt but is a good deal more masculine, as his alter ego. Also, as some of the incidents in which Osewoudt supposedly cooperated with British agents are now seen as acts against the agents, Osewoudt might have invented the story to prove his innocence. But the possibility that Dorbeck existed and Osewoudt performed his tasks in the best of faith cannot be excluded either. In short, no definite version of the fictional reality can be determined on the basis of the narrative. It is not certain whether the narrator is not deceiving the reader in a large part of the narration; the narrator's version might differ from fictional reality.

Whereas the "incriminated" major part of Perutz's novel can be explained as fallible filtration, albeit revealed with delay and only implicitly, in Hermans's work the status of the narrated is ambiguous: it might be fictional reality, the main character's fantasy, or just fabrication. Still, one should differentiate this kind of narration from "classical" narrative unreliability because, unlike unreliable narration, it does not involve dramatic irony in the sense that the reader possesses knowledge superior to that of the narrator. Rather, both novels engage in what Martínez-Bonati calls "the reverse of dramatic irony": the narrator knows something that the reader does not (*Fictive* 119). Another border between unreliable narration and a different type of "bending the facts" might lie somewhere here. However, this border lies beyond the scope of this book, which is primarily concerned with autodiegetic narrators.

Self-deceived vs. Other-deceiving

A useful distinction for analyses of autodiegetic narrators is Marcus's discrimination between "self-deceived and other-deceiving narrating characters" (139). As my analyses will demonstrate, the unreliable narrators of Ishiguro's and Frisch's novels are self-deceived. Self-deceivers differ from other-deceivers in that they themselves do not know that their statements are not true: they "are usually unable to reveal the truth" while other-deceivers are aware of the truth and consciously tell lies (Marcus 140). Furthermore, self-deceivers "are unaware of the strategies they employ to convince themselves of the veracity of the lie, and therefore their state of mind is not a consequence of an intentional act of deception, as opposed to the state of mind of other-deceivers" (Marcus 140). Marcus correctly contends that "an interpretive distinction between these two forms of deception [...] may significantly influence the reader's judgment of the narrating character" (141). In works whose main focus rests at the discourse level rather than the story level, as is the case with many of the novels examined in the analytical part of this book, this interpretative move is crucial for the understanding

of the whole work. For this reason a part of each chapter will aim at proving the narrator's self-deception. By way of preparation for this task, I survey the notion of self-deception and some related aspects in chapter 1.3. Before getting there, however, I will mark a distinction between the unreliable narrator and a different type of a narrator that is often self-deceptive: the world-constructing homodiegetic narrator.

1.2 Delineating the Borders of Unreliable Narration: Possible-World Theory and World-Constructing Homodiegetic Narrators

The large number of partly overlapping and partly conflicting approaches to unreliable narration demonstrates that this concept still eludes a unified definition. I have drawn from many of these existing theories to formulate my own position. My next step is to make a less obvious association and situate unreliable narration in the context of possible-world theory. This connection will not only give more precision to my definition, but it will also aid in differentiating an unreliable narrator from a related yet different type of narrator, one that has yet to be classified and which—despite differences—could be confused with an unreliable narrator. Narrators of this kind can be suspected of presenting a distorted perception of themselves and the things around them, but the fictional reality of the given work does not contradict their viewpoint. I call this phenomenon a world-constructing homodiegetic narrator.

First, I introduce the possible-world theory—the theory of fictional worlds projected by works of art—and its application in literary studies. This theory reveals that every fictional world is a universe containing an actual world (the fictional reality) and many possible worlds (the virtual domain). Importantly, these possible worlds mostly correspond to products of the characters' mind. I then use this theory to discuss the question of truth in fiction; this discussion then leads me to the difference between world-constructing and world-reflecting narrators I also relate the category of world-constructing homodiegetic narrators to unnatural narratology.

Unreliable Narration from the Perspective of the Possible-World Theory

The concept of possible worlds was first developed by Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz in his book of essays *Theodicy*, in which he claims that the world we live in (that is, what we usually call reality) is "the best (*optimum*) among all possible worlds" (129), chosen by God out of "an infinity of possible worlds [that] exist

as thoughts in the mind of God" (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 16). Accordingly, the theory of possible worlds is based on a "multi-world frame," which implies that "[t]he universe of discourse is not restricted to the actual world but spreads over uncountable possible, nonactualized worlds" (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 13). This scenario suggests that the arrangement of the actual world is merely one possible order of things and that under altered circumstances reality could be different. Our real world, the actual world, is therefore accompanied by possible worlds—alternative worlds that have not been actualized, or, in David Lewis's words, "entities that might be called [the] 'ways things could have been'" (*Counterfactuals* 84). As a result, "reality forms a 'modal system'" (Ryan, "Possible" 529). Probably the best-known model of this system, the *M-model* or *model structure*, comes from Saul Kripke. Thomas Pavel describes Kripke's model as

> a logical construction consisting of a set K of elements, a well-designated member G of this set, and a relation R between the elements of the set. Under an interpretation influenced by Leibniz' notion of *possible world*, the set K may be viewed as a set of possible worlds, the privileged member G as the real world, and the relation R as the link between various worlds belonging to the system K and their possible alternatives within K. (*Fictional* 44)

What Kripke calls the "real world" (the member G) is more often referred to as to the *actual world*, and the "relation R" corresponds to *accessibility relation* in possible-world semantics.[68] There have been many attempts to determine the source of the privilege of the actual world over other possible worlds. I adopt the assumption of *actualism*, which proposes that the actual world is "an empirically observable world [...], while the possible alternatives of the actual world are constructs of the human mind" (Doležel, "Truth" 10). To put it differently, only the actual world has "an autonomous existence" (Ryan, "Possible" 530).[69] The other worlds stem from people's imaginations, dreams, wishes, and other mental activities.

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68 See, for example, Ronen's *Possible Worlds in Literary Theory* and Ryan's *Possible Worlds, Artificial Intelligence, and Narrative Theory.*

69 This proposition appears, among others, in Adams: "[T]here are in some sense many completely determinate possible worlds but [...] they are logically constructed out of features of the actual world" (230). Ryan lists some other suggestions beyond using actualism as to how we recognize which world is the actual world: David Lewis concludes that the actual world is always the world in which the speaker is present; Nelson Goodman refuses the notion of a privileged world as "there is no such thing as a stable and knowable reality, but a multitude of competing versions presenting equal claims to being right" (Ryan, "Possible" 529–30).

However, I have only adopted this theory of actuality for fictional worlds; I am aware of its questionable points when used for possible worlds as versions of the extratextual reality. Umberto Eco argues that what we consider the "real" world is not given absolutely; it is just "a system of notions, that is, [...] our semantic encyclopedia" (222). Following Eco's reasoning, not only possible worlds but "even the world of reference has to be postulated and dealt with as a cultural construct" (222). Ruth Ronen, too, concludes that "the actual state of affairs is not a stable point of reference" since it depends on an individual's real-world framework (94). While I find these assumptions entirely reasonable in the broader context, I prefer to follow the actualist theory when dealing with fictional universes. In fact, I regard the fictional actual world as the one that we interpret as empirically observable and existing autonomously within the fictional universe.

As Lubomír Doležel points out, fictional worlds—the products of artistic creation—"are a special kind of possible world" and bear some common features with the possible worlds as defined by logic but differ from them in some other aspects (*Heterocosmica* 16). Like possible worlds, "[a] fictional world is [...] composed of sets of *entities* (characters, objects, places) and of networks of relations that can be described as *organizing principles*: spatio-temporal relations, event and action sequences" (Ronen 8). However, as Ronen shows, fictional worlds occupy a "different logico-ontological domain" because they, like possible worlds, are not only "non-actualized" in the actual world (extratextual reality) but they are "non-actualizable" as well (51). A possible world "*ramif[ies]* from the actual state of affairs" while a fictional world is "logically and ontologically *parallel* to the actual world" (Ronen 91–92). Whereas possible worlds stand for what might have been in the actual world, but is not, fictional worlds do not have this relation to actuality; they only refer to themselves. In Ronen's words, "fictional facts do not relate *what could have or could not have occurred in actuality, but rather, what did occur and what could have occurred in fiction*" (9). Therefore, a fundamental difference between a possible world and a fictional world exists, resulting from the ontological autonomy of fictional worlds.

Another difference between the possible worlds of logic and fictional worlds is the incompleteness of fictional worlds as opposed to the completeness of possible worlds (Ryan, "Possible" 532; Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 22; Ronen 108–43). Fictional worlds only contain a limited amount of facts, and thus "many conceivable statements about a fictional entity are undecidable" (Ronen 114). We will never be able to learn as much about a fictional character as we can hypothetically learn about a real person because some information simply does not exist in the fictional world. Possible worlds as defined by logicians are, on the other hand, "complete state[s] of affairs in which every conceivable proposition is either true

or false" (Ryan, "Possible" 532). When we ask a question about an entity or state of affairs in a fictional world (e.g., "Does Humbert Humbert have a scar on his left arm in the fictional world of *Lolita*?"), it can only be answered if the information is stated in the text. By contrast, when we ask a question about a real person, thing, or event, the answer always exists in the actual world—even if nobody knows it (e.g., "When was *The Tempest* written?"). Similarly, in a counterfactual possible world (e.g., one in which the state of affairs "Kafka did not die in 1924" is actualized), each proposition (e.g., "If Kafka had not died in 1924, he would have completed *The Castle*") can be assessed as to its truth: the possible world contains the information that determines the proposition as either true or false.[70]

The Structure of the Fictional Universe

Within a fictional world all fictional characters are ontologically on the same level—the level of nonactualized possibilities; regardless of whether they are called Molly Bloom or Adolf Hitler, they do not exist outside the fictional world (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 18). Why do readers become emotionally involved in the stories of these nonactual beings even though they are aware of their fictional nature? Kendall Walton explains "our epistemological access to fictional occurrences [and] capacity to be affected by them" with his theory of the "game of make-belief" ("How" 12). Readers know that the story they are following has not really happened and the characters do not really exist—that is, they are aware that the fictional world is not the actual world, but they behave as if it was: "As inhabitants of the one and only actual world, we realize that the textual universe is created by the text, but as players of the fictional game, we agree to regard it as preexisting to it, as being merely reflected in the narrator's declarations" (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 23). Walton asserts that we do not regard the fictional world as actual but that "we accomplish the 'decrease of distance' [between the actual and the fictional worlds] not by promoting fictions to our level but by descending to theirs. [...] Rather than somehow fooling ourselves into thinking fictions are real, we become fictional" ("Fearing" 23). As Pavel observes, Walton's theory involves readers' "pretend[ing] to inhabit fictional worlds" by "projecting a fictional ego [...] who is assigned the task of witnessing the fictional happenings and experiencing the appropriate feelings" (*Fictional* 85–86). This projection results in a "dual standpoint": while readers become members of the fictional world (in

70 As Ronen notes, "Claims to the contrary confuse psychological accessibility with logical possibility, i.e., we might not know all about an absent state of affairs, yet even absent domains of which we are ignorant are logically accessible to us" (93 n.).

the role of observers since physical interaction with beings or things on a different ontological level is impossible), they simultaneously continue being the people they are in the actual world (Walton, "How" 21).

This mental relocation of the recipient into the textual world can be related to *recentring*, an idea proposed by Ryan. While reading, the reader is withdrawn from "his ontological perspective" (Pavel, "Possible" 174) and moves from his system of the actual world and possible worlds into another one as "the semantic domain of fictional works does not merely comprise a singular possible world but encompasses an entire modal system, the textual universe, centered around its own actual world – [...] the textual actual world (TAW)" (Ryan, "Possible" 535).[71] The textual actual world, as opposed to the private possible worlds of the characters (e.g., their beliefs, wishes, and dreams as well as the fictional tales told by them within fiction),[72] is the fictional reality, "the factual domain" of the fictional universe (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 112). The merely possible but not actualized worlds of the fictional universe encompass a knowledge-world (reflections of the textual actual world, whether correct or incorrect, complete or incomplete) as well as an obligation-world and a wish-world ("models of what [the TAW] should be" as determined by social and moral codes or by an individual's desire, respectively) (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 111–17).[73] Apart from these satellite worlds, there exist what Ryan calls "F-universes" that enable "escape from TAW" and which come into being by means of "the mind's creations: dreams, hallucinations, fantasies, and fictional stories told to or composed by the characters" (*Possible Worlds* 119). They differ from other private worlds in that they are themselves "complete universes and they are reached by characters through a recentering" (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 119). They form a modal system within the modal system of the fictional world; they are embedded universes with their own "actual F-world" and virtual domain (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 119). The various types of private worlds are especially relevant for my examination of the narrators in *Orphans*, *Unconsoled*, and *Gantenbein*.

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71 See also Ronen: "A fictional world, like any possible world, is analogous to the actual world in that it has its own set of facts and its own subworlds and counter-worlds. As a *world* it contains 'an actual world' and a set of possibilities, alternatives, predictions and forecasts non-actualized in the fictional world" (29).

72 In this sense, the term *possible worlds* is used as a metaphor rather than in the way it was originally defined by philosophers. Like fictional worlds and in contrast to the possible worlds of logic, the private worlds of characters are incomplete and indeterminate.

73 Eco calls these worlds "possible subworlds" (235).

Truth in Fiction

Applying possible-world theory to literary studies can enhance our understanding of truth in fiction. First of all, it lends us a theoretical tool to refute the identification of the fictional with the untrue. The ontological autonomy of fictional worlds yields the basic assumption that the truthfulness of statements within a fictional world cannot be deduced from their correspondence with or difference from the facts of the actual (extratextual) world. Doležel differentiates between "*world-imaging texts* (I-texts) and *world-constructing texts* (C-texts). [...] Imaging texts are representations of the actual world; they provide information about it in reports, pictures, hypotheses, and the like. Constructing texts are prior to worlds; it is textual activity that calls [fictional] worlds into existence and determines their structure" (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 24). Accordingly, one can decide whether the statements of an I-text are true or false by comparing them with the facts of the actual world whereas C-texts—which include fictional texts—lie "outside truth-valuation; their sentences are neither true nor false" (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 24). To sum up, the validity of fictional assertions cannot be evaluated with regard to the state of affairs in the actual world, that is, the reality external to the text.[74]

Yet the self-referentiality of fictional worlds does not preclude means of assessing truth within such a world. The yardstick, however, is not the reality external to the text but the reality of the fictional world created by the text: "Fictional discourse creates its own universe of discourse in relation to which statements are either true or false" (Ronen 39). The truth of fictional utterances can be judged, in Doležel's theory, according to the "agreement or disagreement with *authenticated* narrative facts" ("Truth" 15). Doležel thus sees truth in fiction as related to the process of authentication, which involves classifying the individual narrative units (motifs) as authentic and nonauthentic (11–12). The authentic units comprise the "narrative facts, the elementary constituents of narrative worlds" (12). These narrative or fictional facts—the factual domain of the fictional world—correspond to the TAW in Ryan's model. This realm stands in opposition to "the virtual domain" (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 150), constituted mainly by the characters' private worlds.[75]

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74 By contrast, the truth value of sentences uttered in the actual world about fictional worlds (e.g., "In *Crime and Punishment*, Raskolnikov kills an old woman") can be assessed. Pavel calls such sentences *ersatz propositions* ("Possible" 170).

75 Doležel introduces the *disnarrated* (the events mentioned as possible by the narrator but not materialized in the fictional world) and *hypothetical focalization* (an event as it

There is a difference between assessing fictional truth in texts with an impersonal (authorial) extradiegetic narrator and texts with a homodiegetic narrator or subjectivized heterodiegetic narrator. According to Doležel, "entities introduced in the discourse of the anonymous third-person narrator are *eo ipso* authenticated as fictional facts" (*Heterocosmica* 149). This claim implies that "the narrator's statements do not *refer* to a world, but rather *construct* a world" since authenticated fictional facts constitute the fictional world (Doležel, "Truth" 13).[76] In Ryan's terms, the narrator's utterance in this case can be equated with the textual actual world: "[T]he speaker has absolute authority, and his or her discourse yields directly what is to be taken as the [textual] actual world" (*Possible Worlds* 113). The characters' statements, on the other hand, are not subject to this automatic authorization. They can still generate fictional facts but only if they fulfill certain conditions, such as the trustworthiness of the speaker, consistency with the other characters' utterances, and the absence of a statement to the contrary by the authorial narrator (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 150). Yet the position of the authorial narrator remains special by convention: he possesses absolute authentication authority. As Ronen points out, the authorial narrator has the power to create fictional facts even if they "represent a supernatural element or events that contradict each other. If the authoritative say-so of a speaker establishes the fictional existence of a square circle, this impossibility becomes a fictional fact" (179). In short, the narrator's utterances always generate the textual actual world in reliable heterodiegetic narration.

In contrast, a homodiegetic (personal) narrator does not, by convention, automatically possess authentication authority: "In order to be accepted as a source of fictional facts, the *Ich*-narrator has to prove his or her competence"[77] (Doležel, *Heterocosmica* 154). In Doležel's view, this kind of narrator still "assumes the role

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would be seen from the position of "a hypothetical, fictionally nonexistent observer") as two other components of the virtual domain (*Heterocosmica* 151).

76 The narrator has to be reliable for this assumption to work; Doležel's theory thus entails the reliability of all third-person narrators. Ryan comes to the same conclusion ("The Pragmatics" 533, *Possible* 113). Without adopting this idea, I use Doležel's "third-person" or "anonymous" narrator in the sense of a reliable heterodiegetic narrator. Ronen's system roughly corresponds to this usage: "Once a speaker has been situated outside the fictional world *with omniscience and omnipotence* on his side, the events and situations narrated are likely to be viewed by the reader as facts of the fictional world" (176; emphasis added). For the purposes of the following exposition, I borrow Franz Stanzel's term *authorial* to refer to this type of narrator.

77 The term *Ich-narrator* corresponds to a homodiegetic narrator.

of constructing the narrative world," but the world created in this way will only be "*relatively* authentic. It is not the world of absolute narrative facts, rather [...] an authentic belief-world of the Ich-narrator" (Doležel, "Truth" 17). Although Doležel claims that both types of narrators construct the fictional world, I wish to emphasize the difference in how the reader normally perceives this world-construction in the case of a homodiegetic narrator. Though using the narrator's utterances to construct the fictional world, the reader senses that this world was created at a higher ontological level (by the author) and the narrator only reproduces it.[78] As Ryan argues, one has to make "a precarious compromise between two seemingly incompatible attitudes toward the fictional text: viewing it as a world-reflecting as well as a world-creating utterance; taking the fictional world to exist independently of the narrator's declarations, while using these declarations as material for construing this world" ("Pragmatics" 530). Accordingly, one has to project a fictional world that exists prior to the narrator's enunciation in homodiegetic narration: the narrating character therefore merely reflects the fictional world (cf. Hamburger 250). Consequently, the reader acquires the fictional facts only through a mediator:

> [A] personal narrator is a mind interposed between the facts and the reader, and the discourse reflects the contents of his or her mind. The reader in this case does not perceive the narrative actual world directly, but apprehends it through its *reflection* in a subjective world. The reader must sort out, among the narrator's assertions, those which yield objective facts and those which yield only the narrator's beliefs. (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 113; emphasis added)

Although the narrator's discourse is the reader's only source of information about the fictional world, this discourse cannot be seen as the narrator's act of world-constructing; if the narrator is to act simultaneously as a character in this world, the world has to exist prior to the narrator's engagement with it. To sum up, I differentiate between world-constructing narrators who have the power to create a fictional world through their discourse (whatever they say—no matter how strange or incompatible with our actual world it might be—becomes fictional reality at the moment of enunciation) and world-reflecting narrators who refer to a world that the reader projects as pre-existing the narration.

The distinction between world-constructing and world-reflecting narrators proves relevant to unreliable narration. If a narrator is reliable, he depicts the

78 This difference is reflected in the fact that common readers often equate a heterodiegetic narrator with the author of the work whereas they usually understand the character narrator to be fictional and not to be confused with the author.

fictional reality accurately. His statements then correspond to fictional facts, out of which the textual actual world can be reconstructed. However, if the narrator is unreliable, his utterances create a possible world (a version of reality) that differs from the textual actual world: "The existence of unreliable narrators in fiction demonstrates a possible gap between the world projected by the narrator's declarations [...] and the facts of TAW" (Ryan *Possible Worlds* 113). The textual actual world then corresponds to the "other version," the counterstory that I have argued to be a crucial component of unreliable narration (cf. Surkamp 161). The reader may or may not be able to establish the fictional facts, but the discrepancy between the narrator's report and the textual actual world suffices to determine the narrator as unreliable. It is thus clear that only world-reflecting narrators can be unreliable: as a world-constructing narrator's discourse automatically creates fictional reality, no difference between his version and fictional facts can exist. Only in world-reflection can accuracy and hence the degree of narratorial reliability be assessed.

World-Constructing Homodiegetic Narrators

It might seem logical that all character narrators are—due to their presence in the fictional world—by definition world-reflecting narrators. This premise states that a narrator who constructs a world cannot at the same time be part of that world because she would have to construct herself as well. However, this assumption is not necessarily true in fictional works that depart from realism and challenge our view of characters as modelled on actual-world people. Before I formulate my argument about world-constructing homodiegetic narrators, I will have a brief look at how the degree of realistic illusion affects the way we project fictional worlds while reading.

Ryan, adapting Lewis's theory of counterfactuals to fictional worlds, formulates a law governing the way people read: the *principle of minimal departure*. According to this principle, we as readers reconstruct the fictional world "as conforming as far as possible to our representations of [the actual world]. We will project upon these worlds everything we know about [the extratextual] reality, and we will make only the adjustments dictated by the text" (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 51). In other words, readers use their real-world frames of reference to fill in the gaps left by the text, to complete their image of the fictional world; they do this "not because there is anything explicit in the text to make [these frames] true, but rather because there is nothing to make them false" (Lewis, "Truth" 42). This rule applies to a large number of literary texts, especially historical and realist fiction, but also to works containing fantastical elements: for example, when

a man with a pig's tail is mentioned in Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, readers are likely to imagine a being perfectly fitting the image of a person inhabiting the readers' actual world yet complemented by a pig's tail. Similarly, in Urs Widmer's novel *Im Kongo* some originally white characters, including the character narrator, are transformed into black people. As nothing contradicts these events, the reader has no reason to attribute unreliability to the narrator in order to account for them; instead, he revises his view of the fictional world projected by the novel. All other elements of the fictional world are verisimilar; the reader thus regards the characters in question as real-world people, with the exception of their nonverisimilar metamorphosis.

But is this law applicable to all situations and with all kinds of texts? Pavel argues that some kinds of texts, on the contrary, encourage their readers to "anticipate a maximal departure and to look anxiously after its signs. Mimetic principles are supplemented with antimimetic expectations" (*Fictional* 93). Minimal departure from the extratextual reality is therefore not always the most apt method for completing fictional worlds: the reader's task is to "figure out an *optimal departure* by virtue of which we would consistently make sense out of unusual states of affairs" (93). In other words, some literary works make it difficult or impossible for readers to rely on their real-world frames of reference when projecting the fictional world; readers are then forced to adjust these frames in order to grasp the reality portrayed by the text.

These different methods of reading that various types of texts elicit corroborate Brian Richardson's appeal against "the goal of universal narratological categories that are able to comprehend fictional and nonfictional texts" ("Theses"). Put simply, as different texts use different techniques and have different effects, we should not try to fit them into the same theoretical moulds: rather, the variety of texts should shape and broaden the range of concepts we use. Richardson's plea is part of a recently developed stream in narratology—an approach focusing on so-called unnatural narratives.[79] As defined by Jan Alber, unnatural narratives are those that introduce "physically impossible scenarios and events, that is, impossible by the known laws governing the physical world, as well as logically

79 Although the word *unnatural* might evoke negative connotations, it is not intended to express a disapproving attitude towards its referents. Quite the opposite is true: proponents of unnatural narratology (such as Jan Alber, Rüdiger Heinze, Henrik Skov Nielsen, and Brian Richardson) emphasize their infatuation with narratives falling into the category of unnatural (cf. Alber and Heinze 2). Note also that the phrase *unnatural narrative* is not meant as a simple opposite of *natural narrative*, defined by Fludernik as "spontaneous conversational storytelling" (*Towards* 13).

impossible ones, that is, impossible by accepted principles of logic" ("Impossible" 80). Consequently, the reader has to negotiate an optimal departure from the actual world by acknowledging the (fictional) existence of a nonverisimilar kind of reality that is operated by different rules than the reader's actual world.

By transgressing the rules of mimesis, unnatural narratives challenge not only conventional ways of reading but also existing narratological categories. In Richardson's definition,

> *an unnatural narrative is one that conspicuously violates conventions of standard narrative forms, in particular the conventions of nonfictional narratives, oral or written, and fictional modes like realism that model themselves on nonfictional narratives. Unnatural narratives furthermore follow fluid, changing conventions and create new narratological patterns in each work. In a phrase, unnatural narratives produce a defamiliarization of the basic elements of narrative.* ("What" 34)

Authors of unnatural narratives often make use of antimimetic techniques that highlight the work's deviation from the illusion of reality and from conventionalized methods of representing fictional reality.[80] At least in some cases, such innovative writing requires new or modified theoretical concepts.

Importantly, insights from unnatural narratology can inspire a refinement of the concept of unreliable narration. While I do not claim that unnatural narration automatically rules out unreliability, I wish to delineate a border between a traditionally unreliable narrator and a narrator whose reality-bending is depicted by means of an antimimetic technique. More specifically, I posit a category of a world-constructing homodiegetic narrator, which defies the conventions traditionally pertaining to homodiegesis in a way that places this technique outside of the scope of unreliable narration.

In works following mimetic principles, homodiegetic narrators are subject to anthropomorphization. Unlike heterodiegetic narrators, who can be perceived as narrating instances "temporal[ly] and spatial[ly] release[d] from the

80 Convention plays an important role in defining the scope of unnaturalness. Some techniques are not mimetic in the sense of imitating actual-world principles but due to their conventionality are not considered unnatural. Examples include omniscience in heterodiegetic narration or a homodiegetic narrator possessing an implausible memory capacity (enabling an exact rendering of dialogues that took place many years previously). For this reason, what is unnatural can change throughout time (see, e.g., Alber, "Diachronic"). Furthermore, opinions might differ as to whether a particular technique is unnatural or has already been naturalized by frequent use: for instance, whereas Alber and Heinze list narration by a dead narrator as unnatural (7), Richardson regards this technique as no longer unnatural ("What" 34).

limitations of human embodiedness," the reader expects homodiegetic narrators to act similarly to a real person telling a story and have similar cognitive abilities[81](Fludernik, *Towards* 44–45). One of these expectations is that the narrator can represent (fictional) reality with varying degrees of correctness and accuracy but cannot change it: this restriction corresponds to the status of homodiegetic narrators as world-reflecting narrators (as opposed to world-constructing narrators). However, some homodiegetic narrators transgress this limitation: although they are also characters inhabiting the fictional world, they adopt the authority conventionally granted just to heterodiegetic narrators—the power to create fictional facts under any circumstances even if these facts are contradictory and impossible. Consequently, such narrators are not merely world-reflecting but also world-constructing.

This kind of narration raises questions of unreliability as the reader has strong reasons to consider the narrator's point of view slanted. However, texts with this feature do not offer any other perspective and do not implicitly include an alternative rendering of the story to be discovered by the reader. Nor do they provide the reader with any means of distinguishing between the narrator's subjective point of view and an objective fictional reality. The reader is thus not able to construct a version of fictional reality that would correct the narrator's account. Consequently, the narrator's account is not in contradiction to the textual actual world as it is in unreliable narration; on the contrary, the narrator's possible worlds—knowledge- and wish-worlds as well as F-universes—merge with the textual actual world.

The difference between unreliable and world-constructing character narrators can also be related to Zerweck's argument that unreliable narration ceases to be a plausible interpretative strategy in highly metafictional and radically experimental postmodern literature: texts of this kind abandon realistic illusion and its effects to such an extent that they do not enable the reader to apply real-world frames of reference when naturalizing the narrative ("Historicizing" 165–67). Such texts often make it impossible to define the relationship between narrating and the narrated. Zerweck also links unreliable narration with a narrator that can be anthropomorphized. He claims that only a narrator that can be understood with recourse to real-world models of persons can be unreliable ("Historicizing" 155). As many postmodern experimental texts feature narrators

81 There are some exceptions: the reader expects some transgressions of real-world powers, such as the aforementioned implausible memory capacity, which is not perceived as unnatural in fictional characters because it has become a literary convention.

that substantially deviate from common notions of real-world persons, they are, in Zerweck's approach, automatically excluded from featuring unreliable narration. By contrast, Martens convincingly demonstrates that unreliability may lie in rhetorical aspects of the work and thus does not necessarily correlate with a narrating character's psychology (93). From my point of view, Zerweck's restriction is valid in many cases yet should not be seen as absolute.

The most important factor in whether a work can potentially feature an unreliable narrator is the structure of the fictional universe. In order to be able to apply the criterion of reliability to a work, this work needs to offer a plane of fictional reality distinguishable from the narrator's perspective. For instance, the experimental form of Pierre Robbe-Grillet's *Jealousy* certainly prevents the reader from projecting an antropomorphic narrator and from reconstructing an unambiguous fictional reality, and hence does not invite interpretations involving unreliable narration. On the other hand, contrary to Zerweck ("Historicizing" 156) I do not regard the narrator of the first chapter in Barnes's *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters* as automatically exempt from considerations of unreliability just because it is a woodworm and not a person. The story establishes its own fictional world (incompatible with our actual world), and thus the reliability of the narrator's utterances cannot be assessed against the state of affairs in our actual world but must be measured against the state of affairs within the fictional world. The narrative is coherent and comprehensible; the nonhumanity of the narrator does not make the discourse as such incompatible with that of a human being. The nonanthropomorphic narrator does not affect the way the fictional universe is structured: fictional reality can still be differentiated from the narrator's potential distortions. The narrator's utterances thus do not resist judgements of veracity within the fictional world.

In contrast, in works with a world-constructing unnatural narrator, fictional facts blend with the narrator's imagination or seem not to be present at all. When reading such texts, the secret the reader looks for is not the truth within the fictional world. This sort of discourse requires the reader to suspend disbelief to a considerable degree: even when the fictional reality as presented by the narrator goes against the reader's intuition and real-world knowledge, she has to accommodate the incongruities by imagining a different kind of reality. Not suspending one's disbelief would prevent the reader from making any sense of the narrative: discarding the strange and unrealistic elements as the narrator's fantasies or lies would leave nothing left. With reference to Yacobi's five mechanisms of integration, one can say that texts with a world-constructing homodiegetic narrator do not encourage the reader to apply the perspectival principle to account for inconsistencies, as is the case with unreliable narratives, but to employ the

functional or existential principles, both of which relate the narrative's strangeness to the aims of the whole work and to the type of reality in the fictional world, respectively.[82] The reader's recognition that the narrator is bending facts hence does not occur at the level of the reader's reconstruction of the fictional world, as in unreliable narration, but at the level of interpreting the whole work—that is, it is part of the process of *meaning production* rather than *world construction*.

A more thorough explanation of this process of meaning-making and possible interpretation strategies follows in chapter 2.2, in which I analyse the homodiegetic world-constructing narrator in Ishiguro's *Unconsoled*. Before that, however, let us get back to self-deceived unreliable narrators.

1.3 Relevant Philosophical, Psychoanalytical, and Psychological Theories and Concepts

As the category of the self-deceived unreliable narrator proves relevant for some of Ishiguro's and Frisch's novels, at least a brief excursion into the phenomenon of self-deception and related concepts is provided to acquaint the reader with the processes activated during an individual's self-deception and the possible motives for this state of mind. Other issues related to unreliable narration include the Freudian concept of repression and the narrative construction of the self, in which the unreliability of human memory plays an important role. I also address the question of whether the findings of psychology might invalidate the concept of unreliability.

Self-deception

Given the persisting dissensus concerning the issue of *self-deception*, no generally accepted definition of the term exists. Philosophers' views differ with regard to the possible intentionality, irrationality, and paradoxical nature of self-deception. The source of this difference of opinion is, to a great extent, the fact that *self-deception* is usually derived from *other-deception*, which presupposes an intention to deceive on the part of the deceiver, a condition that leads to a paradox in the case of self-deception (cf. Kipp 305). Successful deceivers must conceal their intentions to deceive so that the deceived are unware of these intentions. If the deceiver and the deceived are one person, as is the case with self-deception, a paradoxical situation arises: How can one intend to deceive, yet simultaneously remain unaware of this intention? Furthermore, in order to be successful,

82 See chapter 1.1 for an explanation of Yacobi's integration strategies.

deceivers must possess some information that their victims do not—but how is it possible for self-deceivers to hide relevant information from themselves? In David Kipp's words, self-deceivers appear to be "knowing something and not knowing it, believing something and not believing it, or believing both one thing and some opposing thing" (305). It is not my aim here to discuss the various existing views on self-deception.[83] Instead, I try to elucidate how this concept can enhance understanding of a certain type of unreliable narrator—the self-deceiving narrating character. In my approach I draw extensively on monographs on self-deception by Marcus and Fingarette, two scholars who find ways to circumvent the paradoxes that occur in many other similarly themed works.

Marcus, combining in his work insights from philosophy, literature, and literary theory and criticism, understands self-deception

> as a mental state in which the subject is *motivated* (as opposed to harboring a conscious intention) to believe in a specific proposition or state of affairs *p*. This motivation causes the subject to enact certain *mental strategies* and *behavioral patterns* that convince him of *the truth* of *p*, despite his exposure to information that tips the scales towards accepting the truth of the proposition (or state of affairs) not-*p*. (17)

Self-deception therefore involves an individual's belief in the truth of a hypothesis that is false according to evidence available to that individual. By replacing intention with potentially unconscious motivation, Marcus avoids the paradox of the subject holding an intention and simultaneously being unaware of that intention. The two basic types of motivation behind self-deception are "*desire* (or *wish*) and *anxiety*" (Marcus 23). Examinations of self-deceived literary characters corroborate Marcus's assumption that "desire and anxiety are often two complementary aspects of the motivation for self-deception that reinforce each other" (25). In addition, the self-deceived narrators analysed in this book confirm the hypothesis that "self-deception is often related to the subject's beliefs about the kind of person he is (his *self-image*), and to his aspirations—the kind of person he would like to be (his *self-ideal*)" (Marcus 25). Often an unreliable narrator's self-deception is further motivated by an attempt to avoid feelings of guilt.

The mental strategies adopted by the self-deceiver to prevent his awareness of the falsity of the belief in question "demonstrate the subject's systematic and persistent efforts to conceal from himself both the truth, and the motivation for concealing it" (Marcus 27). These strategies include directing one's attention away from facts that contradict a believed proposition *p* to information that speaks in favour of it; underestimating the importance of evidence against the truth of *p* as

83 For an overview of the main approaches, see Marcus 34–55.

well as "interpret[ing] evidence for not-*p*, or neutral evidence, as if it supports *p*"; and overestimating data that help one maintain such false convictions (27–28). Another strategy, rationalization—that is, retrospectively supporting one's actions or beliefs with reason—aims mainly at hiding one's self-deception from oneself and others: it disguises the real motives for believing in a false hypothesis by providing "supposedly rational reasons for it" (28). The subject's disregard or misinterpretation of information that speaks against her beliefs is one of the possible explanations for the seeming paradox of unreliable narration—that is, that the reader is able to construct a different version of the story in spite of the lack of sources other than the narrator's discourse. Since the narrator has access to this information, it may appear in the narrative even if the narrator does not pay attention to it or interprets it as supporting her hypothesis. For example, she might recount other characters' utterances that contradict her belief. Or she may accurately report events whose implications are at odds with her convictions while still maintaining her beliefs since she circumvents the necessity of building the contradicting evidence into her thinking.

Another paradox perceived by some theorists of self-deception, "the paradox of knowing ignorance" (Fingarette 91), can be resolved if one abandons the notion of a unified and self-transparent mind (advocated, for example, by Sartre). As Marcus argues, "self-deception requires a mental division, a (perhaps temporary) split in which one subsystem conceals some information from another or prevents an integration of the available information" (67). This conception evokes Freud's theory of the unconscious and of the mind's defence mechanisms, to which I turn later.

Herbert Fingarette, too, works with the idea of a mental division. Drawing on Freud's thoughts, especially those sketched in his last paper ("The Splitting of the Ego in the Process of Defence"), Fingarette explains that the process of defence "split[s] off from the more rational system (i.e., the system which is defended) a nuclear, dynamic complex. This nuclear entity is a complex of motive, purpose, feeling, perception, and drive towards action" (129). In other words, the ego detaches an incompatible part of itself: "The Ego treats this unassimilable but still ego-like system as 'outside' rather than 'inside'" (Fingarette 130). In Fingarette's own theory of self-deception, this split corresponds to the subject's "disavowal"—the individual's "refus[al] to identify himself as one who is [...] engaged" the way he is engaged in the world (67). To put it differently, the self-deceiver does not acknowledge a part of himself (such as certain feelings, wishes, or memories) as his own. He achieves this by preventing himself from becoming

"explicitly conscious" of the engagement he disavows, that is, by abstaining from "spelling it out"[84] (Fingarette 38–39). Self-deception, then, arises out of

> the situation in which there is overriding reason *not* to spell-out some engagement, where we skilfully take account of this and systematically avoid spelling-out the engagement, and where, in turn, we refrain from spelling-out this exercise of our skill in spelling-out. In other words, we avoid becoming explicitly conscious of our engagement, and we avoid becoming explicitly conscious that we are avoiding it. (Fingarette 43)

Thus, the subject hides the spuriousness of his belief from himself, and he conceals from himself his motivations for hiding the true nature of his belief as well.

Fingarette's theory becomes particularly interesting for analyses of fictional narrators when it comes to the side-effects of the "policy of not spelling-out an engagement":

> [I]n the course of the normal occasional spelling-out of one's engagements in the world, there will be 'breaks' or gaps as one comes near the "hidden" area in question: certain memories, perceptions, desires, action—any of which would in general be readily spelled-out on occasion—now are not spelled-out, even when the occasion would otherwise be appropriate. (49–50)

Such gaps in the narrative—gaps which, in contrast to the gaps naturally present in every fictional narrative, involve unuttered information that would normally be shared were the narrator not motivated to hold it back—are a common feature of unreliable narration: one need only recall the categories of underreporting and underreading in Phelan and Martin's typology to see this particularly clearly. It is partly by filling in these gaps, by "supplement[ing] the account," that the reader pieces together the alternative version of what happened, which corresponds to the fictional reality (Phelan and Martin 94).

Nevertheless, most gaps usually do not appear in the narrative as empty spaces, for the narrator (like the self-deceiver in real life) eliminates them by supplying different content so as to mask the absence of what he is trying to conceal. This kind of camouflage leads to the emergence of a "cover-story" (Fingarette 50). The subject will attempt to "fill in plausibly the gaps created by his self-covering policy. He will try to do this in a way which renders the 'story' as internally consistent and natural as possible, and as closely conforming as possible to the evident facts" (50). A similar situation occurs in narratives featuring a self-deceiving unreliable narrator: the narrator presents a cover-story, hence a version of the story that

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84 Fingarette's usage of the expression *spelling-out* does not entail articulation; he uses it as a metaphor to demonstrate how one becomes explicitly conscious of something (38–40).

differs from fictional reality, but mostly strives for consistency and plausibility in order to hide the falsity of his account from himself and from the narratee. For this reason, reading this kind of narrative commonly involves not only adding withheld information and inferring suppressed emotions and wishes but also deciphering the fictional reality concealed under a surface version distorted by self-deception and its strategies of covering-up the traces it leaves behind. In Phelan and Martin's words, readers are sometimes required to "reject [a narrator's] words and, if possible, reconstruct a more satisfactory account" (94). These parallels illustrate the relevancy of the concept of self-deception to unreliable narration.

Repression

As mentioned above, the workings of self-deception resemble the defence mechanisms of the mind as described by Freud. The defence mechanism that most closely resembles self-deception is repression. Freud first described repression in relation to his earlier model of the human psyche, which involves a division of the mind into three parts: the conscious, preconscious, and unconscious. To become preconscious (i.e., callable into consciousness at will, or, to use Fingarette's term, *ready to be spelled out*), contents of the mind have to go through "a kind of testing (*censorship*)" that sorts them out to prevent undesirable energies from reaching consciousness (Freud, "Unconscious" 175). Repression keeps unwelcome impulses, wishes, emotions, and memories in the unconscious as they would cause unpleasant sensations to the subject if they were in the conscious mind (Freud, "Repression" 147).

Freud's second structural model of the psychic apparatus consists of the ego, id, and superego. The ego and the id are closely interconnected; as opposed to the strict border between the preconscious and the unconscious in the original division, there is no clear boundary in this model as parts of the ego blend with the id (Freud, "Ego" 362). The id contains repressed impulses and is ruled by the pleasure principle—all its activities aim towards pleasure. The ego tries to put an end to the unlimited power of the pleasure principle in the id by employing the reality principle (Freud, "Ego" 362–64). The ego represses the impulses of the id that conflict "with [the ego's] ethical standards" mediated by the third component of the model, the super-ego (Freud, "Two" 144). The super-ego (the ego ideal) consists of a certain part of the ego that has been modified and has acquired a special function: it represents parental and social authorities (Freud, "Outline" 377). It takes the form of "*conscience*" and gives rise to "a *sense of guilt*" when the ego fails to fulfil its requirements (Freud, "Ego" 377). As a result of the

ego's endeavour to reconcile the conflicting demands of the super-ego, the id, and the external world, some desires and emotions stay repressed in the id and the individual remains unaware of their existence.

However, the repressed contents of the mind might emerge on the surface, in a disguised form, as a dream or a symptom (such as anxiety that has no obvious explanation). Such surfacing signals the "*return of the repressed*" (Freud, "Repression" 154). Here the theory becomes particularly relevant to analyses of self-deceived unreliable narrators: often seemingly unmotivated actions of the narrating characters can be attributed to the influence of a repressed wish or feeling. Moreover, the transformations the unconscious contents of the mind undergo in order to mask their unacceptability and pass the mind's censorship, for example, in dreamwork, correspond to the changes that some of the narrator's wishes, motives, emotions, and memories go through before they appear in the narrative. Similarly to a dream, which comprises "latent dream-thoughts" transformed into the disguise of "manifest dream-content" (Freud, "Two" 138), a story told by an unreliable narrator contains a manifest version (the narrator's account) and a latent version (the counterstory to be constructed by the reader). In the case of self-deceived narrating characters (as opposed to other-deceiving narrators or simple liars), the latent version is concealed from the narrator, as it usually is from the dreamer.

The two primary processes that the latent contents of a dream go through are *displacement* (the substitution of the "forbidden" contents of the mind with those only indirectly related to the forbidden contents or a shifting of the emotional significance of a component of the dream-thoughts onto contents of marginal psychic value that become a manifest constituent of the dream) and *condensation* (the combination of two or more latent impulses into a single, manifest one) (Freud, *Traumdeutung* 283–314). These principles of distortion operate in the narratives told by self-deceivers as well: as some issues might jeopardize the narrator's cover story, they cannot appear in the discourse in the way they are. Yet they continue to affect the narrator and subsequently the narration. Just as symptoms and dreams protect the individual's conscious mind from the resurfacing of repressed impulses, transformed elements in a character narrator's discourse help keep the narrator's authentic but unwelcome wishes, memories, and feelings at bay.

Narrative Identity and Unreliability of Memory

Self-deception, as described by Fingarette, involves a subject creating a "cover-story" with the purpose of cloaking any gaps in his "spelling-out of" the actual state of affairs–in other words, the individual fabricates information in order

to conceal the holes in the narrative of his life. In general, narrative and life are closer to each other than they might seem at a glance—not only self-deceived individuals but all people create an autobiographical narrative, an "'inner story' that individuals tell themselves about themselves" (Henke 80). Following the narrative turn in the humanities and social sciences, the conception of an individual's identity as a life story has become popular. The psychologist Dan McAdams defines identity as a "*configuration* of thought and activity that provides life with a semblance of psychosocial *unity* and *purpose*," into which people strive to "integrate their disparate roles, talents, proclivities, and social involvements" ("Identity" 188). Identity enables us to cope with the many diverse aspects of our lives in that we integrate them into a meaningful, coherent, and consistent unity, which also helps us understand our position in society. This integration of often seemingly incompatible versions of who we are is enabled by narratives that help us define ourselves: our life stories or self-narratives.

Some scholars, prominently among them Jerome Bruner, claim that the self is a result of such narrative, not its referent preceding the narrative: "[S]elf is a product of our telling and not some essence to be delved for in the recesses of subjectivity" ("Self-Making" 222). According to this view, the self does not exist outside of the self-narrative: without a story there is no self.[85] Other researchers are less radical,[86] yet most of them acknowledge the significance of narrative for self-definition and agree that at least a substantial part of our self-awareness takes the form of a story.[87] Even more importantly, narrative is seen as the most important source of self-knowledge and self-reflection: as Paul Ricoeur contends, "self-knowledge is an interpretation; self interpretation, in its turn, finds in narrative, among other signs and symbols, a privileged mediation" ("Narrative" 188). This also means that the characteristics of the narrative form and the conventions that govern story-telling influence the way people perceive themselves and their lives. A significant factor is "the story's indifference to extralinguistic reality"

85 For other approaches that regard the self as a product of narrative, see Bruner, *Acts* 112–13.

86 For example, Paul John Eakin, drawing on Ulric Neisser, contends that a crucial part of our self takes the form of narrative, yet this is but one of a number of "modes of self and self-experience" (Eakin 2–3). More specifically, we construct in narrative "the self of memory and anticipation," that is, the self outside of the present moment, as the temporal aspect of this mode of self-experience makes narrative an especially apt medium (Eakin 3).

87 For an argument against assigning narrative a crucial role in identity formation, see Strawson.

(Bruner, *Acts* 44): to be convincing, narrative need not be truthful, but it must be verisimilar (Bruner, *Actual* 11). The criteria for acceptability of narratives are their inner coherence and meaningfulness rather than the relation to what they refer to outside of themselves.

Another issue that calls the veracity of self-narratives into question is their heavy reliance on personal memories. Even though self-narratives also contain our plans and aims for the future and our worries about what the future might bring, memories of the past are the cornerstones of self-narratives (cf. McAdams, "Identity" 195; Bruner, "Self-Making" 210).[88] The psychologist Daniel L. Schacter talks in this regard about "the self-defining role of memory" in our lives (*Searching* 34). Yet our memories are far from reliable: the findings of cognitive psychologists show that memories are not durably stored data or accurate, photograph-like imprints of past events. First, experiences are already modified at the moment of encoding since "memories are records of how we have experienced events, not replicas of the events themselves" (Schacter, *Searching* 6), and it is clear that "[i]f the input to the memory system is not an accurate reflection of reality, then the output will necessarily be distorted" (Schacter, "Memory" 6). Second, memories are partly shaped by "the rememberer's pre-existing knowledge structures or schemas that guide "what is extracted from an experience and determine how it is reconstructed" (Schacter, "Memory" 9).[89] These schemas help to maintain "continuity between past and present" because they enable new data to be processed with recourse to older information (Birke 34). Yet the power of these schemas also implies that earlier personal memories and knowledge as well as assumptions common in the individual's culture play an important part in creating new memories, which are then susceptible to distortion. In addition, the stored representation of an experience might be transformed in the process of retrieving a memory: "[W]hen we remember a past experience, it is encoded anew into the memory system. However, we may focus on or think about only certain aspects of the retrieved experience, thereby changing its subsequent memory representation" (Schacter, "Memory" 6). In consequence, though this may seem paradoxical, the more often we remember something, the less accurate the memory might be.

The present situation of the remembering individual greatly affects the memories he is trying to retrieve. This factor in memory distortion is significant in reference to self-deceived narrators. As Schacter puts it, "Just as visual perception of

88 More specifically, self-narratives draw from "*episodic memory*, which allows us explicitly to recall the personal incidents that uniquely define our lives" (Schacter, *Searching* 17).

89 The notion of schemas in connection with memory was introduced by Frederick Bartlett in his highly influential study *Remembering*.

the three-dimensional world depends on combining information from the two eyes, perception in time—remembering—depends on combining information from the present and the past" (*Searching* 28). This observation indicates that one's knowledge, opinions, state of mind, and aims at the time of recalling co-create memories.[90] Consequently, one's present point of view, as well as one's motivation for remembering, sometimes distorts representations of the past: "In everyday life, [...] individuals often use recall as a means to an end; accuracy is not necessarily their primary or only concern" (Ross and Buehler 212). As indicated in the preceding pages, the self-deceiver is motivated to believe in a proposition contradicted by evidence; this proposition often concerns the person's self-concept. Given that one's self-concept is based largely on memories, it is in the interest of the self-deceived individual to "re-make" and bend the past: to modify memories so that they fit in with the individual's false belief. For instance, a person that wishes to repress a sense of guilt will probably fail to present accurate memories of actions that gave rise to feelings of remorse. The fact that a rememberer's state of mind often alters his memories is reflected in the aforementioned frequent occurrence of the narrator's emotional involvement in unreliable narration (it is included among the potential signals). The emotions at the time of narrating play a role in what the narrator recalls and how he interprets the memory.

The constructive character of remembering, that is, the power the present exercises over the representations of the past, suggests a mutual influence between memories and self-concepts. Memories are important building-blocks of our identity, but the way we see ourselves and the way we *want* to see ourselves has, in turn, an effect on what we remember. Not only may the current state of mind alter retrieved memories, it may also have a bearing on the selection of memories to be retrieved. Moreover, retrieved memories are subject to evaluation: we divide them into those that are to be included in our self-narrative and those that are considered irrelevant to our self (McAdams, "Identity" 196). As far as the criteria that guide selective remembering are concerned, Bruner stresses the "'need' to emphasize *agency*, to recover memories related to the initiation of relatively autonomous acts governed by our intentional states," or, if this proves impossible, to "create a kind of 'reactive agency'" by assigning oneself the role of victim ("Remembered" 41). Another factor that plays an important role in the process of creating and adjusting self-concepts is "the need or striving for *consistency* (unity in various situations) and *constancy* (unity over time) of the

90 Cf. Ross and Buehler 207; Schacter, *Searching* 22. Cf. also Bartlett: "[T]he past is continually being re-made in the interests of the present" (309).

self-image"[91] (Glomb 12–13). This need for consistency and constancy often prevents people from radical revising their self-concepts even when many things in their lives, or their interpretation of these things, have changed. Furthermore, memories are often affected by the way one wishes to be—by one's ideal self. Appearing to oneself and to others as having a wished-for personality then guides the (re)construction of the past: "How much of our remembered self is carefully, scrupulously edited in order to conform to some vision of how we would like our self to appear?" (Albright 32). Both memories and self-concepts are also affected by what we believe to be right at the given moment. These beliefs are, moreover, shaped by the culture we live in: we are influenced by what is regarded as correct and acceptable in our culture as well as by notions of what is a person (or what is a man, woman, member of a certain ethnic or social group, etc.). Culture, including culturally specific conceptions of what makes a (good) story, also influences what we determine important enough to remember and what we narrate.[92]

The unreliability of memory, together with the inaccessibility of truth, may seem to justify claims that the concept of the unreliable narrator, especially in cases that involve memory distortion, is invalidated by the impossibility of a homodiegetic narrator giving a reliable account (cf. Wall 39; Basseler and Birke 141). What is the point of conceptualizing unreliability if it is a common practice rather than a deviation from the norm? By contrast, I believe that the criteria for judging narratorial reliability remain unaffected by the fact that many unreliable narrators' accounts correspond to the way real-life people remember their pasts. As Birke argues, "The literary and extra-literary frames guiding our expectations of homodiegetic narrators are [...] much closer to [...] popular beliefs [concerning memory and its workings] than to views voiced by contemporary psychologists"; these popular beliefs mainly consist in the conviction that the act of recalling involves retrieving fairly accurate stored data (83). Furthermore, contrary to the view of some postmodern scholars who regard reality as established by memories and not vice versa, I agree with Ulric Neisser that "it *does* matter what really happened. To manage the present or survive the future, we often need an honest account of the past. Even when no such account is available, we must still believe that the past consisted of some definite set of events that have had specific consequences for the present" (2). In other words, even though

91 "das Bedürfnis nach bzw. Bemühen um Konsistenz (Einheitlichkeit in verschiedenen Situationen) und Konstanz (Einheitlichkeit über die Zeit hinweg) des Selbstbildes"

92 Cf. Bruner, "Self-Making" 210–11; Eakin, 22–33; McAdams, "Identity" 200.

it is difficult and sometimes impossible to reconstruct the past unambiguously, we should still attempt to do so in order to avoid the trap of boundless relativism.

An even more important argument against the invalidation of the unreliability concept is that we need to remember that the narrator, no matter to what extent personalized, is a function of the text rather than a real person, and unreliable narration a matter of the narrative's structure. Therefore, the fact that an unreliable narrator's manner of telling a story reflects the way people recount their lives in the real world does not interfere with the reader's detectivelike work while reading, that is, it does not impede the discovery of an alternative version. In most works of fiction, a plane of fictional reality is implicitly present—and even if it is not clear what the fictional reality is, the reader is often able to tell that it differs from the narrator's account or at least that the narrator's version is a questionable source of information.

The unreliable narrators in the novels I examine in the following chapters are primarily concerned with themselves and their own lives. Despite hiding some facts from themselves and from the narratee through narrating, they also unveil certain aspects of their selves: their narration serves as a means of self-interpretation and a source of self-knowledge. They "seem to seek the truth but then persistently evade it, or retell versions of that truth in more ostensibly comforting ways" (Wong, *Kazuo* 20). Marcus refers to narrating characters of this kind as those "that ha[ve] been partly released from [their] self-deception" (70). They are torn between the desire to know and tell the truth about themselves and the unwillingness to accept some features of their selves and lives. In their attempts to justify their lives, the subjects of my research also tend to interpret some past events in a manner that corroborates the image they have or want to have of themselves.

This brief introduction into the issues of self-deception, repression, and memory distortion demonstrates that the idiosyncrasies of fictional character-narrators constitute part of the human condition. In the succeeding chapters I hope to exemplify the fruitfulness of combining narratological tools with the findings of psychology and philosophy of the mind. On the one hand, the concepts described above facilitate an explanation of narrators' motivations for bending facts—that is, their inner struggle with unacknowledged parts of their lives. On the other hand, analysing fictional narrators and characters can give us more insight into the way real-life human minds work. This endeavour is an especially worthy enterprise in the case of Ishiguro's and Frisch's books since both writers prove to be most perceptive observers of human nature.

Part Two: The Retold and Relived Identities of Kazuo Ishiguro's Narrators

Living is easy with eyes closed,
Misunderstanding all you see.
It's getting hard to be someone
But it all works out...
John Lennon and Paul McCartney, "Strawberry Fields Forever"

If you stumble over mere believability, what are you living for? Love is hard to believe, ask any lover. Life is hard to believe, ask any scientist. God is hard to believe, ask any believer. What is your problem with hard to believe?
Yann Martel, *Life of Pi* (297)

2.1 The Distorted Self-Portrait: Unreliable Narration in *An Artist of the Floating World*

Kazuo Ishiguro's first three novels form a quasi-trilogy: all three feature elderly narrators looking back over their lives. This chapter focuses on the second novel in this series, *An Artist of the Floating World*. In addition, I draw parallels with Ishiguro's other two works in the trilogy (*A Pale View of Hills* and *The Remains of the Day*) to place the novel in the context of his writing. These three novels are characterized by a lower degree of experimentation than his two subsequent novels (*Unconsoled* and *Orphans*). The former involve a discrepancy between fictional reality and the unreliable narrator's rendering of it, in contrast to the two latter works, in which the fictional reality cannot be distinguished from the narrator's subjective version of it.

Artist, set in Japan shortly after World War II, is narrated by Masuji Ono, a retired painter, whose artistic career has ended as a result of political changes in his country: although successful and admired for his patriotic paintings before and during the war, he has fallen out of favour after it due to Japan's break with nationalism. This change endangers Ono's view of himself—the favourable self-image he has created on the grounds of his successful career. Ono's initial reaction to the threat of being forced to revise his self-concept is to deny the erroneousness of his prewar undertakings. In other words, the narrator deceives himself about the parts of his nation's history that matter to the interpretation of

his career and thus to his self-image. His self-deception results in a discrepancy between his account and the fictional reality that the reader constructs on the basis of various inconsistencies in the text. As time progresses, however, more and more memories come to Ono's mind that make him question his view of the past. Consequently, he is forced to modify his understanding of the events he remembers, which transforms his attitude not only to the past but also to the present: he shifts from feeling conflict with the younger generation that has abandoned traditional Japanese ideals in favour of American values towards "wish[ing] [...] young people well" (206). Whereas he initially ignores the wrongness of the principles his nation and he himself followed before and during the war, he eventually moves towards admitting that these principles were wrong and caused much misery. Ono's release from self-deception that can be observed in this mental transition means that the gap between his version of fictional reality (his belief-world) and the fictional reality itself is gradually closing. Yet when it comes to a matter more closely connected to Ono's self-concept—his personal history—Ono's progress towards the truth remains limited. Indeed, the gap between the two versions of reality does not diminish; on the contrary, while the reader becomes acquainted with an increasing amount of facts that contradict the narrator's account, Ono continues interpreting these same facts in a manner that supports his self-image.

In this chapter I demonstrate that the text often ironically discloses the opposite of what Ono intends to convey and that the narrator's unreliable reading is largely responsible for such disclosures: Ono's view of himself as someone who has always thought and decided for himself is contradicted by the memories he narrates. In this context I look into the way Ono's self-deception regarding his self-concept correlates with his unreliability as a narrator and examine the ways in which narratorial unreliability is connected to the characterization of the narrating character in this novel. I additionally show how the text indirectly displays Ono's repressed sense of guilt: the absence of certain scenes and motifs (his underreporting) indicates the narrator's suppressed memories, and these unconscious elements seep into the narrative in disguise. Finally, I argue that despite the reader's superior knowledge of many aspects of the narrative, this superiority is less pronounced than in traditional unreliable narration, for the text does not enable the reader to construct an unambiguous version of the story. In some cases it cannot be decided whether Ono's reporting is reliable or not. This persevering indeterminacy of some fictional facts contests the convention that an unreliable narrator's scenic presentations are usually to be trusted. Furthermore, the novel's ambiguous episodes exemplify the fact that a narrator's reporting of events cannot always be distinguished from interpretation.

As in most novels by Ishiguro, several layers of time intertwine in the narrative. In the present, Ono's explicit concern lies with his daughter Noriko's impending marriage negotiations with the family of Dr. Saito. The previous year Noriko was engaged to a man whose family opted out of the marriage at the last moment. In speaking, Ono insists that the family's official reason for cancelling the nuptials (that the young man was not worth Noriko in terms of social status) was indeed the actual reason the wedding did not take place. But in his mind he starts to ponder other possible causes of why his daughter was refused and begins to suspect that his own activities before and during the war may have been the problem. He also interprets his other daughter Setsuko's insinuations as prompting him "to take certain precautionary steps" in order to preclude the Saitos from finding out about the negative connotations of his career (49). Subsequently, Ono pays a visit to some of his former colleagues in order to warn them that the Saitos might have hired a detective to investigate him.

Although Ono emphasizes his preoccupation with Noriko's marriage negotiations, the past eventually gets more space in his narrative: Ono's delineation of present matters proceeds very slowly as it is often interrupted by excursions into his youth and his career as a painter. As Ono presents his memories in non-chronological fashion, the reader tries to piece together Ono's personal past, which, nevertheless, stays incomplete.

Ono's professional history, as he depicts it, contains three turning points. First, he breaks free from his father's authority and leaves home to become a painter. Later, he quits his job selling made-to-order paintings for the Takeda company to live in master painter Mori-san's villa with other artists whose creed is relishing, admiring, and painting the "floating world" of geisha houses and pleasure districts. After seven years of this life, Ono meets Matsuda, a sympathizer of Japanese militarism, who persuades him to join the patriotic movement. Ono's change of artistic style is seen as a betrayal of his teacher's ideology; he is forced to leave the villa and begins to produce propaganda art in the service of Japanese nationalism.

Closing the Gap: Ono's Gradual Acceptance of Social and Political Change

As I mention in the introduction, Ishiguro's novels, like many other experimental texts, challenge the traditional distinction between the categories of *story* and *discourse* because the crucial aspects of his works are located on the level of discourse rather than story. In *Artist*, too, the main emphasis lies on the narrator and his narration: the story of Ono's past is not as important as the way he presents it. Through

his narration, he attempts to retroactively justify his life. Moreover, as has often been pointed out,[93] the form and content of the novel are linked together; some aspects of the narrative technique are repeated in the plot. This feature of the novel can even be spotted in its title, which refers to the stage in Ono's career in which he was painting the world of transient pleasure under Mori-san. But the "floating world" also symbolizes society as such, a society in which "values [...] are always in flux": Ono has to come to terms with changes in society that have made villains out of former heroes (Ishiguro, "Interview" by Mason 344). Even more importantly, the "floating world" of the title might be read as the world created by Ono's narration, the "mental landscape mapped out entirely by what Ono was conscious of, and nothing else" (341). This world—Ono's belief-world—is floating because it is not always clear what the narrator's words mean; it is "a world of hidden significances" (Bradbury 365). Meaning is not communicated directly but must be extricated through filling in the gaps and deciphering the transformed contents of the narrator's mind.

The reader's activity thus at times resembles dream interpretation, which involves "a form of reading that [...] undoes distortions, expands condensations, puts displacements back in their place, and sets enigmatic visual images into comprehensible words" (Rand and Torok 15).[94] The way the characters, including Ono, communicate with each other further reflects the indirectness and incompleteness of the narrator's discourse. Their conversations (as reported by Ono) are mostly full of insinuations instead of explicit impartation of the message and contain many unspoken implications—gaps that the addressed characters fill in. Due to this masking of meaning, Ono is not always sure what other people's speech means—just as the reader sometimes finds himself at a loss as to the way he should read the text. Importantly, gaps in conversation usually result from the speakers' avoidance of unpleasant, embarrassing topics and statements that might lead to conflict. When speakers do approach such themes, they typically "[trail] off awkwardly" or "[give] a little laugh" (18). The evaded issues are often somehow related to Ono's past. As Oliver Schoenbeck notes about the nervous laughs in the characters' exchanges: "This laughing is everywhere in the text [...] a substitution for the not-to-be-said, which can in Ono's case be specified as the unacknowledged"[95] (52). Ono's utterances in conversations warn the reader about his attitude to painful issues: the omissions in these utterances alert the reader to the unavowed and suppressed elements in the whole narrative.

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93 See, for example, Walkowitz and Petry.

94 Cf. Stanton 16.

95 "Dieses Lachen ist überall im Text [...] ein Platzhalter für das Nicht-zu-Sagende, das in Onos Fall konkretisiert werden kann als das Uneingestandene."

However, despite the many gaps in the narrative, Ono does attempt to tell his story—if his only motivation were to hide something from the narratee, he would probably not narrate at all. Based on Ono's account, one can observe that he is often "lost in thought," "doing nothing in particular" (40), and "thinking about nothing in particular" (34). As the narrator's descriptions of the current state of affairs of his family, which he posits as the actual reason for telling the story, take up much less narrative space than his memories, one can guess that Ono's mind is actually preoccupied primarily with his past.

One of the reasons why Ono finds himself delving into the past is the aforementioned change of values in his country and the implications this development has had for his personal history. Ono is exposed to the general feeling that everything his generation did was wrong and would best be forgotten; he hears stories of people who have committed suicide as a way of apologizing for what they did before and during the war. These circumstances give a new meaning to Ono's own past: they show that his professional activities, performed "in good faith," were based on morally wrong principles (123). As one's self-concept is built with the help of memories that have been organized to form one's life story, the loss of or doubts about these memories pose a danger to one's sense of identity (cf. Schacter, *Searching* 7). Accordingly, the new interpretation of his career makes it harder for Ono to keep his view of himself: the facts that have been a source of pride for Ono—that he won an "auction of prestige," was a respected *sensei*, and painted successful patriotic pictures—seem to be devoid of their original significance and even hint at Ono's moral failures (9). Like most of Ishiguro's narrators, Ono becomes "desperate to explain away the present sense of a prior mistake" (Walkowitz 1052): on the one hand, he wants to know the truth about his life so that he can come to terms with the past, but, on the other hand, he is eager to maintain his favourable view of himself. The result of this double motivation is a narrative that partly reveals the fictional facts but which also distorts and covers them.

Ono's Nostalgia and Denial

The narrative is divided into four sections, each provided with a date in a diary-like format. Consequently, four different points of view that vary with regard to the narrator's attitude to his past are presented. Ishiguro, referring to this aspect of his novel, says that "the advantage of the diary narrative is that each entry can be written from a different emotional position. What [Ono] writes in October 1948 is actually written out of a different set of assumptions than the pieces that are written later on [...] so we can actually watch his progress" ("Interview" by Mason 344). Ono's progress involves, among other things, a change in the means by which he negotiates his acceptance of his flawed past and his

insignificance in the present. This acceptance depends on Ono's interpretation of the past and his role in it, as well as on his interpretation of the present. More specifically, to come to terms with the past and present, Ono resorts to self-deception regarding his personality and his life. Although the basic motivation for his self-deception at different stages of his narrative remains the same (his desire to maintain a positive self-image), the subject matter of what he misinterprets, distorts, and leaves out alters with time. This feature of the narrative proves significant for the representation of fictional reality in different parts of the novel as the narrator's changing attitude is reflected in the way the facts of the story are provided.

Throughout the first part of his narrative ("October, 1948"), Ono defends himself against the necessity of modifying his flattering self-concept by denying or ignoring the transformed view of history in his country, which enables him to close his eyes to the fact that his professional life had been a mistake. Although Ono insists that "I have never at any point in my life been very aware of my own social standing," it soon becomes clear that most of the stories of his past thematize his achievements and social status in the prewar period (19). A recurring motif in many of these stories is his sense of satisfaction whenever he feels recognized as an important person, such as when he is selected in an "auction of prestige" as the most suitable buyer of his current house (previously belonging to a highly respected family), when his recommendation helps a young man get a job, or when he is awarded a prize for his art. Obviously, Ono feels nostalgia for the times when he led a group of propaganda painters who admired him as their *sensei*[96] and when he, as he sees it, exerted great influence.

This craving for the old days is symbolized by Ono's relationship to his former pupil, Shintaro. He likes meeting Shintaro because

> [t]here is something reassuring about [...] finding Shintaro sitting up there at the bar, just as one may have found him on any evening for the past seventeen or so years [...]. It really is as though nothing has changed for Shintaro. He will greet me very politely,

96 *Sensei* is a term used in Japan for a teacher. In the novel it applies specifically to a senior painter leading a group of younger artists who admire him and loyally imitate his style. The word's literal meaning— "one who lived before"— illustrates the cyclical world of the successful painter depicted in the novel: a young man becomes a pupil of an experienced master from whom he learns and whom he then "betrays" by adopting his own style (the implication is that the *sensei*'s authority has been disclaimed); this former pupil is subsequently expelled from the community and goes on to become a *sensei* himself, with his own followers.

> as though he were still my pupil, and throughout the evening, however drunk he may get, he will continue to address me as 'Sensei' and maintain his most respectful manner towards me. (21–22)

Ono admits that "it is probably this very quality of Shintaro's – this sense that he has remained somehow unscathed by things – which has led me to enjoy his company more and more over these recent years" (23). In an environment hostile to the patriotic sentiments of the prewar period and to the former proponents of these sentiments, Shintaro's persevering respect provides Ono with a feeling of importance that he otherwise misses. Ono's longing for the prewar period is further reflected in his nostalgia for the pleasure district in which he used to spend a great amount of time with his pupils and which—as a kind of condensation of the various aspects of the past—represents the whole era in Ono's mind. He keeps returning to Mrs Kawakami's bar, the last remnant of the pleasure district, which can be seen as an oasis of the old times in a desert of modern development and thinking antagonistic to Ono's prewar doings: "[F]or all the changes which have transformed the world around it, Mrs Kawakami's remains as pleasing as ever" (26). When Ono looks over the rubble surrounding this last bar, sees "two columns of smoke rising from the rubble," becomes lost "in a melancholy mood," and views the columns "like pyres at some abandoned funeral," he is actually mourning over his lost past self—the admired *sensei* he once was (27–28).

Furthermore, sitting in the only pub left in the former pleasure district with his sole remaining admirer helps Ono clear his mind of the social turn that has brought his career to an end. In fact in the following remark, Ono seems to be projecting his own feelings onto Shintaro: "I suppose in the evenings, after a few drinks, Shintaro likes to believe he is still the idealistic young artist I first took under my supervision" (22). This comment generates a metaphor of Ono's self-deception: actually it is he who, cherishing his self-image, likes to imagine that he is still the respected *sensei* drinking with his pupil.

Ono's self-deception can also be observed in his approach to his position within his family. His daughter Noriko might be exaggerating when she says that earlier her father was "a tyrant and ordered [his family] all around. [He's] much more gentle these days" (13). Still, her statement communicates the shift in Ono's standing in the family from the traditional authoritarian patriarch to someone who lets his daughter snap back at him and mock his "moping around the house all day" and who has to submit to Noriko's and Setsuko's will in disputes (13). Again, Ono projects his feelings onto another person, this time his grandson, Ichiro. After his daughters have declined Ono's suggestion that they go and see a film, Ono reads his own suppressed disappointment at the outcome into Ichiro's lack of reaction:

'Cheer up, Ichiro,' I said. 'This is nothing to get upset about [...].'

[...]

I gave a light laugh. 'Well, Ichiro, we'll just go the day after. We can't have the women ruling over us, can we?' I gave another laugh. 'I expect they thought it would be too scary. Eh, Ichiro?'

My grandson still gave no response [...]. I decided it would be best to leave him alone for a few moments, and giving another laugh, went back through into the dining room. (39)

The three laughs in this passage constitute Ono's attempts to cover his distress not only at his daughters' noncompliance with his wish but mainly at his loss of authority in the family, with "the women ruling over" him.[97] The significance of this denial comes to light when one relates it to the teacher-pupil relationships in Ono's professional life, which strongly resemble father-son relationships: in this context Ono's altered status in the family appears as a correlate of his lost position in society (cf. Schoenbeck 53).[98] In both cases Ono hides the extent of the change from himself, for acknowledging the new circumstances might force him to revise his favourable self-image.

Ono's Unreliable Self-portrait: The Narrator as the Butt of Dramatic Irony

In the second section, narrated in April 1949, Ono's attitude to the past has been considerably modified. He has abandoned his denial of the wrongdoings of the patriotic movement and admitted that the aims of this movement were very

97 A similar scene that takes place about a year later provides a clue as to how to interpret Ichiro's silence in the quoted passage. In this later scene Ono talks to his grandson after failing to convince Setsuko that she should let her son try sake: "'No, Ichiro, it's really nothing to get upset about.' For a moment, my grandson gave no response. Then I heard his voice say behind me: 'Oji's not to worry.' [...] 'Sometimes at home,' Ichiro said, 'Father wants to do something and Mother tells him it's not allowed. Sometimes, even Father's no match for Mother'" (188). Ichiro's reaction shows that with the advantage of being one year older, he better understands the importance of the issue for his grandfather: Ichiro identifies his grandfather's concern about his declining authority within the family, related to changes in the roles of men and women in Japanese society.

98 The parallel between the patriarchal family system and the teacher-pupil cycle in an artist's career is further enhanced by the way Ono's life as a professional artist began—by opposing his father's disapproval and thus revolting against his authority. In another instance the narrator himself hints at the similarity of the teacher-pupil bond to familial relationships: "Of course, it is not only when we are children that we are open to these small inheritances; a teacher or mentor whom one admires greatly in early adulthood will leave this mark" (136).

harmful and that it was wrong for him to have supported it. The process of this gradual change, as he reports it retrospectively, culminates at the *miai* during Noriko's current marriage negotiations (the occasion on which both families officially meet for the first time), where Ono declares his responsibility for his past mistakes. Ono's new approach to the pleasure district also reflects his modified point of view: "Of course, the old district had been fine. We had all enjoyed ourselves and the spirit [...] had never been less than sincere. But then perhaps that same spirit had not always been for the best. Like many things now, it is perhaps as well that that little world has passed away and will not be returning" (126–27). Compared to his earlier melancholic view of the area as a graveyard, these lines indicate that Ono has given up his refusal to face his past errors of judgement. In other words, Ono becomes aware of one of the unpleasant issues that he has been hiding from himself: in this respect his account no longer differs from the version the reader constructs on the basis of the latent elements of the narrative and general knowledge.

This is not to say, however, that Ono is fully released from his self-deception and that he becomes a completely reliable narrator. He has had to revise his personal history and to concede that "he has misused his talents unknowingly" (Ishiguro, "Interview" by Mason 339). This could be a blow to Ono's self-concept: his being "easy in the knowledge that [he has] put hard work and achievement behind [him]" threatens to be replaced by a sense of a wasted life (*Artist* 40–41). No longer able to deny the mistakenness of his past affiliation, he tries to salvage his self-concept in a different way: he "tr[ies] to cling on to some sense of dignity" by rewriting the past and the role he played in it (Ishiguro, "In Conversation" 20). Put differently, he retells his life so that the story yields his coveted self-image—so that it confirms the picture of him as a great, successful man who was bound to make an important contribution had it not been for the inopportune circumstances.

Ono's narrative therefore continues to be guided by his self-deception: he represses some of the memories and feelings that are incompatible with his self-image and emphasizes those that sustain it. His remembering is a good example of the link between current goals and memory distortion, and of the influence one's self-ideal exerts on memories: "If we speak of a remembered self, we should also speak of an editorial self that consciously or unconsciously selects the memories that wrap us round with the sense of our dignity, our erotic power, our nonchalance, our good will toward mankind, all those pleasures that our self-consideration craves" (Albright 32). Ono's "editorial self" manifests itself in his narration mostly in the form of what Phelan and Martin identify in their

typology[99] as unreliable reading (mis- and underreporting) and underreporting. Ironically, Ono is aware of the subjectivity of self-portraits, as the following quote demonstrates, but he does not extend this insight onto the self-portrait that he produces in words, in his narration: "[E]ach of us, it seems, has his own special conceits. [...] I cannot recall any colleague who could paint a self-portrait with absolute honesty; however accurately one may fill in the surface details of one's mirror reflection, the personality represented rarely comes near the truth as others would see it" (67). In the next pages I examine the conceits that direct the workings of Ono's editorial self and thus play a role in the narrator's representation of himself and of his past.

"Rising above the sway of things": The Narrator's Unintentional Self-exposure

Ono's attempt to justify his life and his favourable self-image leads him, among other things, to emphasize his importance in the prewar period so that he can present himself as someone who used to "[be] in a position of large influence," someone whose achievements were above the average before the change of values in society marred his efforts (139). This view of himself can be seen, for example, in his digression into the story of Akira Sugimura, who "had the most ambitious of plans concerning Kawabe Park" (133). Even though the plans ended in failure, Ono thinks highly of him:

> I confess I am beginning to feel a certain admiration for the man. For indeed, a man who aspires to rise above the mediocre, to be something more than ordinary, surely deserves admiration, even if in the end he fails and loses a fortune on account of his ambitions. It is my belief, furthermore, that Sugimura did not die an unhappy man. For his failure was quite unlike the undignified failures of most ordinary lives, and a man like Sugimura would have known this. If one has failed only where others have not had the courage or will to try, there is a consolation – indeed, a deep satisfaction – to be gained from this observation when looking back over one's life. (134)

The "deep satisfaction" assigned to Sugimura rings a bell—it is the leitmotif of many of the narrator's tales from the past. Clearly, Ono once again displays a typical feature of unreliable narrators as defined by Allrath: even when unreliable narrators speak about other characters, they "reveal more about themselves than about the character they are describing"[100] ("But" 66). As earlier with Shintaro and Ichiro, Ono projects his own feelings onto Sugimura: the passage displays the pride with which he looks back over his life and how he considers his life

99 Cf. section 1.1.1.

100 "sagen [...] mehr über sich selbst als über die jeweils beschriebene Figur aus."

better than "most ordinary lives." In this way, he excuses his past mistakes and justifies his life.

As a counterexample to people such as himself, he posits his former colleague, nicknamed "Tortoise," who comes to represent people who prefer to evade risks and consequently never attempt to do anything extraordinary and to surpass the average: "I do not on the whole greatly admire the Tortoises of this world. [...] [O]ne despises their unwillingness to take chances in the name of ambition or for the sake of a principle they claim to believe in. [...] [T]hey will never accomplish anything above the mediocre" (159). It follows that Ono justifies his work in the service of military propaganda by bracketing off its social context and focusing solely on his achievements at the time. As Brian Shaffer aptly puts it, Ono "works himself around, defensively, to the position that even if he was wrong, at least he was influential: that it is more important to have made one's mark than to have been a right-minded nonentity. [...] Like Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*, Ono comes to care more about his professional standing than about the values this standing upholds" (59). Both Ono and Stevens dedicated their careers to serving something or someone in the faith that they were "mak[ing their] own small contribution to the creation of a better world," only to realize—when it was too late—that they had actually been supporting a morally wrong enterprise (*Remains* 116). Stevens, after it turns out that his lifelong employer was involved with the Nazi regime, strives to excuse his life by inventing the category of the "great butler" and convincing himself that he has spent his life meaningfully. Similarly, Ono needs to assure himself of his reputation as an artist and perhaps magnifies this reputation.

Yet precisely the character trait that Ono is the most proud of becomes a tool of irony in the text, irony which discloses Ono's continuing self-deception and unreliability as a narrator. Ono's self-esteem is largely based on his belief that he has always possessed "the ability to think and judge for [himself] even if it meant going against the sway of those around [him]" (69). The stories he recounts, such as those about revolting against his father, defending Tortoise from the other painters, leaving the Takeda firm and, finally, developing his own style and subsequently emancipating himself from his *sensei*, Mori-san, are meant to highlight this alleged characteristic. However, the reader can grasp a different version under the surface of the narration: Ono unwittingly conveys the opposite of what he believes and what he wants the narratee to believe.

The implicit information that differs from his explicitly given self-description transpires, for instance, from his aside to the "Hirayama boy," a local fool who regularly gets beaten up for singing the same patriotic songs that made him

popular before the war (61). Ono makes this digression in the context of the "general mood these days," which is characterized by disapproval with the older generation; clearly, he sees his situation as similar to that of the boy in that he, too, is being criticised for the same things for which he was once admired (59). Ironically, the resemblance extends further than Ono is aware of: Ono's interpretation of this relation is a patent example of underreading. First, just as "the Hirayama boy became fixated on those patriotic songs because of the attention and popularity they earned him," the painter hangs on to the prewar period and has difficulties coming to terms with the new values (61). Second, some events depicted by Ono reveal that rather than "rise above the sway of things" (73), he acts like the idiot who does "what he was taught" and what brings him praise without any insight into the meaning of what he has produced (60). Ono is convinced that his career proves his ability to question authority, but his account of the seven years under Mori-san speaks to the contrary: for example, he joined the others in depriving his colleague, Sasaki, of his paintings and labelling him a traitor for working out an independent style of painting (143). The blindness of Ono's loyalty is best summed up by the questions Matsuda asks of Ono: "So please tell me, when you insist you wish to have nothing to do with us, is that your own personal opinion? Or is it what your teacher happened to decree?" (88). Furthermore, it is Matsuda who leads Ono to depart from Mori-san's style: in spite of his doubts concerning the correctness of the debauchery connected with the master's teachings, Ono might never have left the villa if Matsuda had not shown him a different way.

The passage dealing with Ono's transformation from an "artist of the floating world" to a propaganda painter is especially telling with regard to Ono's "parochial perspective," his lack of understanding of what he becomes a part of (Ishiguro, "Interview" by Mason 341). Matsuda plainly abuses Ono's gullibility and ignorance to win him over: he awakens Ono's interest in his project by linking it with a struggle against poverty and confuses him so that he does not notice that its real aims have little to do with fighting poverty. Thus, although Ono prides himself in "never [...] follow[ing] the crowd blindly," his actions betray that the crucial moments of his career were accompanied by just such behaviour (73). Put differently, Ono misreads the experiences he reliably reports, and this misreading distorts his verbal self-portrait.

The incompatibility of Ono's opinion about himself—that he has always swum against the tide—with the fictional reality that the reader makes out on the basis of the implicit information contained in the text draws attention to Ono's self-deception concerning his self-concept. I have demonstrated that Ono's desire to

keep his flattering self-image motivates him to hold a false belief about himself and to disregard existing information that contradicts this belief.[101] An individual who is deceiving himself with reference to his self-concept is prone to support and cover up his self-deception with an alternative version of his life story, and to produce a self-justifying narrative that he tells to himself and possibly to others. In homodiegetic narratives this situation most often results in unreliable narration: unaffected by the narrator's self-deception, the reader recognizes evidence indicating the falsity of the narrator's belief. This link between self-deception and unreliability confirms the close "connection between the narrator's lack of reliability and the techniques of character portrayal,"[102] which Nünning suggests involves a "discrepancy between [the narrator's] explicit utterances about himself and the others, and his implicit self-characterization"[103] ("*Unreliable*" 18). The passages from *Artist* dealt with above illustrate that by making inferences that the narrator fails to make as a result of self-deceiving mental strategies, readers can construct a picture of the narrator different from his own self-image. These mental strategies, such as ignoring or misinterpreting some information, manifest themselves in the narrative in the form of unreliable reading: the narrator either misinterprets an event (for example, joining the patriotic movement) or does not pick up on some of the connotations of an event (such as in his remarks about the Hirayama boy) (cf. Phelan and Martin 95–96). Self-deceived unreliable narrators often "betray – without being aware of it – more about their own repressed fears, needs, and self-deceptions than about the alleged facts of the story"[104] (Nünning, "Synthese" 194). Accordingly, the main focus of *Artist* is on the narrator and his partly unconscious struggle to maintain his self-concept, with the story as a means to this end rather than the actual centre of the novel.

The Return of Repressed Guilt: Latent Meanings

In the given circumstances Ono's pride in his assumed ability to make independent decisions requires that he ignore the consequences of some of his choices. In the narrative this neglect is reflected in the form of conspicuous absences:

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101 Cf. my exposition of Marcus's theory of self-deception in chapter 1.3.

102 "Zusammenhang zwischen der mangelnden Glaubwürdigkeit eines Erzählers und den Techniken der Figurendarstellung"

103 "die Diskrepanz, die zwischen seinen expliziten Äußerungen über sich und andere und seiner impliziten Selbstcharakterisierung besteht"

104 "verraten [...] – ohne sich dessen bewußt zu sein – mehr über ihre eigenen verdrängten Ängste, Bedürfnisse und Selbsttäuschungen als über die vermeintlichen Fakten der Geschichte."

for all his boasting about the acceptance of his mistakes, Ono never explicitly specifies what mistakes he is talking about, nor does he show any regrets or feelings of guilt. In this context the opposing forces guiding Ono's narration come to light: although he unconsciously desires that the narrative fit his self-image, he is simultaneously searching for the truth about himself. Consequently, events that require Ono's acceptance of guilt are not directly represented in the narrative, but they are not absent altogether: they appear in disguise. This leads to the aforementioned resemblance between Ono's narration and a dream. Reminiscent of Freud's return of the repressed, when Ono's guilt surfaces it is distorted by repression so that he does not have to take it into account. As a result, some of the narrated episodes have a latent significance that can only be discovered in relation with other scenes. What Ishiguro says about the narrator in *Remains* can be extended to the narrative strategy in *Artist* as well:

> [Stevens] ends up saying the sorts of things he does because somewhere deep down he knows which things he has to avoid. He is intelligent enough, in the true sense of the word, to perceive the danger areas, and this controls how the narrative goes. The book is written in the language of self-deception. Why he says certain things, why he brings up certain topics at certain moments, is not random. It's controlled by the things he doesn't say. That's what motivates the narrative. (Ishiguro, "Shorts" 38)

Similarly, some of the events Ono narrates only gain significance when related to the gaps in the narrative.

This feature of the narration points to another link between the content and the form of *Artist*: the nonlinear structure of the text reflects the self-deceptive workings of Ono's selective memory. Drawing attention to his lack of concentration, Ono says: "It is perhaps a sign of my advancing years that I have taken to wandering into rooms for no purpose" (40). This seemingly aimless roaming through the house has a parallel in Ono's manner of narration: he drifts through various stories without obvious intent, digressing from one topic to another in no apparent order. As in most novels by Ishiguro, digressions from what the narrator considers the main story—here the events concerning Ono's family—turn out to be the actual story, despite Ono's repeated claims about the subsidiary character of the inserted memories: "But I am digressing. I was trying to recall here the details of Setsuko's stay with us last month" (28). Ono is obviously neither fully in command of his wandering around the house nor of his wandering mind. The link between these two forms of distractedness can be observed especially well in the scene concerning the reception room of his house. Ending up in this room, Ono proclaims: "I must be getting absent-minded indeed to be wandering aimlessly into – of all places – the reception room" (41). Although Ono does not

realize it, the memory that the reception room brings to his mind reveals that he has not found himself in this room by pure accident: his drifting through the house and through the narrative is guided by unconscious motivation.

Inspired by his physical presence in the reception room (or has his presence there been inspired by his memory?), Ono recalls the events that happened in the reception room of his father's house many years before. In this scene his father expresses discontent with Ono's intention of becoming an artist but fails to discourage him from acting on his aspirations: "The only thing Father's succeeded in kindling is my ambition" (47). As demonstrated above, an important goal of the narrator in his telling is to show off his ability to make decisions that defy authority; in this sense the fact that Ono remembers—as if by chance—the story of his rebellion against his father reflects the way one's current aims have an impact on remembering. Yet there is another less obvious reason why and in what way Ono recalls this incident. Ono reports being forced by his father to gather all his paintings and recalls "a heavy earthenware ashpot" placed in front of his father (43). Ono also remembers noticing "a smell of burning in the air" (44). This smell is never confirmed—Ono says that "when I glanced into the ashpot, there were no signs of its having been used" (44), and later his mother dismisses the idea, attributing it to Ono's "imagination" (47). Nevertheless, the unspoken but clear implication of the whole scene, on the first reading, is that Ono's father has burnt the paintings.

Later, Ono's conversation with his *sensei*, Mori-san, in the pavilion at Takami Gardens, shortly before he leaves the group, bears a striking similarity to the episode with his father.[105] Some of the phrases Mori-san uses are almost identical to those Ono's father employs in the earlier scene. Ono's associations bring another event into play: he had his last conversations with one of his pupils, Kuroda, in the same pavilion. Apparently, Ono is mixing up memories of the two events: "Of course, [Mori-san] may well not have used that precise phrase [...]. For it occurs to me that expression was one I myself tended to use frequently in later years and it may well be that I am remembering my own words to Kuroda on that later occasion in that same pavilion" (177). This merging of memories gains additional significance when the Mori-san scene evolves, without any transition, into an episode that involves burning paintings in Kuroda's house: "From time to time, I still turn over in my mind that cold winter's morning and the smell of burning growing ever stronger in my nostrils" (181). From the direct speech that the narrator reports, one can infer that Ono has denounced Kuroda to the

105 I am indebted to Koray Melikoğlu for alerting me to this connection.

authorities for his "unpatriotic activities," yet his own commentary on this incident is missing. Furthermore, the reader never learns what exactly preceded this event: Ono's conversation with Kuroda in the pavilion is absent from the narrative. Still, Ono's becoming "deathly pale" upon hearing Matsuda's advice to see Kuroda (95) signals that something significant happened between Ono and Kuroda during that conversation.

The narrator omits this unmistakably significant event because it is incompatible with his narrative that aims at maintaining his complimentary self-image. Birke relates such divergences from the expected speed of narration (in Genette's sense) to representations of memory in fiction:

> [The] usage of the basic types of duration mirrors the real-world expectation that memories of events that are important to us are especially detailed and accurate, while memories of everyday events are more likely to become hazy, blurred or be completely forgotten. Deviations from this pattern can signal crises of memory: for example, ellipses of important events may in some cases point to the fact that the character is suppressing a pain- or shameful memory. (Birke 70)

The reader cannot determine with certainty whether this episode is missing completely from Ono's memory as well as from his narrative; in any case, the gap betrays the working of the narrator's editorial self that smoothes out his past self by amending his life story. At this point it becomes especially evident that Ono's "acceptance of the past depends on his creative manipulation of the facts" (Wong, *Kazuo* 44). This paralipsis[106] also exemplifies that the discrepancy between the narrator's account and the alternative version the reader deduces sometimes stems from the narrator's omission of events the reader assesses as necessary for the truthfulness of the narrative—what Phelan and Martin call underreporting (95).[107]

However, the elided information about Ono's conflict with Kuroda seeps in through the earlier scenes involving the reception room and the conversation

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106 Genette calls paralipsis an ellipsis that is not temporal but "lateral," "created not by the elision of a diachronic section but by the omission of one of the constituent elements of a situation in a period that the narrative does generally cover" (Genette, *Narrative Discourse. An Essay* 51–52). It is thus not a gap in time but in content: a significant piece of information, such as an event or character, is left out of the account.

107 An extreme example of this type of unreliability occurs in *Pale* in Etsuko's unwillingness to narrate the events preceding her departure from Japan that prove significant for the matter presently occupying her mind: her daughter's recent suicide. Like Ono, she suppresses these events to avoid painful memories that could intensify her feeling of guilt.

with Mori-san. As Rebecca Walkowitz argues, "The repetition of phrases [...] implies that Ono's discussion with Mori-san and the episode with his father stand in for a scene we will never see: Ono's rejection and betrayal of Kuroda, who is subsequently tortured as a government traitor" (1070). Mori-san's "vindictive words" point to Ono's own harshness towards Kuroda (*Artist* 180), and the unconfirmed "smell of burning" in the reception room marks a displaced memory of the Kuroda incident that hints at Ono's responsibility for the destruction of his pupil's works; he does not, however, acknowledge responsibility in the scene in Kuroda's house: "'I had no idea', I said, 'something like this would happen. [...]' I stared again at the smouldering pile [...]. 'It was quite unnecessary to burn those. There were many fine works amongst them'" (183).[108] It is difficult to decide whether Ono reports his actual words uttered at the time or whether his present remorse has coloured these words.

To sum up, instead of recounting Kuroda's disownment, and admitting responsibility for what happened, Ono embellishes two other episodes from his life with aspects borrowed from the omitted story, two episodes in which he features as the victim and not the perpetrator. Thus, he can disregard his real guilt while "fac[ing] up to the past" (103). In this context, Ono's excusing of Mori-san can be read as a justification of his own actions: "[I]t is perhaps understandable, if not excusable, that the teacher lose for a moment his sense of proportion and react in ways he may later regret" (181). This shift allows Ono to introduce mitigating circumstances relevant to his deed without the painful necessity of remembering the action itself.

The hidden story likewise implies that Ono punishes Kuroda for manifesting exactly the qualities Ono propagates: independent thinking and action. What is more, Ono has denounced his pupil for disloyalty to principles that he himself has blindly adopted from Matsuda. These circumstances call to mind *Remains*, particularly Stevens's explanation of his moral failure in the past. The butler considers not revealing his doubts about dismissing two Jewish servants an act of "dignity". But this "dignity," a concept that Stevens constructs and holds on to as a means of justifying his past, actually corresponds to unquestioning loyalty

108 Ono's later remark contains another echo of Kuroda's burnt paintings: "The smell of burning still makes me uneasy. [...] It's not so long ago it meant bombings and fire. [...] Next month, it will be five years already since Michiko died" (200). This comment also links Ono's repressed sense of guilt concerning Kuroda to his unacknowledged self-accusations regarding the deaths of Ono's son, Kenji, and his wife, Michiko, both of whom died in the war that Ono indirectly supported through his work.

and suppressing one's own self together with one's own values and morals: according to the butler, servants are not "well placed to be passing judgements of such a high and mighty nature," such as firing employees on the basis of their Jewishness (149). Stevens's narration brings about his gradual release from self-deception and hence progress towards reliability (cf. Phelan, "Estranging" 231), which culminates in an outburst of regret for a wasted opportunity to act in accordance with his own identity: "[Lord Darlington] chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that. You see, I *trusted.* [...] All those years I served him, I trusted I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really – one has to ask oneself – what dignity is there in that?" (243). Stevens, in this evaluation of his own professional life at the end of the novel, articulates the connotations of Ono's career, which Ono himself never makes explicit. Unlike Stevens, Ono continues to deceive himself about this aspect of his life and to insist on his own importance. The narrator's discourse on the conflict with Kuroda offers yet another version of fictional facts and their significance different from that which Ono intends to impart and provides additional information about the narrator's state of mind.

Apart from the displaced memory of their last conversation, Ono's repression of his sense of guilt regarding Kuroda manifests itself in his reaction to an exchange with Enchi, Kuroda's pupil: "Naturally, I did not allow the young man's words to upset me unduly, but in the light of Noriko's marriage negotiations, the possibility that Kuroda was as hostile to my memory as Enchi had suggested was indeed a disturbing one" (114). In order to save himself from getting upset, Ono transfers significance from an internal danger to an external one—that is, from the thoughts on his mind to the possible repercussions for his daughter's marriage negotiations. His transfer of an inner threat onto an external element implies that Ono, in his attempts to excuse his conduct, strives to explain away his actions in the face of *his own* accusations. The precautions he purportedly takes for the sake of Noriko's happiness serve as a pretext for his own preoccupation with his past and with the nagging idea that his life was a mistake and his view of himself erroneous. This situation is repeated in the structure of the novel: "Past events [...] are told as digressions from the 'present' narrative, which superficially concerns his efforts to remove obstacles to Noriko's marriage, but which actually concerns these past events themselves or, more accurately, Ono's biased reconstruction and filtered understanding of them" (Shaffer 39–40). The memories, seemingly triggered by Ono's present preoccupation with the preparations for Noriko's marriage negotiations, serve to help Ono come to terms with his life: they avoid directly representing Ono's wrongdoings and create an image of

him as someone who was admired and exerted great influence. Throughout the novel the reader realizes that Ono's pride and attempts at repressing unpleasant feelings often affect his memories and his interpretations of them. But towards the end of the text, new possibilities of reading the whole narrative come into view and leave the reader hesitant about the degree of Ono's self-deception and his unreliability as a narrator.

A Surprise Lying in Wait: The Indeterminacy of Fictional Facts

Ono justifies his past by believing he has had a better life than most ordinary people because, in spite of being mistaken that he was doing something good, he gained much influence and success: "[H]owever one may come in later years to reassess one's achievements, it is always a consolation to know that one's life has contained a moment or two of real satisfaction" (204). Ono's winning the "auction of prestige" and being an official advisor to the "Committee of Unpatriotic Activities" seem to confirm his belief. Yet the text also offers clues that point to Ono's exaggeration of his importance in the past, to the possibility that "[p]erhaps he was both wrong *and* insignificant" (Shaffer 61). For example, his apology at the *miai* is met by general puzzlement among the participants, and Dr. Saito's reaction implies that Ono has overestimated his importance and thus his responsibility: "You're saying that you are unhappy about the work you did? With your paintings? [...] I'm sure you're too harsh on yourself" (123–124). Setsuko's statement later establishes that Dr. Saito is not simply expressing politeness: "Noriko told me she was extremely puzzled by Father's behaviour that night. It seems the Saitos were equally puzzled. No one was at all sure what Father meant by it all. Indeed, Suichi also expressed his bewilderment when I read him Noriko's letter" (191). As Suichi, Setsuko's husband, was earlier depicted as a representative of the younger generation with its "bitterness for [the] elders," his confusion is especially revealing (59).

The two conversations Ono has on his visits to Matsuda that take place in October 1948 and in the spring of 1950 belie another contradiction of Ono's importance in the past. On the first visit Ono reports the following statement by Matsuda: "[T]here are things we should both be proud of. Never mind what people today are saying. [...] It's my wish to see my life's efforts vindicated" (94). Matsuda sounds quite differently on the later occasion, one month before his death, admitting that both he and Ono were "[o]rdinary men with no special gifts of insight" and their actions have long been forgotten: "[A]s for the likes of us, Ono, our contribution was always marginal. No one cares now what the likes of you and me once did. They look at us and see only two old men with their sticks. [...]

The likes of you and me, Ono, when we look back over our lives and see they were flawed, we're the only ones who care now" (200–201). The question whether Ono, affected by his own interpretation of the past, misreports Matsuda's words during the first conversation or whether Matsuda's view of their role in history develops over time, perhaps as a result of his impending death, remains open. In both cases Matsuda's utterance during the later visit, as well as everybody's reaction to Ono's speech at the *miai*, seems to contradict not only Ono's interpretation of certain events but also his reports concerning his achievements.

The following two incongruities in the mimetic components of the narrative (i.e., in Ono's report), more specifically between Ono's claims and another character's opinion, are the most glaring: the first concerns Ono's reputation as an artist, specifically Dr. Saito's awareness of his career, and the other revolves around a conversation with Setsuko that she later disclaims. Ono insists on the accuracy of his vivid recollection of Dr. Saito's statements during their first meeting in the 1930s: "A real honour to have someone of your stature here in our neighbourhood" (131). Setsuko, by contrast, claims that Dr. Saito "was unaware that Father was connected with the art world at all until last year when the negotiations began" (193). The second discrepancy involves Setsuko's denial that she has ever urged her father to take any "precautionary steps" regarding Noriko's marriage negotiations or given him any other advice (191). This contradicts Ono's earlier presentation of an exchange in which Setsuko recommended that he "speak to certain acquaintances from his past. That is to say, before the Saitos' detective does" (85). Setsuko also opposes Ono's belief that he "too was a man of some influence, who used that influence towards a disastrous end" by reminding him that he "was simply a painter. He must stop believing he has done some great wrong" (192–93).

This second discrepancy can be explained in two ways. On the one hand, Ono, in reading into Setsuko's words, may have distorted them by projecting his own sense of guilt onto her. This distortion would suit his needs, enabling him to dwell on his past under the pretext of helping Noriko; in addition, Setsuko's speech is typically full of unuttered insinuations and thus easy to misinterpret. On the other hand, this incongruity could also be explained by Setsuko's intentional denial of her earlier advice and her downplaying of Ono's responsibility for Japan's past in the fear that he might commit suicide, a fear aroused by her father's comparison of himself to a former writer of patriotic songs who killed himself by way of apology.[109] However, the text does not provide any decisive clues that help the reader solve this riddle.

109 Petry proposes another possible reason why Setsuko disclaims her words: "It may also be the case that, now that the marriage negotiations are through, Setsuko denies having ever talked to her father about something that was obviously embarrassing to

Ono's recollections of Dr. Saito's supposed familiarity with his artistic career might suggest that Ono unconsciously generates this memory to support his self-image. Psychologists Michael Ross and Roger Buehler observe that the vividness of a memory does not necessarily entail accuracy, but it is likely to provoke a feeling of certainty about the memory's correctness. Furthermore, "[a] belief in the accuracy of such remembrances may be important to people's psychological well-being. If individuals can't have faith in these types of memories, what can they believe about their pasts? When forced to doubt such recollections, people may feel that they have lost touch with their own histories and, perhaps more important, with their sense of self" (Ross and Buehler 229). This psychological explanation could account for the firmness of Ono's faith in his memory even in the presence of conflicting information: he possibly hangs on to a false memory because it is consistent with his view of himself and of his past. All the same, no textual evidence allows the reader to decide for or against Ono's version: the text does not unequivocally signal whether the narrator misreports the given events or not.

These two unresolved conflicts of opinion at the end of the novel negate, to a certain extent, readers' "smug satisfaction" with the discovery of the hidden version of the story (D'hoker 158), their "congratulat[ing] themselves on having unearthed the figure in the carpet" (Fludernik, "Defining" 78). As D'hoker observes, this means that the novel "deviate[s] from the more 'traditional' use of unreliability" (155). In contrast to works in which readers can, upon finishing reading, distinguish fictional facts from the narrator's illusions (such as in *Remains*), *Artist* does not let the reader clearly identify its fictional reality.

A comparable situation occurs in *Pale*. The narration in this novel superficially focuses on the narrator's friend, Sachiko; explicit information about Etsuko herself is scarce. Nonetheless, the many similarities between the narrator and Sachiko let the reader infer that while speaking explicitly about her friend, Etsuko implicitly reveals information about herself and her personal history. This assumption is confirmed towards the end of the novel as Etsuko, while recounting her conversation with Mariko, suddenly acts as if she were not talking to Mariko but to her own daughter, Keiko, saying "we" instead of "you": "[I]f you don't like it over there, we can always come back" (173). Whereas it seems evident throughout the novel that Etsuko's sense of guilt about her daughter's recent suicide guides her narration, and hence that she modifies the facts of the story to

her in the first place" (77). This explanation, however, does not take into consideration Setsuko's insistence on her father's minor responsibility for wartime horrors.

include elements of the narrator's own life, the slip of the tongue at the end of the novel opens up new possibilities of reading the whole narrative. The reader suddenly feels unsure whether Sachiko ever existed. Barry Lewis suggests four possible interpretations of the relation of Etsuko's life to Sachiko's story: "(a) Etsuko is confusing different sets of memories; or (b) Etsuko is merging memory and fantasy; or (c) Etsuko is projecting her guilt about forcing Keiko to leave Japan on to her memories of Sachiko in a similar situation; or (d) Etsuko is projecting her guilt about the above on to a *fantasy* of a woman called Sachiko and her child" (36). Alternatively, Mike Petry contends that Sachiko "is actually one side of [Etsuko's] *split* personality" (57). The resemblance to *Artist* materializes: although the reader might opt for one reading, he cannot rule out other possibilities. In D'hoker's words, "the reader cannot be sure about the exact nature or extent of Etsuko's distortion of fictional facts" (157–58). Thus, as in *Artist,* the reader of *Pale* succeeds in uncovering the narrator's various evasions, projections, and instances of repression and therefore realizes that the narrator's account diverges from the fictional reality. However, the reader fails to determine the extent of this divergence, that is, the degree of the narrator's unreliability.

In addition, the unresolved points in *Artist* and *Pale* draw attention to the difference between the narrators' descriptions and their interpretations, an issue previously discussed by scholars in the context of unreliable narration.[110] Wall argues that "convention in unreliable narration almost dictates that we trust scenic presentations" and that unreliability often stems from "a conflict between the narrator's presentation of scene and his or her interpretive summaries or commentaries" (20). Wall's argument holds true for many parts of *Artist*: for instance, Ono's report of coming into the service of Japanese militarism does not adhere to his conviction that he was impervious to influence. Still, the reader has reasons to doubt the report of other episodes. First, it is uncertain to what extent the two episodes dealing with Ono's exchange with his father in the reception room and with his conversation with Mori-san in the pavilion are descriptions of fictional facts and to what extent they are inventions replacing the suppressed memory of Ono's rejection of Kuroda. Second, the reader never finds out whether Ono's reports of his conversation with Setsuko, containing her suggestion that Ono's past might be an obstacle in her sister's marriage negotiations, and of Dr. Saito referring to Ono's reputation as a renowned artist are reliable or not. In these cases the reader questions the mimetic components of the narration. In this way, Ishiguro's novel contests Wall's presupposition that the mimetic elements of

110 D'hoker, too, mentions this topic in connection with Ishiguro's novels (157 and 159).

homodiegetic narration are always trustworthy except when the narrator intends to lie to the narratee (Wall 22).

This challenge correlates with the departure of *Artist* from traditional unreliable narration in terms of the reader's superior knowledge: as the reader usually learns most of the fictional facts through the narrator's reporting of events, the narrator's unreliability in mimetic components (misreporting) of a work with a single narrator make it impossible for the reader to fully reconstruct the fictional world. Furthermore, Ono's narration indicates the impossibility of always being able to differentiate between the "mimetic" and "interpretative" authority of the narrator.[111] As I have pointed out above, the possible misrepresentation of mimetic elements can be explained as a result of Ono's motivation to deceive himself, which results in the distortion of memories. The narrator's misinterpretations might have caused this misreporting: he may have misinterpreted either events themselves (by reading into Setsuko's utterances more than she meant to convey) or more general issues affecting his understanding of the particular event (his false belief that he was once an important artist might have generated the memory of Dr. Saito mentioning his career). This analysis confirms Phelan and Martin's finding that various types of unreliability can be combined, especially that the misrepresentation of mimetic elements mostly goes hand in hand with other types of distortion: "[A] narrator can [...] be unreliable in more than one way at any point in his narration, and indeed misreporting will almost always be accompanied by another kind of unreliability" (96). This conclusion constitutes another argument against always trusting the mimetic components of the narrator's account: the narrator's mistaken interpretation of a particular episode or of things pertaining to the whole narrative might affect her presentation of that incident itself.

The ambiguous points in *Artist* lessen "the ironic distance between the reader and the narrator and [deprive] the reader of a sense of superiority vis-à-vis the unreliable narrator" (D'hoker 160). Other factors also diminish the reader's feeling of superiority: despite Ono's conceit and vanity, he is not a wholly unlikable character. He represents someone who "wanted so badly to make a grand contribution," as Matsuda puts it, but who has, as a result of his "narrow [...] perspective," devoted his efforts and talent to the wrong cause (199). The novel gives an account of the way Japan "accepted defeat with as much vigour as it had once urged victory" (B. Lewis 50): fierce, expansionist Japanese patriotism with its emphasis on national traditions and heroes was promptly substituted by the

111 For a definition of these terms, see section 1.1.1.

uncritical adoption of everything American.[112] This cultural shift illustrates that reality is to a great degree a social construct: people's values are not always intrinsic as the social milieu greatly determines what we believe in. In an interview Ishiguro suggests that "Ono is fairly normal; most of us have similar parochial visions. So the book is largely about the inability of normal human beings to see beyond their immediate surroundings, and because of this, one is at the mercy of what this world immediately around one proclaims itself to be" ("Interview" by Mason 341). In this sense Ono is a victim—just like the Hirayama boy who gets beaten for singing patriotic songs—a victim of social change, a victim of the decline of the values most people and he himself believed in, a victim of the rejection of one reality, together with its implications of what is good and what is bad, for a new one. Under such circumstances it is understandable that Ono tries to save his self-respect by creating a life story that he can be proud of.

Artist departs from traditional unreliable narration by leaving some riddles unresolved and thus preventing the reader from reconstructing an unambiguous version of fictional reality. Nonetheless, the fictional reality clearly differs from the narrator's account: *Artist* remains within the borders of unreliable narration. The novel examined in the next chapter, *The Unconsoled*, displays a more radical departure from tradition: it requires one not only to modify established ways of reading but also to adjust one's views of what is possible.

2.2 The Contagious Wound: Unnatural Narration in *The Unconsoled*

The readerly and critical success of *Remains* did not stop Ishiguro from experimenting with different narrative strategies. His fourth novel, *The Unconsoled*, besides being much longer than the previous three, leaves the realm of the realistic behind and plunges into the domain of the unnatural. The protagonist and narrator, Ryder, comes to an unknown city as a famous pianist who is supposed to help the community out of a cultural crisis. Travelling to various places to help the locals improve their situation seems to be a kind of mission for him. In this particular case, he is expected to give an important concert preceded by a speech that will contribute to the city's cultural progress. However, he has prepared nothing and is not aware of the city's problems. Everybody expects him to

112 This change is reflected in, among other things, Ono's grandson Ichiro's heroes: cowboys and Popeye the Sailor, as opposed to the samurai warriors and ninjas admired by earlier generations. Characteristically, Suichi, the emblem of the new beliefs, "thinks the American heroes are the better models for children now" (36).

be familiar with the schedule of his visit, but in fact he has no idea about any of his appointments. Moreover, someone is always asking something of Ryder; he tries to please everyone but keeps forgetting his promises as new requests arise. Chaos results as Ryder goes about the city without any understanding of the consequences of his individual actions. Furthermore, he meets various people from his past, tries to sort out his relationship with a woman and a small boy (Sophie and Boris), and has great expectations regarding the arrival of his parents, who are supposed to come to see his performance.

The narrative situation is of a different type than in Ishiguro's first three works. The narrator also presents his subjective view of the world around him, but here the world more often than not fails to resist his misinterpretations. In an interview with Maya Jaggi, Ishiguro says about the novel:

> The whole thing is supposed to take place in some strange world, where Ryder appropriates the people he encounters to work out parts of his life and his past. I was using dream as a model. So this is a biography of a person, but instead of using memory and flashback, you have him wandering about this dream world where he bumps into earlier, or later, versions of himself. (22)

Ishiguro's comparison of his novel to a dream points to the special nature of the fictional universe of *Unconsoled*: just as a dream is a product of one's mind, the fictional reality of this book originates in Ryder's mind. The laws of this fictional world are incompatible with the laws of our own actual world, and therefore we cannot apply the rules of the extratextual world to assess the narrator's mimetic authority. To put it differently, the novel places many restraints on the use of the principle of minimal departure: when reconstructing the fictional world, the reader is compelled to devise frames of reference specific to this world, and these frames will considerably differ from the reader's real-world model.[113] For instance, the flexibility of time and space portrayed in the book (e.g., a ride in a hotel lift that is described in over six pages of conversation; a building to which Ryder travels through the whole city and which turns out to be part of his hotel later on that evening) cannot be regarded as the narrator's inaccurate rendering of the fictional reality (as it would be if real-world frames of reference were applied). The text does not offer a version of reality that contradicts the narrator's perspective because the narrator's mind itself—at least partly—constructs

113 Ishiguro himself indirectly speaks against applying the principle of minimal departure to *The Unconsoled*: "I've never been happy when people have said [Ryder]'s got amnesia. [...] That seems like it's trying to be a very real-world explanation for what's going on" ("Rooted" 152). Cf. also my discussion of interpretative strategies below.

this world. In Ishiguro's words Ryder is able to "bend and twist the whole world around into being some big expression of his feelings and emotions" ("Rooted" 152). Furthermore, as in a dream, whose content is transformed by dream mechanisms, there is a latent meaning behind the manifest structure. Neither the narrator's account nor the textual actual world can be taken at face value; certain features of the fictional reality have a metaphorical significance for the protagonist's psychology. Ishiguro refers to one of his narrative techniques inspired by the workings of dreams as *appropriation*: in a dream "you are appropriating people you run into in the present to stand for somebody deeper in your psyche, in your past, in your personal history" ("Chaos" 123). Accordingly, there is seemingly no motivation for why some characters appear in *The Unconsoled* (what could at first be explained as coincidence becomes unrealistic when these occurrences proliferate). These characters, as it turns out, actually have a symbolic meaning, such as representing a part of Ryder's past.

This chapter offers an analysis of *The Unconsoled* that demonstrates how certain elements of the novel's fictional world function as metaphors of Ryder's inner life and how his subjectivity interferes with fictional reality. I elucidate the fundamental metaphor of the narrating character's "wound," the result of a traumatic experience in his childhood. I also examine the way the textual actual world and the various possible worlds of the fictional universe interplay, especially focusing on the narrator's private possible worlds that become incorporated into the textual actual world. I then address the topic of narratorial unreliability to show that although one can detect some potential indicators of unreliable narration in the novel, the absence of a stable fictional reality against which the accuracy of the narrator's account can be judged casts doubt on the usefulness of the category of unreliability in this particular case. Finally, categorizing the narrative as unnatural, I propose possible interpretation strategies that can help make sense of the impossible storyworld.

Worlds of Memories, Wounded Feelings, and Fulfilled Wishes: Characters' Possible Worlds Becoming Fictional Facts

In *Unconsoled* the reader is uncertain about the character of Ryder and about what is going on in the story. As Brian Shaffer points out, information about the protagonist's private life is scarce and the reader receives it "via Ryder's vague and elliptical memories and via the novel's other characters, each of whom is revealed to have a pathologically self-destructive personal life that significantly mirrors Ryder's own" (93). Some facts about Ryder's life are presented in disguise, adumbrated by metaphors: specific characters, places, and situations symbolize certain

aspects of the protagonist's life. For example, the character of Boris, the boy who might be Ryder's son (the reader never finds out for sure), stands for Ryder as a child and evokes Ryder's difficult childhood. Importantly, Boris feels it is his duty to take care of his family in order to salvage its happiness. This sense of duty is reflected in his remorse about not being able to tile the bathroom in his family's new flat, a failure that upsets his mother.

Houses, flats, and chalets serve as symbols of family happiness: Boris's mother, Sophie, keeps telling Ryder that once they find a new place, everything will be alright again; Christoff (a musician who has fallen out of favour with the city's inhabitants as a cultural leader and is replaced by Brodsky in that role) dreams about buying a chalet with his wife; and Ryder recalls how, as a nine-year-old boy, he looked forward to moving to a new place with his family in "the hope that a fresh, happier chapter was unfolding for us all" (214). Thus, Boris's unsuccessful attempt at improving the flat amounts to a failure to ensure his family's happiness.

Similar to Boris, Stephan, the son of Hoffman, the hotel manager, represents Ryder as a young man and developing pianist; he is expected to save his parents' marriage by becoming an accomplished pianist. So far his piano playing has always failed to please his parents, and now, before his performance that is to precede Ryder's concert, his central concern is whether his choice of the piece to be performed complies with his mother's taste. Both Boris's and Stephan's efforts to salvage familial relationships point to the significance of Ryder's obsession with his parents' alleged attendance of his performance.

The Wound Metaphor

The experiences of Boris and Stephan (i.e., representations of Ryder as a child and as a young man, respectively) help explain Ryder's fixation on his parents' supposed arrival: all three characters feel neglected by their parents and seek their approval, and all three feel that their deeds will heal a rift that had opened up in their family. This feeling is further symbolized by Brodsky—who functions as Ryder's older self, the embodiment of his fear of how he might end up—and his wound. Miss Collins tells Brodsky: "You'll never be able to serve the people of this city, even if they wanted you to. Because you care nothing for their lives. [...] Your music will only ever be about that silly little wound, it will never be anything more than that, it'll never be anything profound, anything of any value to anyone else" (499). Brodsky's wound symbolizes an unspecified childhood trauma that keeps affecting Ryder in his adulthood. It is this wound that forces Ryder to go from one place to another in search of the one performance that will

change everything: "[S]omething has gone wrong way back in his life, and a lot of his energy, the motivation behind his acquiring his expertise and his brilliance as a musician is his thinking he can fix this thing one day" (Ishiguro, "Maya Jaggi" 22). Like Brodsky, Ryder is not really interested in helping the town but in sorting out his personal problems.

Ryder's preoccupation with his wound is one of the mental acts that shape the fictional world, which then becomes a "landscape of imagination" (Ishiguro, "Rooted" 151). Apart from the younger (Boris, Stephan) and older (Brodsky) versions of himself, Ryder encounters other people and things out of his past that are somehow linked to his obsession. Borrowing Oliver Schoenbeck's notion of a *hysterical text*, that is, a text that uses characters and incidents to introduce repressed experiences in a different context (152–53), one can relate this narrative technique to Elaine Showalter's ideas on hysteria and traumatic memories. The above-mentioned characters and events then stand for Ryder's repressed memories: "memories [that] were banned from consciousness and converted into bodily symptoms that [are] 'mnemonic symbols' or physical metaphors of the suppressed trauma" (Showalter 38).[114] Thus, the text "externalize[s] the central character's interior life by means of doubles" as some of the characters he meets function "as his stand-ins in a narrative he continuously relives" (Adelman 178). This continually relived narrative evokes war veterans and other victims of trauma, who re-experience their traumatic experiences in their minds and bodies.

An example of a character double that brings out Ryder's interiority is his childhood friend Fiona, whose function is to enlighten the circumstances that gave rise to Ryder's wound. He recalls her telling him that "when *you* get married, it needn't be like it is with your mum and dad. It won't be like that at all. Husbands and wives don't always argue all the time. They only argue like that when... when special things happen" (172). This memory discloses the existence of a "special thing" that happened in Ryder's family when he was a child, the something that has gone wrong and that has haunted Ryder all his adult life. This situation is repeated in Ryder's relationship to Sophie and Boris; some events imply that this "something" happened in this family as well, for instance, when Ryder says to Sophie: "After what's happened, who knows what the future holds for the three of us? Boris has to learn to become more resilient, more independent. I'm sure in his own way, he understands this as much as I do" (334). Boris is determined to grow up, promising that he will refrain from escaping into his fantasies about a brilliant footballer: "I won't talk about Number Nine ever again.

114 Also quoted in Schoenbeck 153.

I'm much too old for that now" (335). Analogically, as a child Ryder resolved to gain more maturity and independence through "training sessions," that is, by staying away from home even when he felt a strong need for his parents' company and had to fend off "the urge to run home at full speed" (172). Ryder's training sessions seem to mark the beginning of his later obsession: by "fighting off [his] emotions," Ryder the boy convinces himself that he likes to be lonely while Ryder the adult deludes himself into believing that he has to travel around to help other people (172). In fact, both the child and the adult combat a problem that they do not acknowledge. Their endeavours are reflections of Ryder's inner struggle with a pain that originates in the distant past.

The Interplay among Possible Worlds

According to Ryan, the textual actual world of a fictional universe amounts to "a succession of different states and events which together form a history" (*Possible Worlds* 113). The textual actual world hence comprises "a factual and an actualizable domain" (113–14). The factual domain is the present situation in this sequence whereas the actualizable domain corresponds, on the one hand, to the events that happened in the past and, on the other, to "a set of general laws that determine the range of possible future developments of the plot out of the present situation" (113). Although this domain does not stem from a character's mental activity, Ryan considers it "technically a possible world" as it differs from the current condition of the textual actual world (114).

One of the features of the landscape of imagination in *The Unconsoled* is the materialization of some of Ryder's memories and images of the future; in other words, the past and the future are actualized in the present version of the textual actual world. Ryder's anxious view of his future is embodied in the figure of Brodsky and his life: Brodsky is a fallen hero, despised as a local drunkard (Ryder's own drinking is insinuated in a former neighbour's speech), who has not got rid of his wound and never will.

Ryder's memory of his childhood materializes in his hotel room, which turns out to be "the very room that had served as my bedroom during the two years my parents and I had lived at my aunt's house on the borders of England and Wales" (16). This room functioned as the boy's "sanctuary" and even now it gives rise to "a profound feeling of peace" in Ryder (17). Here, Ryder as a child created alternative worlds for himself to escape from the hard reality of his family problems: he remembers playing with his plastic soldiers one day when "a furious row had broken out downstairs. [...] But I had told myself it was nothing and, resting my cheek back down on the green mat, had continued with my battle plans"

(16). As an adult, Ryder continues to do the same: he avoids his problems by downgrading their importance ("it is nothing") and by escaping into imaginary worlds, such as when he concentrates on remembering some football players' names instead of focusing on his duties. As Cynthia Wong contends about the room incident, "Ishiguro mixes psychology with the character's sense of material reality to produce a compelling scene in which past and present merge" (72). Like some of the characters, the room, too, has a symbolic meaning with regard to Ryder's inner life.

Ryder's flights into possible worlds are repeated in Boris, who in his own escape world follows the incredible footballer Number Nine. Furthermore, in a fantasy analogical to Stephan's desire to salvage his parents' relationship by his piano playing, Boris beats up the thugs who threaten his home and in this way rescues his family from all their problems. These troubles can be overcome in this possible world because they "come from without, not from within" (Shaffer 109). These private worlds retain the status of possible, but not actual, in the fictional universe: they are incompatible with the fictional reality—that is to say, they do not form a part of the textual actual world. They correspond to F-universes in Ryan's model of the narrative universe.[115] Ryan explains that these escape worlds "may fulfill metaphorically the function of [knowledge]-worlds or [wish]-worlds with respect to the primary narrative system" (*Possible Worlds* 119). Boris's fantasy about defeating his family problems (disguised as thugs), Stephan's daydream about his success that will mend the damage in his family, and Ryder's vision of his parents' arrival add up to F-universes functioning as wish-worlds, which do not accord with the textual actual world.

The dissonance between these F-universes and the textual actual world becomes especially conspicuous when Ryder joins Boris in his fantasy world about Number Nine, which clashes with the world that another character, Geoffrey Saunders, inhabits. Saunders criticizes Ryder's acceptance of Boris's F-universe: "No reason to fill his head with rubbish. Besides, he doesn't look as young as all that. In my view, a boy his age, he should be making a proper contribution to things by now. Starting to pull his weight a bit. He should be learning about wallpapering, say, or tiling. Not all this nonsense about fantastical footballers..." (50). Saunders's speech indicates that the fantasy world serves as an escape from the hard reality, a reality in which Boris should grow up, discard the protective shield of a child's obliviousness, and learn how to improve houses; read metaphorically, Saunders's words imply Boris should start trying to save his family.

115 See chapter 1.2 for an explanation of this model.

Boris's position between the necessity to grow up and his desire to escape into imaginary worlds (e.g., in his sanctuary room) mirrors Ryder's situation as a child that gave rise to his travelling mission.

However, in the novel's fictional universe the characters' private possible worlds do not always conflict with the textual actual world. As mentioned above, Ishiguro associates the world of the novel with a dream, and indeed, many things work as they do in a dream. Ryder never wonders about anything, no matter how absurd; he takes such occurrences for granted—just as people do in dreams (cf. Shaffer 98). Furthermore, some scenes clearly depict wish-fulfilment, and other scenes resemble a dreamlike feeling of impotence (notably Ryder's inability to speak at Fiona's friend's house and the sudden hindrance in the form of a wall when he is hurrying to the concert hall). Ryder's wishes and fears materialize and become narrative facts; in other terms, the protagonist's possible worlds are integrated into the textual actual world. Ryder's wish-worlds form the fictional reality, for example, when the cinema shows his favourite film (93) or when a bus that "will take [him and Boris] right there" is waiting "directly in front of [them]" (205). The materialization of a character's wish-world in the textual actual world in itself is neither impossible nor exceptional: "A [wish]-world is theoretically satisfied in [the textual actual world] if all the propositions labeled good are true in [the textual actual world]" while "the law of desire" determines what is good (Ryan, *Possible Worlds* 117–18). Nevertheless, Ryder's wish-worlds, even though they are satisfied in the textual actual world, are often later contradicted by this same fictional reality or appear to be very unlikely. Still, one cannot simply take them as lies, hallucinations, or illusions if one does not want to deprive the narrator of all his mimetic authority.

This interpretative move would contradict Susan Lanser's argument that as a result of convention, the narrator must be granted some degree of mimetic authority: "[W]ere there no mimetic authority at all, the text would surely become incoherent and meaningless and would probably never see print" (*Narrative* 171). Understanding the narrator as devoid of mimetic authority would completely frustrate the reader's endeavour to construct the fictional world projected by the work as Brian McHale's contention corroborates: "[U]nreliability [...] is seldom ontological. What the character definitely knows to be there normally is there in the fictive world, and the reader can confidently incorporate it in his or her reconstruction; *as indeed one must, if one is to reconstruct at all*" (*Constructing* 64; emphasis added). Furthermore, as D'hoker argues, "The world of *The Unconsoled* is so thoroughly fantastic that the distinction between fact and fabrication in Ryder's narrative ceases to be meaningful. This prevents the reader not only from finding out what really happened, but also from attributing the

narrative contradictions or inconsistencies to the narrator's limited awareness or aberrant world-view" (161). This indistinguishable mixture of the narrator's imagination and his environment corresponds to the textual actual world's mixing with Ryder's private worlds.

Significantly, some of these wish-worlds that become incorporated into the textual actual world concern Ryder's family, such as when the other passengers on a bus he is riding on start doing everything to keep him and Boris satisfied; the two give the impression of an ideal father-son relationship as one of the passengers sums up: "It's good to see a father and son getting on so well. Here they are, going on a little day trip together. We don't see this sort of thing nearly enough these days" (207). Other instances of Ryder's wish-world's fulfilment involve being consoled by others in moments of distress: "[F]or a moment, I felt so overwhelmed by these thoughts I was on the brink of tears. But then I became aware of a hand on my back and someone repeating gently above me: 'Mr Ryder. Mr Ryder'" (389). The last scene of the book makes several of the protagonist's wishes a perceptible reality. Ryder is being consoled by a stranger, he is listening to a story of his parents' idyllic holiday, he is riding on a tram that "will get you [...] anywhere you like," and he is offered food and an opportunity to "forget about [troubles] and talk about whatever you like, whatever's likely to cheer you up. Football, cinema. Anything you like" (533). This materialization of his desires makes it possible for Ryder to repress his problems and to escape from them (for example, by thinking about football, his adult version of Boris's fascination with Number Nine).

Contagious Subjectivity: Against the Hypothesis of Narrative Unreliability

I have shown that the motivation behind Ryder's travelling is his private "wound," something painful from his past, which is symbolized by his wish to please his parents with his virtuosity. In the reader's actual, extratextual world, this motivation would be strictly private, but here in the fictional world affected by Ryder's subjectivity, the matter acquires such wide public importance that a ceremonial arrival in a carriage is planned for his parents (379–80) and the city's citizens recall details of his parents' short visit to their city many years previous (530). In other words, the centrality of the matter in Ryder's life is imprinted in the textual actual world. Ryder's endeavour to undo a past wrong is further reflected in the city's struggle as city councillor Pedersen sums up in a metafictional comment: "You know the way old men dream sometimes, wondering how it would have been if some key moment had gone another way. Well it can also be like that for a town, for a community" (374). Ryder's subjective perception spreads to the

other characters, resulting in a kind of collective subjectivity. Consequently, as Pico Iyer points out, "the book is a natural extension, and a grand amplification, of *The Remains of the Day*, presenting us with a whole world of Stevenses, and a whole society that wonders if it has missed the boat" (22). Contagious subjectivity can also be seen in the absurd importance of music for the city's inhabitants (in the functioning of their community as well as in their personal relationships), which is an extension of the situation in Ryder's and Stephen's families.

Whereas in Ishiguro's first three novels the narrative facts contradict the narrators' subjective perception, in *Unconsoled* Ryder's subjectivity determines, or at least mixes with, the textual actual world. His mind has the power to bend the fictional facts. As Barry Lewis suggests, "bad experiences from the past are no longer repressed – as they are by Etsuko, Ono and Stevens – but erupt into the consciousness of the protagonist and are projected outwards into his circumstances" (104). However, even within this strange dreamlike world, some contradictions between the narrator's statements and fictional reality can be detected. He refuses to admit to himself and others his lack of control over things, which is illustrated by the situation with the schedule of his visit: everybody expects him to have one and he is afraid to admit that he does not. He always explains events so that they show him in a good light—pretending that "he always intended to end up where he happens to be" (Ishiguro, "Maya Jaggi" 23). Very often, Ryder's account resembles Stevens's discourse in *Remains*; as Wall observes, "[Stevens] has had to create interpretations that do not quite square with events" (23). For example, Ryder retrospectively interprets his accidental and useless meeting with drunken citizens in a cinema as an instance of his intentional self-sacrifice for the sake of the town: "I remembered how the previous night I had given up precious hours of sleep in order to carry out further my investigations of the local conditions" (197). Whenever he realizes his unpreparedness, it is only for a short time; he usually manages to convince himself that he is "entitled to feel pleased with the amount of information I had already absorbed" (159). When, however, a feeling of guilt threatens to creep into Ryder's consciousness, he promptly transfers the responsibility onto someone else, mainly Sophie: "Suddenly I felt again an intense irritation with Sophie for the chaos she had caused and for the way she had obliged me to compromise so thoroughly my usual standards" (115). In this respect, Ryder behaves similarly to Ishiguro's other narrators: he tries to present a favourable image of himself even if he has to deceive himself in doing so.

Furthermore, Ryder is deluded about the arrival of his parents, an event that he takes for granted. He not only requires many preparations for their visit but at one point even persuades himself that his parents are already on their way:

> [T]he possibility struck me that at that very moment my parents were themselves on the point of arriving. I suddenly remembered with great vividness Hoffman's description of their horse-drawn carriage emerging out of the darkness into the admiring gaze of the crowd. In fact, [...] I had the distinct impression I could hear somewhere not so far away the sound of their carriage going by. [...] Then I heard once more the faint noises I had before: the beat of hooves, a rhythmic jingling, the rattle of a wooden vehicle. (435–36)

At first, this might seem to be another instance of Ryder's wish-world being satisfied in the textual actual world. But later it turns out that this wish contradicts the fictional reality as Miss Stratmann's words confirm: "I must remind you, Mr Ryder, it was from you and you alone that we heard of [your parents'] plans to visit us. [...] I have found no sign of them. No one has heard of them, no one has seen them" (511). In this case the textual actual world has resisted Ryder's wish-world, and the pianist's image of his parents' arrival proves to be a mere figment of the imagination, a self-delusion. As Ryder's hope that his parents will listen to his music symbolizes his hope of healing his childhood trauma (his "wound"), and this hope constitutes the primary driving force behind Ryder's career and way of life, he is actually deceiving himself about the core of his life.

In these cases a latent version of the story seems to exist behind the narrator's discourse—a situation that could indicate the narrator's unreliability. However, it is doubtful whether one can assess the narrator's reliability against the fictional reality when "[i]t is not just the narrator who is out of tune with reality, reality itself is tilted at an angle" (D'hoker 161). Furthermore, as Vince Passaro notes about the novel, "What the characters know, and therefore what we as readers can count on knowing about them, changes within a paragraph, within a sentence" (75). This situation does not allow the reader to possess superior knowledge over the narrator. The textual actual world of *Unconsoled* being extremely unstable, the reader cannot rely on the information gained from the text: what seems to be a narrative fact might turn out to be a figment of the imagination and vice versa. Even if the reader recognizes a version of the story that contradicts the narrator's account in some respects, Ryder's consciousness determines this version to such a degree that it ceases to be a consistent yardstick of the speaker's reliability.

Unnatural Narration and Interpretation Strategies

As Ryder's mind at least partly shapes the textual actual world of the novel, he is not a mere world-reflecting narrator, as is usual with homodiegetic narrators, but a world-constructing one. Ishiguro's use of an antimimetic technique employing a physically and logically impossible homodiegetic narrator, a technique that has not been conventionalized in literature, results in an unnatural narrative.

Unsurprisingly, unnatural narratives often call for different interpretation strategies than texts adhering to mimetic or traditional narrative methods.

Unlike some other theorists of the unnatural,[116] Alber claims that "even the most unnatural scenario ultimately takes us back to ourselves, that is, to the nature of the human mind and our problems in the actual world" ("Unnatural" 54). As a result, when interpreting such narratives, we naturalize them in a way that enables us to read them as a message about the human condition. Alber proposes five reading strategies that readers employ when encountering an unnatural narrative. These strategies are *reading events as internal states* (the unnatural is seen as a character's dream, fantasy, etc.); *foregrounding the thematic* (the unnatural as a means of illustrating certain themes the work attends to); *reading allegorically* (the unnatural as a function of an allegorical comment on human concerns); *blending scripts* (combining two or more frames of reference that we use to make sense of the world); and *frame enrichment* (extending our existing frames of reference to include the possibility of the unnatural) ("Impossible" 83). By recourse to one of these strategies or a combination thereof, the reader is able to relate the unnatural elements in the given literary work to familiar matters and thus make sense of the narrative. It is beyond the scope of this monograph to judge whether all unnatural narratives can be perceived in these terms. Nevertheless, a cognitive reading works very well in the case of *Unconsoled*.

Unlike situations that elicit a reading of unnatural events as internal states, in *Unconsoled* the products of the narrator's mind cannot be naturalized as possible worlds deviating from the textual actual world. Rather, the novel encourages us to incorporate unnatural elements into our frames of reference (frame enrichment): we need to "considerably stretch existing frames beyond real-world possibilities until the parameters include the strange phenomena with which we are confronted" (Alber, "Impossible" 82–83). Using our real-world frames of reference when reading *Unconsoled* would lead us to discard large parts of the narrative as utter nonsense. But the strategy of frame enrichment enables us to project a fictional world in which, for instance, time and space function in a way that would be impossible in the actual world. It also allows us to relate this unnatural world to human concerns in that we interpret the various impossible elements as materializations of the protagonist's state of mind and his repressed fears and painful experiences. As a result, we do not attribute the strangeness of the reported to the speaker's perspective but recognize it as pertaining to the author's method of portraying the narrating character's inner reality. In Yacobi's

116 Cf. Alber and Heinze 9–11.

communication model[117] this reading strategy entails applying the functional rather than the perspectival principle: the inconsistencies are explained not as a result of the narrator's faulty perspective but as "motivated by the work's purpose" ("Authorial" 111). In conclusion, what could in a different context be regarded as signals of unreliable narration is here identified as a principle guiding the whole text.

The novel also inspires an allegorical reading, which explains "impossible elements as parts of allegories that say something about the world in general rather than particular individuals" (Alber, "Impossible" 82). Contagious subjectivity, where the protagonist's inner reality spills into the world around him, makes it possible to view Ryder as an embodiment of human life in general. As Ishiguro puts it, "We go through life rather like this guy goes through these four or five days. [...] You're pushed around by other people's agendas and accidents, all this time making an effort to say, 'Yes, I decided this consciously.' We tend to think we're in far more control than we are" ("Rooted" 153). In other words, Ryder's chaotic situation amounts to a symbolic picture of the way many of us live our lives: without noticing it, we diverge from our plans (just as Ryder misses most of his appointments), yet we surrender to the false impression that we have power over the course of our lives. One of "Ryder's problem[s] is that he cannot say no" to any of the countless requests people make of him and so his "cope/demand ratio has become imbalanced": he strives for the impossible, that is, to please everybody, and is thus kept from concentrating on his most important tasks and on his family (B. Lewis 116).[118] Katherine Stanton, drawing on Jacques Derrida's thoughts on the impossibility of ethics, contends that *Unconsoled* "alerts us to the pervasiveness of claims on us. But it also notifies us of the difficult necessity of deciding among our many pressing obligations" (12). The negative example of Ryder suggests that instead of succumbing to the impossibility of meeting all the demands imposed on us, we should choose to fulfil only some of them.

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117 For an explanation of Yacobi's communication model, see chapter 1.1.

118 The porter, Gustav, can be seen as a personification of Ryder's inability to cope with the many demands placed on him (cf. B. Lewis 116). Gustav's overexertion culminates in the "Porter's Dance," during which he heaves absurdly heavy suitcases and as a consequence of which he probably dies (396). The figure of Gustav calls to mind Stevens's father in *Remains*, whose death, too, results from the exaggerated burdens he places on himself—from his unequal cope/demand ratio. His father's unwillingness to admit his gradual loss of abilities through aging hints at Stevens's own unpronounced overstraining.

Furthermore, by blurring the boundary between Ryder's subjective perspective and fictional reality, the novel thematizes questions of the relation between reality and its representation. It can be read as an illustration of Jean Baudrillard's view of postmodernity as an age dominated by simulacra, in which simulacra exist as a copy with no original: representation precedes reality. In *Unconsoled* the narrating character's mind largely forms the fictional reality—his image of this reality forms the reality itself. Under such circumstances is there still any reality at all, or does the narration (like virtual reality, art, or media in postmodern culture) just "make reality disappear and, at the same time, [...] mask that disappearance" (Baudrillard 5)? Are we not all Ryders in a sense, perceiving not an objective reality but its substitute, a subjective reality seemingly objectified by the shared perception of people around us and confirmed by our sources of information, such as the mass media? Or is Ryder's position as a co-creator of (fictional) reality an inversion of collective self-deception prompted by the norms, values, and conventions of a culture or society?[119]

As Ryder's illusions are incorporated into the textual actual world, the novel seems to illustrate Christine Brooke-Rose's suggestion regarding the nature of contemporary culture: "Certainly what used to be called empirical reality, or the world, seems to have become more and more unreal, and what has long been regarded as unreal is more and more turned to or studied as the only 'true' or 'another and equally valid' reality" (4). Ishiguro's writings up to *Unconsoled* mirror this development: whereas in the more traditional trilogy featuring elderly narrators the narrator's delusions are depicted as unreal and hence are contradicted by the fictional reality, in *Unconsoled* such delusions become the fictional reality itself. The relation between real and unreal, already challenged by the innovative use of unreliable narration in *Pale* and *Artist*, is turned upside down in *Unconsoled*.[120]

One could also think of applying Tzvetan Todorov's categories to the text. Categorizing *Unconsoled* as *fantastic* would imply that the reader hesitates between a natural explanation (most of the text would then be naturalized as an unreliable narrator's fantasy, dream, hallucination, or nonsensical babble, as in Todorov's class of the *uncanny*) and a supernatural explanation (which would rule out an interpretation using the unreliable narrator hypothesis and accept all the strange events as real in the fictional world, as in the *marvellous*). Yet the

119 Cf. Marcus 66.

120 See also section 3.3.1, where I link the novel's representation of reality to literary postmodernism.

natural explanation would mean falling victim to what could be called the *minimal departure fallacy*—that is, overusing real-world frames in reconstructing the fictional world. In an analysis of Thomas Pynchon's *Gravity's Rainbow*, McHale refuses an interpretation that naturalizes parts of the novel as the characters' mental acts:

> If we concur in this, we will have succeeded in imposing a high degree of order on a violently disorderly section of the text. This may be a satisfying outcome, but our satisfaction will have been purchased at the price of too much of the text's interest. The text is more intelligible now, true, but less interestingly so than if we had allowed ourselves to entertain less total naturalizations, to build, if only provisionally, other possible worlds, to give full play to sheerly formal patterning, to dwell on the very tension between modes of intelligibility and the apparently unintelligible. The naturalization we have been tracing, which absorbs otherwise unmotivated passages into the minds of characters, is too powerful: it drastically curtails the process of reconstructing a world, ultimately leaving too little unresolved. (*Constructing* 73)

Similar objections apply to the natural explanation of the impossible elements in *Unconsoled*. *Unconsoled* is not an example of the *pure fantastic*. Instead it is a work in which "we are [...] confronted with a *generalized fantastic* which swallows up the entire world of the book and the reader along with it" (Todorov 174). Unlike in the pure fantastic or the marvellous, the (potentially) supernatural elements in this type of fictional world cease to be extraordinary but "[become] a rule" (174). To reconstruct the fictional world, the reader cannot look for a natural explanation of the unnatural elements but needs to accept the world's strange rules.

Todorov mentions Franz Kafka as a major representative of this kind of writing. Therefore, it is not a coincidence that a number of critics (cf. Beedham 102–03) have pointed out similarities between *Unconsoled* and Kafka's works. It is precisely the fictional world consumed by the generalized fantastic, with its bizarre rules and dreamlike atmosphere, that resembles Kafka's writing. Nevertheless, while Ishiguro's novel provides distinct hints that the ignorance and helplessness of the main character stem from his chaotic and "unconsoled" mind, in Kafka's works the impersonal mysteriousness of the protagonists' surroundings and the impenetrable weirdness of institutions and authorities invite a plurality of interpretations and lay more emphasis on the role of society.

The analysis of *Unconsoled* has revealed that in his fourth novel Ishiguro handles a topic similar to those in his previous works—the narrator's coming to terms with the past through a concoction of self-deception and desire for truth—yet by different, more experimental means. *Unconsoled* stretches the narrator's unreliability beyond the limits of the concept: the narrator's self-deception overflows

the banks of his inner reality into the external fictional world, and thus no clear discrepancy between the textual actual world and the narrator's account arises.

2.3 The Dream Come (Almost) True: Unreliable and Unnatural Narration in *When We Were Orphans*

Ishiguro's interest in narrating characters that struggle with their past continues in his fifth novel, *When We Were Orphans*. As in *Unconsoled*, we meet a protagonist who desperately tries to right a childhood wrong. And like all Ishiguro's narrators discussed in the preceding chapters, he also deceives himself in order to create a life he can accept.

Orphans is narrated by Christopher Banks, an English detective, at different points in his life, ranging from 1930 to 1958. The narration starts in London as Banks is embarking on his career as a detective. His developing friendship with Sarah Hemmings is the thread that binds together the narrator's report of his first successful cases, which help him gain fame and access to high society. Both Banks and Sarah lost their parents when they were still children. The narrator then delves into nostalgic memories of his early childhood, which he spent with his English parents living in the International Settlement in Shanghai. He describes the International Settlement as an oasis of contented life amidst a desert of Chinese poverty. Some of Banks's recollections focus on playing and conversing with his Japanese friend, Akira, who is clearly an important figure in his life; others involve his mother's campaign against the opium trade in China. Although the narrator does not explicitly address the issue, it gradually becomes apparent to the reader that the opium trade was a point of conflict between Banks's mother and father; his mother disapproved of her husband's job with a company that participated in this business. Banks's happy childhood comes to an abrupt end when his father disappears. Banks believes that his father has been kidnapped, and, together with Akira, he begins acting out various scenarios in which detectives find his father. Soon afterwards Banks's mother disappears as well, and Banks is sent to England to live with his aunt. Later he becomes a renowned detective. It is clear that Banks regards his profession as more than a job: he feels he is on a special mission to eradicate all the evil in the world.

In 1937, about twenty years after his parents' still-unexplained disappearance, Banks returns to Shanghai in order to solve this mystery. Strangely, he believes he can stop the Sino-Japanese war and the looming world war by finding his parents; even more oddly, the people around him (mostly members of high society) share this belief. In Shanghai Banks meets again with Sarah, who is now married to a well-known older gentleman, Sir Cecil. Sarah wants Banks to run away with her to Macao so that she can escape her husband and Banks his mission. He

agrees to her plan, but in the end misses the departure because he is unable to break free from his desire to find his parents and thus to save the world. In the war-devastated streets of Shanghai, he meets a Japanese soldier in the midst of fighting whom he takes for his childhood friend Akira and who leads him to a house where Banks hopes to find his parents. To Banks's bitter disappointment—but not to the surprise of the reader—they are not there. Later he learns the cruel truth from Uncle Philip, a former family friend, who is now a wanted communist informer. Banks's father ran away with a mistress, and his mother was forced to become a concubine in a warlord's harem. Banks then returns to London.

In the last part of the novel, narrated twenty-one years after these events in Shanghai, the ageing Banks finds his mother in an institute for the mentally disabled in Hong Kong; she does not recognize him. Banks has reassessed his great mission as something that "got in the way of quite a lot" (309). He continues living in London and finds comfort in recalling his earlier fame and in speaking with Jennifer, an orphan he has adopted.

This chapter aims to demonstrate that *Orphans* combines the techniques for representing the character narrator's self-deception used in Ishiguro's first three novels with the more experimental method applied in *Unconsoled*. I suggest that by mixing verisimilar elements with nonverisimilar ones, the novel projects a fictional world that resembles a *hybrid world* as proposed by Doležel. I divide the novel into three sections based on the degree of verisimilarity of the fictional world: (1) parts 1 to 3, in which the narrator is located in London in 1930–1931 (I refer to this section as *London I*); (2) parts 4 to 6, narrated from Shanghai in 1937 (*Shanghai*); and (3) part 7, narrated from London in 1958 (*London II*). I examine how the narrator Banks deceives himself about the emotional consequences of the loss of his parents in childhood as represented in the fairly verisimilar fictional world of the first section of the novel: here Banks functions as a relatively traditional unreliable narrator.

Nevertheless, the unacknowledged effects of the tragedy are also portrayed in a more experimental way in this first section of the book by parodying the mystery novel genre. Consequently, Banks the detective is expected to save the world from all its troubles. This task recalls Banks the child, whose world has metaphorically crumbled after losing his parents: only finding them could bring this world back. This persevering childhood perspective, together with a repressed sense of guilt, motivates Banks's decision to become a detective. I explain how in the second section of the novel, Banks's self-deceived perspective is no longer depicted in conflict with the fictional facts. Instead, the dreamy world of this part of the novel works according to Banks's wishes, beliefs, and fears. I also discuss how the portrayal of Banks's consciousness is connected to the changing setting of the novel. Throughout the chapter, occasional references to Judith Lewis Herman's

ideas on trauma and its impact on victims as well as to Freud's theories of mental defence mechanisms aid my analysis of the protagonist's mind.

I argue that although the concept of the unreliable narrator does not apply to all parts of the narrative, it works as an interpretation strategy for the text in its entirety. Put differently, although the narrator's subjective perspective is partly exposed not by unreliability but by unnatural narration and metaphorical elements, the reader can still construct a different version of the whole story.

Hybrid Regions: The Fictional World of Orphans

The different methods of depicting the narrator's self-deception Ishiguro employs in *Orphans* are linked with different types of fictional reality. Various sections of the novel roughly correspond to different types of textual world models in Amorós's typology that I present in the introduction. When one world contains both verisimilar and nonverisimilar elements, Amorós follows "the law of semantic maxima," according to which the element farthest from the actual world determines the categorization of the world (44–45). This principle indicates that the fictional world of *Orphans* is world type 3, fictional and nonverisimilar, as some of its elements clearly violate the rules of the extratextual world. However, for interpreting the narrator's psyche, it is more useful to view the novel as combining multiple world types. In Martínez-Bonati's terms, the fictional world of the novel can be described as "heterogeneous" or "pluriregional," which means that it "contains several different *regions*, different kinds of reality" ("Towards" 191–93). To rephrase this using possible-world theory: a verisimilar fictional reality, in which Banks's wish-worlds and belief-worlds are demarcated from the textual actual world, exists in the novel alongside a nonverisimilar fictional reality, where the border between the textual actual world and the narrator's private worlds cannot be traced. These two types of fictional reality—the two different regions—are also connected to the setting of the story, or rather to the place where the narrator finds himself while narrating, which shifts from London to Shanghai and then back to London. Nevertheless, even though the two regions approximately correspond to the parts of the narrative narrated in London and in Shanghai, the border between these two types of fictional reality is not precisely defined. Ambiguity in some elements of the text results: the reader is unsure whether and to what extent certain things exist in the fictional world or whether Banks only imagines them.[121]

121 Cf. Finney: "Ishiguro positions Banks midway between the real and the imaginary, so that the reader can never be sure whether an incident is located in the real (fictive) world or in Banks' imagination."

The two London-based sections (*London I* and *London II*) project a verisimilar world with some nonverisimilar elements whereas nonverisimilar components strongly mark the Shanghai-based section (*Shanghai*). But the transition between these worlds is not abrupt; rather, the nonverisimilar elements proliferate as the narrative progresses. In Ishiguro's words, the novel "move[s] slightly from occupying one kind of world to occupying another kind of world—[...] we [...] slide toward the stranger world rather than go bang into it" (Ishiguro, "Interview" by Shaffer 4). Therefore, a precise boundary does not separate the world types. In this sense the fictional world of *Orphans* comes close to what Doležel calls a "hybrid world" (*Heterocosmica* 187). Doležel describes this kind of world as characterized by "a coexistence, in one unified fictional space, of the physically possible and physically impossible fictional entities (persons, events). Physically impossible events cannot be interpreted as miraculous interventions from the supernatural domain [as in the classical myth], since no such domain exists" (*Heterocosmica* 187). Doležel gives examples of hybrid worlds in Kafka's stories, such as in "The Metamorphosis." In *Orphans* the unnatural fictional entities are not physically impossible in themselves (as they are in *Unconsoled*) but rather illogical or extremely improbable. In the process of interpretation, the reader explains some entities as materializations of the narrator's distorted perspective, rendering them physically impossible as well (for example, when Banks's state of mind, so to speak, infects the environment and thus shapes the setting).

In *London I* unreliable narration accompanies the verisimilar mode: some parts of the narrative (such as other characters' utterances) correct the narrator's distorted view. In *Shanghai* this distorted perspective is no longer contradicted; it becomes the fictional reality. As Birke observes, starting with another character urging Banks to go to Shanghai to eliminate evil at the end of *London I*, "it becomes increasingly hard to distinguish an 'outside' from an 'inside' world—elements that we would relegate to the realm of the narrator's imagination start to appear as parts of the supposed outside world" (170). Constructing this kind of world is another way of representing the narrator's state of mind: instead of letting the narrator betray his own unreliable perspective through inconsistencies in his narration, the text adopts this perspective and performs it. Thus, in most of *London I*, Banks merely mediates the textual actual world, which conflicts with his private worlds, including his belief-world; a discrepancy between what he narrates and what actually happens emerges. In most of *Shanghai*, by contrast, Banks is a co-creator of the textual actual world, which is to a certain degree formed by his possible worlds, that is, by what he believes, wishes, and fears. This part of the text offers no other version than the one presented by the narrator. Therefore, the switch from a mostly verisimilar to a mostly nonverisimilar region

entails a shift from unreliable to unnatural narration: the originally world-referring homodiegetic narrator develops into a world-constructing one.

Sherlock's London: Banks as a Self-deceived Unreliable Narrator

London I projects a relatively solid fictional reality that is to a great degree independent of the narrator's subjective view of it. Textual inconsistencies can be attributed to the narrator's perspective, and the reader can construct a different version of the story than the one Banks explicitly recounts. Banks's unreliability as a narrator is fairly traditional in this part of the novel and concerns mostly his incorrect or insufficient interpretations (misreadings and underreadings). The most obvious gap between the narrator's beliefs and the indirectly imparted state of affairs involves Banks's image of his past self—as a child that has just lost his parents. While Banks insists that he quickly adjusted to his new situation, the reader puts together a different picture. This discrepancy repeatedly comes into view when Banks's opinions clash with other characters' statements. For example, the narrator's memories of the events following his parents' disappearance diverge from the depiction of the same events provided by the colonel who accompanied him as a boy on his journey to England. While Banks portrays his past self as a happy child unaffected by the tragic circumstances, the colonel's memories show a boy "withdrawn and moody, liable to burst into tears at the slightest thing" (27). Also, Banks feels annoyed by his former schoolmate Osbourne's remark: "My goodness, you were such an odd bird at school" (5). On the contrary, Banks believes that he "blended perfectly into English school life" (7). Later, another former classmate, Morgan, confirms Osbourne's opinion when he says that he and Banks had been "two miserable loners" and "so left out of things" (183), an idea Banks refutes, claiming that he "was always the one for mucking in" (184). Such contradictions raise suspicions that Banks's childhood in England was less cheerful than he contends.

These instances are complemented by Banks's interpretations of his own memories: he believes his memories demonstrate his success at coping with his new situation, but the reader can take them as evidence to the contrary. An example of such misinterpretation is Banks's memory of the occasion after his parents' disappearance when some adult strangers (including the colonel) were breaking the news to him that he was to move to London. In presenting this memory, Banks does not mention any emotions and focuses wholly on the external circumstances as if the only thing he was concerned with at that time was his attempts to "find a dignified way to sit in [his leather chair]" and "the ugly way [he] had been made to button [the new jacket] almost to [his] chin" (24).

However, the other figures in this scene behave in a way that suggests they "see him as a shocked and helpless boy" (Birke 161). As in a classic unreliable narration scenario, the narrator's interpretation of an event does not tally with his description of this event.

Another memory that the reader interprets differently from the narrator is the one of his perfect adjustment to a new environment, cited above. In reality Banks does not "blend" in at his new English school; he merely imitates his classmates. He recalls "reproducing [their] mannerism" and adopting the "gestures, turns of phrase and exclamations popular among my peers" (7). The young Banks wishes not to stand out and thus conceals his own authentic self by pretending to be like the other boys—but again, he fails to convince the others, as Osbourne's and Morgan's comments indicate. These incongruities between the narrator's view of his past self and the real state of affairs that emerges in the text reveal that Banks fails to acknowledge how much he was affected by the loss of his parents.

Despite the striking absence of emotions in Banks's descriptions of his childhood tragedy, the impact this event had on him is revealed indirectly when he talks about other people. For instance, he expects his adopted daughter, Jennifer, to be upset when a trunk containing her possessions from her pre-orphan days is lost. Banks's expectation shows that he felt deeply about things connected with his parents. His comments on the girl's (allegedly) repressed emotions apparently stem from his own experience: "You might say a thing like that to a lot of people and they'd believe you. But you see, I know it's not true. When I came from Shanghai, the things that came in *my* trunk, they were important to me" (132). Furthermore, his words to Jennifer betray another aspect of his English childhood—that as a child, he tried to pretend not to be distressed. He tells Jennifer: "Look, I think you're awfully brave. But there's no need, you know, to put up a show, if you see what I mean" (132). Thus, the narrator unwittingly discloses information that he avoids when talking about his reaction to the tragedy.

Interestingly, when talking to Jennifer, Banks uses words nearly identical to those of the colonel in the aforementioned memory in which Banks is sitting in a leather chair in a new jacket: "It's as though your whole world's collapsed around you" (149). The metaphor of the collapsing world proves to be well-chosen: Banks's narration reveals that the loss of his parents marked the end of an era, which he later calls the "splendid days" of his contented childhood (262). In a sense then, the tragedy marked the end of the world as he knew it, which makes it even harder for him to come to terms with the loss of his parents. As psychologists have often pointed out, "traumatic experiences are disturbing, in part, because they violate some of people's core assumptions, including that their

world is just, benevolent, and predictable" (Ross and Buehler 219; cf. J. Herman 33). Banks does not consciously acknowledge the crumbling of his world, but the symbolic elements of the novel represent it metaphorically.

Some of the narrator's utterances about other characters can be regarded as instances of Banks's underreading in the sense that the reader recognizes the significance of the narrated episodes in the context of Banks's own life while Banks disregards the connection to his story. For example, Banks recalls Akira's failure to assimilate during his stay at a school in Japan:

> From his very first day in Japan, Akira had been thoroughly miserable. Although he never admitted this explicitly, I surmised that he had been mercilessly ostracised for his "foreignness"; his manners, his attitudes, his speech, a hundred other things had marked him out as different, and he had been taunted not just by his fellow pupils, but by his teachers and even [...] by the relatives in whose house he was staying. In the end, so profound was his unhappiness, his parents had been obliged to bring him home in the middle of a school term. (89)

Akira's situation is analogical to Banks's when he is sent to England; Banks's efforts to integrate by copying his schoolmates insinuate that he, too, differed considerably from the others. Although Banks does not acknowledge his outsider status, his classmates' reactions betray his failure to fit in. From the way he narrates Akira's experience, the reader can infer the missing information concerning Banks's feelings after his displacement to England: Akira's misery in Japan foretells Banks's unhappiness in England.

As in *Artist*, the significance of some memories only arises when considered in connection with other recollections—again, the reader's activity resembles dream interpretation, for a seemingly unimportant matter might stand for an emotionally charged memory. The first thing Banks tells Sarah when she asks about Akira is a case in point: "I always think about the time we stole something together" (67). Later it turns out that this seemingly trifling episode, in which the two boys steal a small item from a servant's room, is the last thing that happens before the idyll of Banks's childhood comes to an end: before he learns of his father's disappearance. Indeed, these two incidents are intertwined: as a consequence of his father's absence, the young Banks is not allowed to go to Akira's house as arranged to help cover up the traces of their theft. What is more, when the young Banks finds out his father has vanished, he concentrates his thoughts on his missed appointment instead of worrying about his father: "There I sat down at my homework table and waited, thinking not about my father, but of Akira and how I was already going to be late for him" (103). For several days the child unconsciously employs a psychic defence mechanism that protects him from the distress of the impending loss of a parent: displacement. He directs all

his attention to a less serious matter and thus displaces the emotional charge of an upsetting idea onto a relatively harmless one: "I do not remember much about the days immediately following my father's disappearance, other than that I was often so concerned about Akira – in particular, what I would say when I next saw him – that I could not settle to anything" (105). The fact that he was able to recall the memory of the theft with ease indicates that it serves as a disguise for the more painful memory of a subsequent event, that is, his father's disappearance.

This recollection hence corresponds to what Freud calls a "screen-memory": a seemingly trivial childhood memory that actually stands for something important that has been displaced (*General* 211). In an unreliable narrator's account, screen-memories constitute yet another form of underreading: the narrator senses that the memory is significant but does not discover the actual reason for this significance. Banks later shares the memory of his father's disappearance, but the memory of the theft still remains clearer and more central to his narration; it also helps him keep the more upsetting memory at bay.

The various defence mechanisms Banks employs support his self-deceptive belief that he has not been affected deeply by the loss of his parents and lead to a discrepancy between the narrator's and the reader's interpretations of the narrated events. As a result, the reader is able to infer more information and make more accurate conclusions than the narrator. Here the novel allows the reader to enjoy dramatic irony, just like in classical unreliable narration.

The Heart of the Serpent

Banks does not think that the loss of his parents has had a lasting influence on his life, as his following remark indicates: "[M]y lack of parents – indeed, of any close kin in England except my aunt in Shropshire – had by then long ceased to be of any great inconvenience to me" (6). However, the implicit version of the story reveals that Banks's denial of the emotional consequences of his traumatic experience stands behind this conviction. Banks's lengthy disclaimers following his reports of Osbourne's, Morgan's, and the colonel's opinions about him contrast with his assurances that he is not concerned with their views. For example, he states, "I do not wish to imply that this remark of his about my being 'an odd bird', preoccupied me for more than a few moments" (11). These assurances can be then seen as expressions of Banks's uncertainty about his own convictions. Steven Pinker describes such behaviour as "glimpses of our own self-deception. When does a negative remark sting, cut deep, hit a nerve? When some part of us knows it to be true. If every part knew it was true, the remark would not sting; it would be old news. If no part thought it was true, the remark would roll

off; we could dismiss it as false" (423).[122] In this sense, the fervour with which Banks refutes other characters' descriptions of his past self draws attention to his self-deception.

Furthermore, when Osbourne invites Banks to a party where many well-connected guests are expected, Banks imagines meeting prominent detectives: "I pictured to myself one or the other of them taking a fatherly interest in me, offering all kinds of advice and insisting I come to him for guidance in the future" (11–12). His search for a fatherly figure that will see him through the beginning of his career implies that Banks is still intrigued by the concept of being "well connected" as Osbourne once described it to him: "One simply knows people. One has parents, uncles, family friends" (6). Symbolically, Banks remembers that at the party his "voice sounded conspicuously child-like" as if he were still the orphaned child looking for a connection with the outer world, that is, for his parents (13). This episode forewarns the reader about the powerful influence the narrator's mind will have on later events: "I am sure this same agitated frame of mind accounts for the fact that when I now think back to that evening, so many aspects seem somewhat exaggerated or unnatural" (12). Only here Banks realizes he has distorted this memory; later he will not only cease to discriminate between facts and his deformed vision, but his confusing of reality and imagination will also spread into the fictional world.

In addition to the crumbling of Banks's world and his childlike behaviour at the party, another element of *London I* bearing symbolic meaning is Banks's Sherlock Holmes-like career as a detective, which Banks regards as "a calling I've felt my whole life" (16) through which he intends "to combat evil" (21). The reader quickly discerns that Banks's special attitude towards working as a detective lies in his childhood trauma although Banks remains unaware of this connection. After what Banks believes to be the kidnapping of his father, he and Akira invent a game in which they perform scenes of Banks's father's rescue. In their fantasies the boys envision a better world than the one they live in: the kidnappers show kindness, and the dramas the boys enact always have a happy ending. By repeatedly playing out these scenarios, Banks strives to return to the idyllic time before the catastrophe—before his world collapsed—at least in his mind. Crucially, in their games the two boys play detectives who succeed in freeing Banks's father from the kidnappers. Banks continues to escape to this imagined world even after he relocates to England. This game was obviously a coping device he developed as a child, allowing him to at least temporarily escape into a fictive world

122 Also quoted in Palmer, *Fictional* 126.

in which he could undo the traumatic experience of being "rendered helpless by overwhelming force" (J. Herman 33). Such escape fantasies correspond to Ryan's F-universes: fictional universes, created by a character's mind, within the fictional universe of the given work. These F-universes play an essential role in the differences between how fictional reality is depicted in various parts of the novel. Similarly to Boris's fantasies about beating up the thugs in *Unconsoled*, in *London I* these F-universes act as nonactualized wish-worlds and are more or less clearly demarcated from the fictional reality (the textual actual world) of the whole text: they are only in Banks's mind, and he is aware of their fictionality. By contrast, in *Shanghai* the F-universes merge with the textual actual world.

However, even in *London I* the imagined detective scenarios have a material influence on Banks's adult life. Banks tries to turn his fantasies into reality by becoming a detective. As a child, Banks imagines that detectives will bring his parents back—not only in his playtime fantasies but also in real life: he does not want to go to England because "the detectives are working extremely hard to find my mother and father. And they're the very best detectives in Shanghai. I think they're bound to find them very soon" (25). As discussed above, when Banks's parents disappeared, his world collapsed. The world could be righted again if only detectives found his parents. By the same token, the adult Banks believes that as a detective he can "root out single-handedly all the evil in the world" and put things right (16). His childhood wish to return to the idyll of his previous life affects his choice of profession. At the mentioned party an older man belittles Banks's career choice, referring to it as a product of youthful idealism, something almost childish: "[A] lot of young men dream of becoming detectives. [...] One feels so idealistic at your age. [...] But really, my boy, it's just as well to have, let us say, a few other strings to your bow. Because a year or two from now [...] you'll feel quite differently about things" (15–16). Here the wish to become a detective is presented as a naive ideal that one leaves behind as one matures. Yet Banks, as if he never grew up, does indeed become a renowned detective in due time, a detective whose task it is to fight the evil of the world.

The high social status afforded to detectives signals that the fictional world of the novel differs from that of the extratextual world. A detective going around with a magnifying glass and gaining fame for solving cases does not fit in with the otherwise verisimilar world of *London I*. After achieving some esteem as a detective, Banks starts

> [...] to appreciate [...] the scale of responsibility that befalls a detective with any sort of renown. I had always understood, of course, that the task of rooting out evil in its most

> devious forms [...] is a crucial and solemn undertaking. But it was not until my experience of such cases as the Roger Parker murder that it came home to me just how much it means to people – and not only those directly concerned, but the public at large – to be cleansed of such encroaching wickedness. (30)

The idea that a single person—a detective—is capable of ridding the world of evil and making it a better place calls to mind the young Banks's unshakeable faith in the detectives he believed to be looking for his parents, especially in one famous detective, Inspector Kung.

Banks believed that the detectives led by Kung would eventually mend his shattered world; this belief affected his choice of vocation. Yet it also infects the fictional reality, which adopts Banks's conception of world-saving detectives. This kind of logic is reminiscent of the mystery novel genre, about which Ishiguro says:

> Those mystery novels written by people like Agatha Christie, Ngaio Marsh, or Dorothy L. Sayers often give you an idealized harmonious community, usually an English village, that would be absolutely tranquil if only this one thing hadn't gone wrong... which is that somebody's been murdered. The evil is always very clear and easy to identify; you just don't know who the bad person is, and that's the mystery. So the detective unmasks this one element and everything goes back to being beautiful again. ("Kazuo Ishiguro" 159)

The connection between Banks's childhood dream and the mystery novel indicates that the psychological condition of the narrating character—especially his child-like belief in saving the world by finding his parents—"is exposed by Ishiguro as much through his parody of genre as through more psychologically realist means" (Finney). The simplified reality conventionally represented in mystery novels, which usually aim at suspense rather than depth of psychological observations, is here tailored to be read as a metaphor of the complex mental state of a person affected by childhood trauma. As a result, detective Banks in *Orphans* looks for something that only exists in his mind (his kidnapped parents), and thus his work differs considerably from that of detectives in a classic mystery: "For Holmes, the clues that he must decipher exist apart from him, in an objective world; anyone can read them, if they have the perspicuity. Conversely, Banks cannot rely on such neat divisions; he must search the winding, shifting paths of his memory, where boundaries between 'inside' and 'outside' blur" (Weiss 140). Consequently, even the reader who has also taken on the role of detective in order to determine a reliable version of the story is able to see less and less beyond the narrator's inner reality, and therefore her superior knowledge over the narrator is limited.

The way the novel copies the kind of fictional reality typical for the detective genre is a sign of Banks's inner reality merging into and modifying the otherwise

stable textual actual world in *London I*. The influence of Banks's mind on the fictional reality gradually strengthens as references to the contemporary state of affairs in Shanghai emerge. Some of the other characters begin insinuating that Shanghai corresponds to "[t]he heart of the serpent," that is, the centre of all evil, and that Banks is the one who has the means to "slay the thing once and for all"—to eradicate the evil from the world—and therefore should go to Shanghai as soon as possible (136). It soon becomes evident that everybody sees the source of the world's current problems in the unresolved case of the kidnapping of Banks's parents.

Significantly, the Second Sino-Japanese War is used in the novel as a metaphor of Banks's repressed anxiety that stems from the trauma of losing his parents. A cleric whom Banks meets at a social event tells him: "But you have, shall we say, a special relationship to what is, in truth, the source of all our current anxieties. Oh come, my dear fellow! You know perfectly well to what I am referring! You know better than anyone the eye of the storm is to be found not in Europe at all, but in the Far East. In Shanghai, to be exact" (138). The cleric's utterance is a symbolic expression of what has already been represented through unreliable narration: the fact that Banks hides from himself the impact the disappearance of his parents has had on him. While the cleric insists that Banks has "a special relationship" to the source of the world's problems, Banks refuses any responsibility for "what occurs in faraway places" like Shanghai (138). This refusal corresponds to his repression of feelings related to the loss of his parents. In addition, the cleric says about the crisis in Shanghai: "[W]hat was once just a local problem has been allowed to fester and grow. To spread its poison over the years ever further across the world, right through our civilisation" (138). In psychoanalytical terms, this festering and growth can be interpreted as the strengthening of the repressed contents of the mind: Freud maintains that while repression prevents certain ideas, memories, wishes, or feelings from entering consciousness, it does not affect the ability of the repressed contents to develop further. In fact, the repressed develops with less interference than it would were it conscious ("Repression" 148). By repressing and refusing to deal with his childhood trauma, Banks has allowed it to impinge on his whole life. The cleric's utterance relates Banks's repression to the world's slide into total war and thus functions as a metanarrative hint introducing the expansion of Banks's inner reality into the whole fictional world.

Banks's Repressed Sense of Guilt

The narrator disregards any information that could lead him to reconsidering his belief that his parents were kidnapped. For this reason some of his memories "have lately begun to blur," and some come to him only reluctantly; he does not realize the connections between certain preceding events and the later

disappearance of his parents (67). In essence, Banks unconsciously defends himself against his suspicion that his parents' marriage was tainted by a long-lasting conflict resulting from his mother's disapproval of her husband's involvement in the opium trade. Consequently, in another instance of displacement, the narrator first attributes some harsh words uttered by his mother to an insignificant, emotionally harmless episode before remembering the actual emotionally charged context: "In fact, it is even possible I have remembered incorrectly the context in which she uttered those words; that it was not to the health inspector she put this question, but to my father, on another morning altogether, during that argument in the dining room" (68).[123] Banks underreads the incidents that preceded his father's disappearance, such as arguments between his parents leading to several days of mutual silence, in that he refers to them as to "a few small events [...] which I have subsequently come to regard as being of particular significance," but he never explicitly specifies this significance (79). In this manner, Banks avoids any doubts about why his father disappeared: these incidents actually foretell his father's departure, but Banks fails to interpret them in this way.

The narrator is motivated to deceive himself into believing that his father left involuntarily because otherwise he might be tortured by a sense of guilt for his parents' separation and hence the loss of his parents. The scene in which the young Banks decides to go to the racecourse with his mother and Uncle Philip instead of staying at home with his father provides particularly strong clues to his motivation. Despite his awareness that "my father was desperately wishing us not to go, that for us to do so would cause him huge pain," he chooses to go (81). The narrator's comment from his present perspective points to his feeling of responsibility, not only for the outcome of this incident but also for larger issues: "But perhaps I did not understand enough" (81). Banks's unconscious sense of guilt further comes to view in an outburst directed against his nanny, Mei Li, after he discovers that his mother has been taken away:

> And a cold fury rose within me towards Mei Li, who for all the fear and respect she had commanded from me over the years, I now realised was an impostor: someone not in the least capable of controlling this bewildering world that was unfolding all around me; a pathetic little woman who had built herself up in my eyes entirely on false pretences, who counted for nothing when the great forces clashed and battled. I stood in the doorway and stared at her with the utmost contempt. (123)

123 Analogically, Stevens in *Remains* displaces his memory of Miss Kenton's crying: he attributes it to the death of Miss Kenton's aunt before realizing that it actually originated the evening Miss Kenton gave up waiting for Stevens to acknowledge his feelings towards her and accepted the proposal from her future husband.

This outburst arrives unexpectedly and seems illogical as Mei Li's possible culpability for the disappearance of Banks's parents is not mentioned before or after this incident. Therefore, Banks likely projects his own feelings onto the servant: the helplessness of a child incapable of doing anything to prevent losing both his parents. He may also be projecting onto Mei Li the distress born out of his current inability to solve his parents' disappearance as if his reputation as an excellent detective were based "on false pretences." Banks's repressed shame about his incompetence in locating his parents is more pronounced in *Shanghai*, for example, when he defends himself against accusations that have not been made: "I know full well what you've been thinking all this time, Lieutenant! I could see it in your eyes. You believe all this is my fault [...]. Such things take time, sir! A case like this one, it requires great delicacy. [...] It's taken time, I accept, but that's in the very nature of a case like this" (245). Banks's mind defends itself against accusations coming from the inside, from Banks himself, by treating them as external.

Banks's repressed sense of guilt is a significant force that motivates him in his mission, as can be inferred from what he says to a discouraged inspector after solving a particularly nasty crime: "[T]hose of us whose duty it is to combat evil, we are... how might I put it? We're like the twine that holds together the slats of a wooden blind. Should we fail to hold strong, then everything will scatter. It's very important, Inspector, that you carry on" (135). Similar words were originally uttered by Akira, who once explained to Banks that when their parents stopped talking to each other, it was because of their disappointment with them, with the children who were "like the twine that kept the slats held together. [...] it was [the] children who bound not only a family, but the whole world together" (73). Banks later adopts Akira's view of the situation and repeats this line of reasoning to Uncle Philip. Banks's choice of the same words in the scene with the inspector suggests that his sense of mission stems from his feeling of responsibility as a child, responsibility for his parents' relationship and for the whole world. In this sense, too, Banks has never grown up.

Banks's conversation with the soldier whom he takes for Akira in Shanghai confirms that his career is a continuation of his childhood fantasies and an attempt to rewrite his life story: "After all, when we were children, when things went wrong, there wasn't much we could do to help put it right. But now we're adults, now we can. [...] After all this time, we can put things right" (263). In Brian H. Finney's words, "Banks' outstanding reputation as a detective can be viewed as his unconscious adult compensation for the impotence of his childhood games of detection." Importantly, Banks's choice of profession puts him into the role of agent as opposed to the role of a sufferer passively waiting for

other people to restore the harmony of his world, a role in which he was caught as a child after his parents' disappearance.

According to Bruner's theory, people tend to lay emphasis on their own agency when constructing their self-concept through self-narrative,[124] primarily remembering acts that resulted from their own independent decisions ("Remembered" 41).With Banks, this tendency manifests itself not only in his self-deception about the way he coped with his loss as a child but also in his career choice and sense of mission: unlike the childhood tragedy that made Banks a victim of his circumstances, his new life story assigns him the role of an agent, the one who is going to fix what has gone wrong (cf. Birke 168). In *London I* Banks's unreliable self-narrative is to a large extent contrasted by a more reliable fictional reality; however, the way his career proceeds and is viewed by other characters incorporates elements of this self-narrative and thus marks a gradual departure from the novel's mimetic techniques of representing Banks's self-deception. In the *Shanghai* section, then, the unreliable self-narrative dominates the fictional reality, which becomes a metaphor of Banks's psychological condition.

The Orphan's Shanghai: An Unreliable World

As an orphaned child, Banks dreams of a happy ending in which detectives bring his parents back. Similarly, Banks the adult has a utopian vision that his detective work will lead not only to relocating his parents (more than twenty years after their disappearance this plan is unrealistic) but also to saving the world from all its problems. Banks "still lives in the childhood vision of the world that's frozen since the time that he lost his parents when he was a little boy; it's remained arrested at that point and now it's applied to the adult world that he encounters" (Ishiguro, "Kazuo Ishiguro" 158). Banks's inability to move on represents the intrusion of a traumatic event into an afflicted person's life: such people "cannot resume the normal course of their lives, for the trauma repeatedly interrupts. It is as if time stops at the moment of trauma" (J. Herman 37). Banks does not relive the traumatic moment itself, as is common with victims of trauma, but he replays his childhood fantasies of cancelling out the traumatic event by putting things back to normal—by rescuing his parents. Similarly to trauma victims who "reenact the traumatic moment with a fantasy of changing the outcome of the dangerous encounter" (J. Herman 39), Banks unconsciously desires to make his once impotent childhood daydreams come true.

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124 See chapter 1.3 for an explanation of the concept of self-narrative and the influence of present circumstances on memories of one's past.

In *Shangai* the narrator's persevering child perspective materializes: the fictional reality adjusts to Banks's mind and becomes a manifestation of his subjective perspective. Instead of offering the reader knowledge superior to the narrator and hence material to construct an opposing, objective version of the story, the narrative blurs the boundary between the narrator's inner reality and the fictional world's outer reality. As Ishiguro explains,

> It's not an attempt to do that kind of unreliable narrator where we can see that he's slightly crazy, or getting crazier and crazier as the book goes on, but we always have a clear sense of what the normal world is and how far he's moved away from it. What I was trying to do is to paint a picture of what the world might look like if it ran according to the less rational emotional logic that we often carry within us. We all kind of know what that means, metaphorically, to say that somebody is trying to replay something that went wrong in the past and do it right this time. We know that, in most cases, we're not talking literally here. But in this book, to some extent, there's an attempt to portray a world that bends to that emotional logic. ("Kazuo Ishiguro" 157–58)

Whereas in *London I* the narrator's interpretations of the events he reports are often at odds with what the reader can infer, in *Shanghai* it is no longer possible to separate unreliable interpretations from fictional facts. The reader thus hesitates between believing nothing the narrator says and projecting a world in which the absurd does not deviate from normality, a world co-created by Banks's mind. As I have already argued in the previous chapter, granting the narrator at least some mimetic authority is usually necessary to make sense of a text at all. I consider the narration in *Shanghai* not unreliable but unnatural as the homodiegetic narrator shapes the textual actual world (the fictional reality). The textual actual world develops from the narrator's F-universe created in childhood, most vividly represented by the detective scenarios Banks enacts with Akira.

The Influence of Banks's Childhood Perspective

Banks's persevering perspective of a traumatized child also manifests itself in some details of his stay in Shanghai: these details correspond to his childhood fantasies. Not only is Banks convinced that "things will be brought to a satisfactory conclusion in a relatively short time" like in his fantasies, with him in the role of the famous detective, but the other characters also share this conviction (156): "[W]hen the news of your impending arrival reached us, that was the first good news we'd had here in months," claims one of the ladies in the International Settlement, expressing shared high expectations about Banks's intervention in Shanghai (159). Nobody seems to notice the absurdity of Banks's belief that his parents are still being held by their captors so many years after their supposed kidnapping. This conviction stems from how he has unconsciously perceived

time to have stood still since the traumatic event. Even "a magnificent ceremony held in Jessfield Park," a constant component in all the scenarios imagined by Banks and Akira, is being planned (111). The great significance Banks gives to such a ceremony in childhood lives on in his adult mind, and thus he regards the planned ceremony as something special in which everybody would like to take part. He shows this when he drops mentioning the lieutenant in charge of the Shanghai operation at the ceremony and considers this decision to be a great punishment: "And one other thing! You can safely assume I will no longer be mentioning you by name at the Jessfield Park celebration. At least if I do, it will not be in a complimentary light..." (245). Also, the importance of Banks's parents in his mind is repeated in the world around him: for instance, although the Chinese lieutenant whom Banks finds when he leaves the International Settlement is engrossed in guarding a crucial base during severe fighting, he agrees to leave his base in order to show Banks the way to the house in which Banks believes his parents are held. Everything and everybody around Banks is adjusted by his mind: the textual actual world merges with the narrator's private worlds.

In *Shanghai* everything seems to work as Banks imagined in his childhood daydreams; thus, his narrative resembles a dream come true, that is, until Banks gets a rude awakening instead of the happy ending he expects. Indeed, some of the scenes in *Shanghai* represent dreamlike wish-fulfilment (cf. Finney). An especially conspicuous occurrence of this phenomenon is the episode in which Banks visits the house he grew up in: the current proprietors of the house are happy to give it up to Banks and his parents after their expected reunion. This course of action follows some kind of an agreement of whose existence Banks is not aware until someone mentions it: "I had started to locate some vague recollection concerning some such arrangement regarding the old house and my eventual return to it" (189). As in a dream, Banks seems to distantly recall an experience that he in actuality most likely never had (he would have probably known of such an agreement had it really existed).

The episode in the old house bears a resemblance to a dream in other respects, too. First, Banks is driven to the house by Morgan, his former classmate, who only appears in the novel on this occasion and whose connection to the matter of Banks's house remains unexplained.[125] Banks does not know where he is going nor why, and once in the house, it takes him some time to recognize where he is: "[W]hat was dawning upon me was that the entire rear half of the room in

125 Morgan's role in the narrative resembles the emergence of some characters in *Unconsoled*, who stand for parts of the narrator's past.

which I was now standing was in fact what used to be the entrance hall of our old Shanghai house" (185–86). This dawning memory is reminiscent of the way the identity of a place can change in a dream; the "vast reconstructions" that have been carried out since Banks's childhood correspond to the way one sometimes knows a place or person even if it looks different from the real thing as seen in waking life. Also, the memory Banks retrieves when looking at the staircase can be interpreted as the return of the repressed in disguised form because "[t]he scene displays obvious parallels to a key scene connected with [Banks's] childhood trauma: the last time [he] saw his mother" (Birke 175). The happy memory of a trivial accident at the staircase replaces another childhood memory of a later, similar incident, a memory heavily affected by following events—that is, by Uncle Philip's betrayal and Banks's mother's disappearance. This kind of displacement of emotional significance fits very well into the whole dreamlike scene.

Banks's wishes are also fulfilled as he journeys through war-stricken Shanghai—for example, when the house he is looking for is surprisingly nearby, "*just over there*" (224), or when his eyes fall on the name plate of the house that is supposed to stand opposite the one he is looking for. As Paul Veyret notes, "as in a dream, Banks finds clues he wants to believe will lead him to his parents" (164). These instances of wish-fulfilment resemble similar occurrences in *Unconsoled*, such as the bus waiting for Ryder and Boris. But like Ryder, Banks, too, has to overcome some dreamlike obstacles: Ryder, in close proximity to the concert hall, is obstructed by a purposeless wall; Banks gets near the house, but the driver who takes him there faces various impediments and eventually loses his way and refuses to continue. As a result, Banks has to walk through the nightmarish Chinese districts. These twists, even if they disable the immediate fulfilment of Banks's desires, fit into the narrative based on Banks's childhood fantasies because the danger they pose embodies "the chases, fist-fights and gun-battles around the warren-like alleys of the Chinese districts" of his childhood fantasies (*Orphans* 111). Thus, even the difficulties that Banks encounters sustain his childhood perspective.

The discovery of Akira in the war zone also gives the impression that Banks's dreams have come true. Already throughout *London I* Banks is remarkably free of any doubt that Akira is still in Shanghai even though he has not heard from him since he left the International Settlement for England: "I'm sure he's still there. Akira was very fond of Shanghai. Besides, he was determined never to return to Japan" (44). This conviction is another symptom of Banks's "frozen" inner reality: he expects Shanghai to be just as it was during his happy childhood there. Consequently, he plans to pick up his friendship with Akira where they left off, notwithstanding the time that has gone by: "I have also been looking ahead,

to the day when I eventually return to Shanghai; to all the things Akira and I will do there together" (124).[126] What is more, Akira is an indispensable element in the process of finding Banks's parents, for as boys the two always rescued Banks's father together in their fantasies. For this reason Banks easily succumbs to the belief that the Japanese soldier he meets on his way to the house is Akira. To retain the illusion of being reunited with his old friend, Banks ignores hints that the soldier might not be Akira, such as the soldier's remark about his "home village" (not the International Settlement) (256). It becomes especially clear that Banks is clinging to illusion when he changes the subject of conversation because the soldier's talk about his childhood might betray too much; he interrupts the soldier "sensing that the longer this talk went on, the greater was some danger I did not wish fully to articulate" (263). This danger Banks fears corresponds to spelling out the object of his self-deception: that the soldier is not really Akira and thus things are not happening as they are supposed to according to his frozen childhood perspective.

In this incident the representation of Banks's self-deception is closer to *London I* than to the rest of *Shanghai*: the reader is able to infer a different version of the story than the one Banks is aware of. The reader concludes that the soldier is only pretending to be Akira in order to receive help from Banks and hence detects the narrator's misreading. Analogically to *London I*, where more elements that cannot be reconciled with the otherwise verisimilar fictional world progressively emerge, the fictional reality of *Shanghai* slowly starts to split from Banks's inner reality again and gradually becomes more verisimilar as Banks progresses towards finding the house he has been looking for and realizes the futility of his action when he sees that his parents are not there. Banks slowly emerges from his inner reality back into the outer world. His remark about the "danger I did not wish fully to articulate" mirrors this development: he senses the possibility of a contradictory version but does not dare to spell it out—that is, he does not acknowledge it.

Later, when Banks's hopes of relocating his parents are dashed, he awakens from his lived dream. This moment marks the commencement of his departure from his childhood perspective: "[Childhood]'s hardly a foreign land to me. In many ways, it's where I've continued to live all my life. It's only now I've started

126 Similarly, Banks intends to resume living his former life after finding his parents: he imagines them living together in their old house and even his nanny, Mei Li, is there. He regards Mr. Lin's suggestion that Mei Li might have ended up a street beggar as absurd. Again, this stance signals his unwillingness to accept the possibility that things have changed since his childhood.

to make my journey from it" (277). Textually, this metaphorical journey is expressed by the return to the fairly verisimilar fictional reality as presented in *London I*. Banks fully experiences the harshness of reality when he learns the truth not only about his parents but also about himself: his whole career has been made possible by the money paid in return for his mother's service in the harem. This fact definitively destroys Banks's conception of his career as a mission because it discloses that his career has been built upon the kind of evil he wanted to fight. The end of his mission also means the end of his attempt to rewrite (and relive) his life story. Symbolically, Banks realizes that saving the world is "no longer my concern" and starts searching for his mother outside of his inner reality, that is, not as a detective but simply as her son (296). This change in the narrator's attitude marks the transition from Shanghai back to London and from unnatural narration to a more mimetic mode.

The Significance of the Setting

The difference between the parts of the text in which the narrator's self-deceptive perspective is contradicted by a relatively solid textual actual world and those in which the two interweave correlates to a large extent with the geographical position of the narrator. The objective qualities of the settings, however, do not account for this correlation but rather for the notion of these places in the narrator's mind. England, in Banks's consciousness, is marked by constant concealment of his feelings and by the repression of his own identity in favour of a pretended one. During his first days in England, Banks learns to "[take] steps to avoid any further displays of 'introspection,'" and he keeps this intention throughout his school years when he (unsuccessfully) tries to hide his plans to become a detective, plans connected to his parents' disappearance (11). Furthermore, not only does he imitate his fellow pupils in order to conceal his authentic self, his whole Englishness is second hand: as a child, he learns of England through *The Wind in the Willows* and Arthur Conan Doyle's books, as well as through the young men who stay in his parents' house from time to time and who were "all at sea so far from their home" but were still "figures to study closely and emulate" (52). These aspects of Banks's life point to his lack of sincerity while living in England and to the conflict between his personality and his surroundings. This conflict is repeated on the level of the text as his unreliability as a narrator in *London I*, where his inner world is in conflict with the fictional reality.

The International Settlement in Shanghai, by contrast, is a place for which Banks feels strong nostalgia: it represents the happiness of his childhood before the tragedy, the period Banks idealizes in his memories. When first referring to the house where he lived with his parents, Banks admits being influenced by

his childhood perspective: "I suspect this memory of the house is very much a child's vision, and that in reality, it was nothing so grand" (51). Typically, Banks acknowledges in *London I* something that immensely affects his perception in *Shanghai*, where, however, he is no longer aware of it. In the *Shanghai* section, the "child's vision" of the narrator determines the portrayal of both the International Settlement and the Chinese districts of Shanghai. Banks's parents implant into him the idea of "the relative safety of the International Settlement" as opposed to the rest of Shanghai where "lay all manner of ghastly diseases, filth and evil men" (54). Never having left the Settlement himself, Banks believes Akira's fantasies about the Chinese districts:"There were no proper buildings, just shack upon shack built in great proximity to one another. It all looked [...] much like the marketplace in Boone Road, except that whole families were found living in each 'stall.' There were, moreover, dead bodies piled up everywhere" (54).[127] When Banks comes back to Shanghai as an adult, the International Settlement truly does function as a safe haven in the middle of a war; parties are held there as shells fly over the area and the rest of the city is severely afflicted by war. Likewise, the descriptions of Shanghai outside of the Settlement resemble Banks's view of the city that he, as a child, adopted from Akira: "Not all the walls were standing; sometimes we would pick our way through the debris of what might have been three or four houses before encountering another wall. The roofs were almost all smashed, often absent altogether" (240). In addition, when driven towards the house where he expects to find his parents, Banks panics upon finding out that the car has left the International Settlement and entered into the area that was the emblem of danger and ruin in his childhood and that his parents forbade him to enter.[128] Moving from the safe International Settlement to the nightmarish

127 Akira probably never saw the Chinese districts as is suggested by his obviously invented story about meeting the warlord, as well as by Banks's mother's doubts.

128 Cf. Bain: "Realizing that the place where he most needs to be lies within the area he's always been told to avoid, [Banks] unleashes on his cabbie the sort of tirade you can count on an Ishiguro narrator to make when confronted with the reality of the things he or she wants" (241). It is tricky to talk about "the reality of things" given that the scenes are moulded by the narrator's consciousness; rather, his involuntary departure from a safe area to a perilous one calls to Banks's mind the traumatic memory of his helplessness as a child when his secure world crumbled and he was confronted with the ruthlessness of the outer world. Like his fury with Mei Li, whom he labels "an impostor," the outburst against the driver reveals Banks's repressed sense of guilt for his inability to cope with crisis (especially, his failure to protect his mother) projected onto an external factor: "You pretend to know far more than you do. You're too proud to admit to your shortcomings. That's my definition of a fool exactly" (227).

streets of Chinese Shanghai also symbolizes the transition in Banks's life from a carefree child's life with his parents to the fulfilment of his worst fear—the loss of his mother: as the lieutenant says, going through the warren at night is "like drifting through one's worst nightmares" (238). Like the characters' utterances and actions, the setting in Shanghai is adjusted to Banks's mind: it copies his persevering childhood vision, materializes his childhood fears, and symbolizes his return to the past.

In *London II*, though nostalgically longing for the International Settlement, Banks never visits Shanghai again. He knows he would be disappointed as "Shanghai today is a ghostly shadow of what it once was" (300). The city's actual changes parallel the transformation of the image of the city in Banks's mind: the city no longer corresponds to his childhood vision of the International Settlement as an oasis of peace amidst the wilderness of the Chinese districts. His nostalgia does not pertain to the city as such but rather to his memory of it.

At the end of his narrative, Banks claims that London "has come to be my home" and that he has found "a certain contentment" there. Yet the extent to which this statement is true remains ambiguous. Banks admits that "a sort of emptiness fills my hours" and acknowledges his "pride in sifting through old newspaper reports of my cases" (313). These circumstances imply that he does not live fully in the present but still in a way yearns for the past, when he spent his days working on his mission. Nevertheless, compared to the two preceding sections, *London II* is characterized by relative objectivity on the narrator's part. He says about finding his mother in Hong Kong that "it was only then I realised. What I mean is, I realised she'd never ceased to love me, not through any of it. [...] [A]ll my trying to find her, trying to save the world from ruin, that wouldn't have made any difference either way" (305–06). This stance indicates that Banks has acknowledged his sense of guilt as the underlying force that drove him into his mission and that he has, at least partially, come to terms with the past.

Synthesis: The Unreliability Hypothesis Confirmed

Orphans employs both unreliable and unnatural narration to depict the narrator's self-deception about himself and his role in the world. However, the unnatural section of the narrative does not show the gap between the narrator's self-deceived narrative and the fictional reality but stages the self-deception metaphorically in that the narrator's perspective shapes the fictional reality itself. While in the verisimilar section the narrator's self-deception manifests itself in his discourse, in

the nonverisimilar section it is represented by means of the mimetic components of the narrative. As a result, in the case of verisimilar representation the reader recognizes the narrator's self-deception in the process of world-construction and in the case of nonverisimilar depiction in the process of meaning-making.

This scenario comes close to *Unconsoled*. However, unlike *Orphans Unconsoled* is wholly narrated in the unnatural mode and so its fictional world is uniregional; consequently, the story is even more ambiguous than in *Orphans*. While in *Orphans* some circumstances and events can be established with certainty as fictional facts unaffected by the narrator's self-deception, *Unconsoled* offers no objective fictional reality. In my reading of *Unconsoled*, I argue against using the unreliable narrator for naturalizing this novel because the fictional facts, themselves distorted, cannot be considered a yardstick for determining how the narrator's perception distorts these fictional facts (in his reporting, reading, and evaluating). As for *Orphans*, this comment applies to the unnatural elements but not to the whole narrative. Banks is revealed as a self-deceived unreliable narrator in *London I*, and the reader stays aware of Banks's self-deception even while reading the section marked by Banks's inner reality. Thus, the reader can understand what is occurring in *Shanghai*: that the narrative enacts Banks's self-deception in that the fictional reality appropriates the logic of Banks's mind. This interpretation is later confirmed by the outcome of his mission (when Banks awakens from his daydream and departs from his childhood perspective) and by the *London II* section, where Banks admits that his sense of guilt about his parents' disappearance motivated his mission.

Therefore, although no alternative version to the unnatural elements (i.e., Banks's career as a Sherlock-like detective and saviour of the world, and almost all events in the *Shanghai* section) exists, the reader can detect a counternarrative to the narrator's account for the story as a whole. The whole novel, then, can be naturalized with recourse to the concept of the unreliable narrator even though the narrator's distorted perspective is partly presented metaphorically. The function of the unreliable narrator as "an integrative hermeneutic device" (Nünning, "Unreliable" 59) is even more pronounced here than in conventional unreliable narration because it not only explains the various inconsistencies in the narrative but also integrates the different types of fictional worlds. In short, the unnatural elements of the novel can be incorporated into the frame of narrative unreliability that binds together the whole narrative.

By way of conclusion, I will briefly discuss the theme of orphans and its implications for reading the whole novel. At the end of his narrative, Banks associates orphans with "a sense of mission" in his reflection upon reading a letter from Sarah:

> My feeling is that [Sarah] is thinking of herself as much as of me when she talks of a sense of mission, and the futility of attempting to evade it. Perhaps there are those who are able to go about their lives unfettered by such concerns. But for those like us, our fate is to face the world as orphans, chasing through long years the shadows of vanished parents. (313)

In contrast to the beginning of the narrative, Banks here plainly acknowledges that it was his childhood tragedy that motivated his mission. The "shadows of vanished parents" then hint at the immateriality of his sought-after parents: Banks was actually looking for the image of his parents frozen in his memory before their disappearance, that is, before the disruption of his world. Banks's fellow orphan, Sarah, desperately wants to improve the world as well although she opts for a less direct manner of contribution: she marries and supports a man who will "undertake the great mission" (143).[129] Later, when she realizes the futility of her endeavours, she refers to her and Banks's sense of duty to contribute to something great as "some whatever-it-is telling us we haven't done enough yet" (212). The motivation behind both orphans' missions amounts to their desire to do something that will remedy the collapse of their world caused by the loss of their parents.

Yet the "when" and "were" of the phrase "when we were orphans" suggest that being an orphan is a temporary condition or property and hence that the phrase does not necessarily refer just to the absence of parents. Like so many other elements of the book, the state of being orphaned has a metaphorical meaning. When the soldier whom Banks believes to be Akira awakes from a dream set in his childhood, Banks says, referring to the war zone, "It must have been a rude shock. To come from the world you were dreaming of into this one here" (261). This utterance symbolically expresses the extra meaning of *being orphaned*: it stands for "leav[ing] the protected world" of childhood and meeting the stark reality of adulthood (Ishiguro, "Interview" by Shaffer 9). Being an orphan then corresponds to the phase in life when we come to terms with the real world and all its shortcomings as opposed to the safe, guarded world of childhood. If the shift from one world to another is accompanied by a traumatic experience or is too sudden, as in Banks's, Sarah's and Jennifer's cases, the process might extend throughout a great part of one's life. The innovative methods Ishiguro employs

129 In this sense, Sarah resembles Stevens of *Remains* who hoped to make a contribution through his employer, Lord Darlington. Cf. Fluet: "[B]oth [Sarah and Stevens] feel the lack of an eager public for their services, and thus both seek to be connected to someone (a husband, an employer) who will, in turn, serve as the vital connecting force between their ambitions and the public sphere they cannot reach on their own" (276).

in this novel enable him to paint a convincing picture of this inability to grow up and face the facts of adult life.

The analyses in part 2 reveal Ishiguro's remarkable use of techniques related to unreliable narration that depict his narrators' fact-bending. We can conclude with D'hoker that whereas "*The Unconsoled* has shown that unreliability becomes irrelevant at the fantastic end, Ishiguro's other works are evidence of the fact that a highly interesting and innovatory combination of both approaches is possible in the middle" (169). Ishiguro's innovative approaches within unreliable narration include a surprising turn at the end of the narrative in *Artist*, a turn that diminishes the reader's relish in privileged information by retrospectively questioning what previously appeared to be fictional facts. Ishiguro goes beyond the borders of narrative unreliability in *Unconsoled*, where the narrator's subjective perspective is represented by metaphorical meanings of fictional entities; the narrator's account is not at odds with fictional reality because this reality is co-created by his enunciation. In *Orphans* Ishiguro makes use of both the strategies that he has explored in his previous novels and engenders a harmony of seemingly incongruous techniques: the realist mode of unreliable narration is complemented by the use of unnatural narration in which the fictional facts are bent according to the character narrator's take on reality.

In part 3 I look into the strategies that Frisch's narrators employ to come to terms with themselves. The selves they invent are supposed either to hide inconvenient or scary aspects of their psyche, or to replace an identity that is no longer desired. In addition, revisiting Ishiguro's novels after each chapter will shed new light on the matter of their narrators' self-deception as well as the narrative techniques used to depict it.

Part Three: The Invented Identities of Max Frisch's Narrators in Comparative Perspective

> *The Outsider's case against society is very clear. All men and women have these dangerous, unnamable impulses, yet they keep up a pretence, to themselves, to others; their respectability, their philosophy, their religion, are all attempts to gloss over, to make look civilized and rational something that is savage, unorganized, irrational. He is an Outsider because he stands for Truth.*
>
> Colin Wilson, *The Outsider* (13)

> *I'm telling you stories. Trust me.*
>
> Jeanette Winterson, *The Passion* (5)

3.1 The Guided Coincidence: Unreliable Narration in *Homo faber*

The first of three novels by Max Frisch I examine, *Homo faber*, employs the most traditional narrative techniques of the three and thus stands closer to Ishiguro's retrospective trilogy than to *Unconsoled* or *Orphans*. Still, this novel deserves a careful look especially for its creative interweaving of the narrator's unreliability and his portrayal as a character.

The autodiegetic narrator of the novel, engineer Walter Faber, writes his story in two parts. As in Ishiguro's *Artist*, *Remains*, and *Orphans*, the diarylike form lets the reader perceive the change in the narrator's state of mind. In the first part of the book ("First Stop"), Faber's depiction of the events that preceded his daughter Elisabeth's death is mixed with excursions into his past on the one hand and on the other his reflections on the incidents that led to his incestuous relationship and indirectly to the accident that killed Elisabeth. The first part of Faber's report is retrospective: he starts writing after Elisabeth's death, and therefore his knowledge of the story's outcome influences his present point of view. Furthermore, the narrator's revelation of the story's ending early in his narration strongly diminishes the reader's suspense. Consequently, the focus shifts from the story level to the discourse level.

The story begins on board a plane, and thus the reader meets Faber in what he considers his natural environment as he presents himself as a technocrat who prefers machines to people: "One of the happiest moments I know is the moment when I have left a party, when I get into my car, shut the door and insert the ignition key, turn the ignition on, turn on the radio, light my cigarette with the built-in lighter and put my foot down; people are a strain as far as I'm concerned"[130] (94). This attitude embraces total ignorance of any irrational and unpredictable components of life; Faber "is convinced of his ability to pattern the world according to his liking" (Zakrison 68). The plane Faber is travelling on breaks down and must make an emergency landing in the desert. This failure of technology marks the beginning of Faber's transformation. During the following days spent in the desert, he gets to know Herbert Hencke, the brother of Joachim, a friend from his youth, and joins him on his journey to the Guatemalan jungle, where they find Joachim dead by his own hand. Importantly, Faber's chance meeting with Herbert triggers his memories of Hanna Landsberg, a Jewish art history student, with whom he had a relationship approximately twenty years ago. These memories constantly occupy his mind.

After returning home to New York, Faber decides on a whim to take a boat instead of a plane to go to Paris. On the boat he meets a young girl, Elisabeth Piper, whom he calls Sabeth; she attracts his attention. In Paris he arranges a would-be accidental meeting with her and then, in sharp contrast to his habits, decides to accompany her on her trip through France and Italy to Athens, where the girl's mother lives. On the journey their relationship becomes sexual; later it turns out that Elisabeth is Hanna's daughter. When Faber last saw Hanna, she was pregnant with his child; at the time he thought she would have an abortion and therefore now convinces himself that Elisabeth cannot be his child. While they are in Acrocorinth, Elisabeth gets injured. Faber manages to transport her to a hospital in Athens, but she dies after the doctors misdiagnose her. Faber meets Hanna and learns that Elisabeth definitely was his daughter.

The second part of the book, "Second Stop," written by Faber in apprehension of his approaching death while waiting for an operation in hospital, contains descriptions of his travels after Elisabeth's death, notably to Cuba. It also discloses his decision to marry Hanna. Faber's notes end in a way that insinuates he did not survive the operation.

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130 "Zu den glücklichsten Minuten, die ich kenne, gehört die Minute, wenn ich die Gesellschaft verlassen habe, wenn ich in meinem Wagen sitze, die Türe zuschlage und das Schlüsselchen stecke, Radio andrehe, meine Zigarette anzünde mit dem Glüher, dann schalte, Fuß auf Gas; Menschen sind eine Anstrengung für mich" (112).

The present chapter demonstrates Walter Faber's narratorial unreliability and examines the way unreliable narration is connected to the portrayal of the narrating character; it also traces Faber's development as a character and narrator. The analysis shows that Faber deceives himself about crucial parts of his story. By mis- and underinterpreting some events, he lets the reader discover a different version of the story and identify it as fictional reality: Faber is revealed as a self-deceived unreliable narrator. His narratorial unreliability involves two key issues: first, his adherence to the self-image he has created, more specifically his view of himself as a man unaffected by emotions and instincts and only interested in technology, and second, his attempt at self-justification. First, I illuminate Faber's concept of himself as an absolutely rational technocrat and indicate the links between this self-deceived self-image, his emotional repression, his aversion to nature connected to his death anxiety, and his avoidance of authentic experience. I then explain why Faber clings to this inauthentic identity and which textual clues lead the reader to regard his self-image as false—that is, the discrepancies between the narrator's claims and his actions, especially the incongruity between his celebration of rationality and his irrational behaviour. Then I discuss the second cause of Faber's unreliability, that is, his effort to justify his behaviour and rid himself of his sense of guilt. Faber is convinced that the events recounted in the first part of his narrative amount to a "train of coincidences"[131] whereas the reader can see them partly as a result of Faber's unconscious motives (19). I relate this discrepancy to Faber's denial of death and his unconscious wish to undo certain past decisions and to make up for wasted opportunities.

These two sources of unreliable narration (his adherence to his self-image and his attempt at self-justification) constitute two false propositions that Faber believes in. He applies self-deceiving mental strategies, such as disregarding or wrongly interpreting some of the information available to him. These strategies mostly manifest themselves in the unreliable reading (misreading and underreading) of accurately reported events, which the reader interprets differently. In the course of the "First Stop," Faber gradually becomes more reliable as a narrator as he starts to see through his self-deception about his self-concept. In the "Second Stop" Faber has freed himself from his false self-image to a certain extent whereas his misinterpretation of the chain of events leading up to Elisabeth's death and his role in it persists until the end of his report.

131 "Kette von Zufällen" (25–26)

Repression Masked as Technocracy: Faber's Self-Image

Faber characterizes himself as a "technologist," which in his understanding means a complete rationalist, immune to any irrational motives or experiences: "I've often wondered what people mean when they talk about an experience. I'm a technologist and accustomed to seeing things as they are"[132] (21–22). His contempt for emotional behaviour and for people who immerse themselves in experiences shows that he regards his attitude as the correct way of life: "Why get hysterical? [...] I can't imagine a lot of nonsense, merely in order to experience something"[133] (22–23). This conviction enables him to explain—and excuse—many circumstances in his life, as well as to ignore the aspects of life that cannot be controlled by technology. However, various inconsistencies in the narration in the "First Stop" allow the reader to deduce that Faber's self-concept does not reflect his authentic personality but amounts to a version of himself that enables avoiding potentially painful emotions, experiences, and memories, and keeping wishes unconscious that might endanger the convenient stereotype of his life if they became conscious. His discourse ironically reveals more than he is aware of. Faber's narration in the "Second Stop" confirms this interpretation of the "First Stop" as here the narrator realizes the falsity of the self-image to which he has adhered.

Faber's Emotional Repression and Fear of Nature

Faber uses his professed world-view to mask his repression of emotions (connected with his voluntary solitariness), which he masquerades as matter-of-factness: "I'm not cynical. I'm merely realistic, which is something women can't stand. [...] I can't have feelings all the time"[134] (93). In Faber's opinion, technologists are not supposed to have feelings as evidenced by his comments on a dream in which "Professor O., my esteemed teacher at the Swiss College of Technology, [...] was wildly sentimental and kept weeping all the time, *although he is a mathematician, or rather a professor of electrodynamics, it was very embarrassing*"[135] (12–13; emphasis added). Faber convinces himself

132 "Ich habe mich schon oft gefragt, was die Leute eigentlich meinen, wenn sie von Erlebnis reden. Ich bin Techniker und gewohnt, die Dinge zu sehen, wie sie sind" (28).

133 "Wozu hysterisch sein? [...] Ich kann mir keinen Unsinn einbilden, bloß um etwas zu erleben" (29).

134 "Ich bin nicht zynisch. Ich bin nur, was Frauen nicht vertragen, durchaus sachlich. [...] Ich kann nicht die ganze Zeit Gefühle haben" (112).

135 "Professor O. [...], mein geschätzter Lehrer an der Eidgenössischen Technischen Hochschule, aber vollkommen sentimental, er weinte immerfort, *obschon er Mathematiker ist, beziehungsweise Professor für Elektrodynamik, es war peinlich*" (18).

of the insignificance and even harmfulness of emotions for human beings: he regards feelings as "[f]atigue phenomena! As in steel"[136] (94). He praises machines more highly than people not only because they can work faster and more precisely but mainly because they never feel anything: "Above all, however, the machine has no feelings, it feels no fear and no hope, which only disturb [...] [T]he robot [...] neither speculates nor dreams [...] and cannot make mistakes; the robot has no need of intuition..."[137] (76). Faber's preference for machines exposes his fear of the emotional and instinctive aspects of human nature.

Faber also belittles the differences between machines and people. He comments upon the explanation of cybernetics he gave to Elisabeth:

> I had to refute all sorts of childish notions about robots, the human resentment toward the machine, which annoys me because it is so short-sighted, and her hackneyed complaint that man isn't a machine. I explained what modern cybernetics means by INFORMATION – our actions or impulses as responses to information, automatic responses that are largely independent of the will, reflexes that a machine can carry out just as well as a man, if not better."[138] (75)

This view of people as just another type of machine eliminates the unpredictability of human behaviour and the possibility of spontaneity and irrational motives for action: Faber "ignores everything that is not calculable"[139] (Stäuble 192). Furthermore, as Manfred Jurgensen contends, Faber's "description of the robot makes it clear that he himself *reads into* himself robot-like features and that he wrongly assumes that he can himself behave like a robot"[140] (128). Faber uses this belief to justify repressing his feelings, protecting himself not only from negative

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136 "Ermüdungserscheinungen! Wie beim Stahl" (113).

137 "Vor allem aber: die Maschine erlebt nichts, sie hat keine Angst und keine Hoffnung, die nur stören [...] Der Roboter [...] spekuliert nicht und träumt nicht [...] und kann sich nicht irren; der Roboter braucht keine Ahnungen –" (91).

138 "Es galt, allerlei kindische Vorstellungen vom Roboter zu widerlegen, das menschliche Ressentiment gegen die Maschine, das mich ärgert, weil es borniert ist, ihr abgedroschenes Argument: der Mensch sei keine Maschine. Ich erklärte, was die heutige Kybernetik als Information bezeichnet: unsere Handlungen als Antworten auf sogenannte Informationen, beziehungsweise Impulse, und zwar sind es automatische Antworten, größtenteils unserem Willen entzogen, Reflexe, die eine Maschine ebensogut erledigen kann wie ein Mensch, wenn nicht sogar besser" (90–91).

139 "Er ignoriert alles, was nicht berechenbar ist."

140 "Beschreibung des Roboters macht es deutlich, daß er selber roboterhafte Züge in sich *hineinliest*, daß er fälschlicherweise meint, sich selber wie ein Roboter verhalten zu können."

emotions but also from authentic experiences. Faber's escape from emotions, masked by his disinterest in anything but technology, is reflected in his frequent filming: where others experience awe or fear, such as in the desert after the emergency landing, he only records the scenes on film. Filming is his "method of neutralising experience by absorbing it safely at second hand" (Butler 91).[141] Marcel (an artist whom Faber and Herbert meet in Mexico) shares his belief concerning the ruins of the Palenque temple that can be related to this practice: he "insisted that you couldn't photograph these hieroglyphs and grinning deities, they would be dead at once"[142] (41). Similarly, Faber deactivates things and events charged with emotional significance by recording them on film.

Faber's use of technology as a mental shield becomes especially clear when he sees the body of Joachim, who has committed suicide. Faber protects himself from responding emotionally by setting his mind on technology: instead of pondering his friend's death, he takes a picture of the corpse and "wonder[s] where [Joachim's] radio [...] [is] getting the electric current from"[143] (55). A later remark he utters as if in passing indicates that Faber is not as untouched by this experience as he pretends to be: "Joachim had been my one real friend"[144] (59). However, he only lets his emotions loose in his drunken confession to Elisabeth later on the ship. Before then, Faber had managed to repress his shock, but, as Butler notices, "[a]lcohol releases Faber's inhibitions and impairs his customary defence mechanisms" (110). As a result, his emotional reaction reaches his consciousness when he is drunk. Other unpleasant emotions and painful memories, however, remain buried under the disguise of the technocrat—at least during the "First Stop."

Faber also wishes to keep nature at bay. The existence of nature, which is unpredictable and cannot always be subjugated by machines, reminds Faber of the uncontrollable side of life of which he is afraid. Again, he seeks refuge in technology. Apart from filming (often it is natural phenomena that he shoots), Faber's defence against nature is represented by his obsession with using an electric razor to shave. He repeatedly expresses his desire to shave. He remarks: "I don't feel comfortable when unshaven; not on account of other people, but on my own

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141 For a more detailed interpretation of Faber's filming as a means of escape from his feelings and intensive experiences, see Meurer 24, and Alfred White: "Filming excludes experience [...], replacing human by mechanical vision" (271).

142 "behauptete steif und fest, man könne diese Hieroglyphen und Götterfratzen nicht fotografieren, sonst wären sie sofort tot" (50).

143 "Es wunderte mich, woher sein Radio [...] den elektrischen Strom bezieht" (66).

144 "Joachim war mein einziger Freund" (72).

account. Not being shaved gives me the feeling I'm some sort of plant"[145] (25). This statement shows Faber's uncomfortableness with the natural processes in his own body; his frequent use of the electric razor symbolizes his fight against nature. The electric razor provides him with a sense of control over biology: as Jurgensen observes, "With its help he manages to eliminate the marks of natural growth"[146] (113). Faber's fight against natural physical processes is related to his disgust at the rapid natural renewal he witnesses in the jungle: "What got on my nerves were the newts in every pool, a seething mass of newts in every one-day puddle – all this procreation, this stench of fertility, of blossoming decay"[147] (50–51). The cycle of nature, so conspicuous in the jungle that Faber cannot help thinking about it, makes him nervous not only because it is absolutely uncontrolled and uncontrollable but also because of the indisputable presence and "pervasiveness of death"[148] in the rapid putrefaction that occurs there, underscored by the numerous vultures "whose image he inserts again and again, as a leitmotif"[149] (Henze 282). The jungle forces Faber to become aware of natural processes and thus poses a threat to his denial of death. This denial manifests itself, for example, when he does not acknowledge the seriousness of his stomach troubles that later prove to be cancer symptoms. His discomfort with biological processes leads to his annoyance with people not being machines: "[T]he whole of man – the construction is passable, but the material is no good: flesh is not a material, but a curse!"[150] (180–81). It is Faber's despair over the decay of the human body—a veiled death anxiety—that reinforces his hostility to and fear of nature.

Reading the narrator's revulsion at the jungle in the context of his later praise of abortion suggests another reason for Faber's stylization into the role of *Homo faber* (i.e., Man the Maker): his feelings of guilt for the outcome of his relationship with Hanna. As this relationship ended in consequence of Faber's negative

145 "Ich fühle mich nicht wohl, wenn unrasiert; nicht wegen der Leute, sondern meinetwegen. Ich habe dann das Gefühl, ich werde etwas wie eine Pflanze, wenn ich nicht rasiert bin" (32).

146 "Mit seiner Hilfe vermag er die Spuren natürlichen Wachstums zu beseitigen."

147 "Was mir auf die Nerven ging: die Molche in jedem Tümpel, in jeder Eintagspfütze ein Gewimmel von Molchen – überhaupt diese Fortpflanzerei überall, es stinkt nach Fruchtbarkeit, nach blühender Verwesung" (61).

148 "die Allgegenwart des Todes"

149 "deren Bild er immer wieder leitmotivisch einführt"

150 "Überhaupt der ganze Mensch! – als Konstruktion möglich, aber das Material ist verfehlt: Fleisch ist kein Material, sondern ein Fluch" (214).

reaction to Hanna's pregnancy, it is no coincidence that his preference for technology over nature includes promoting abortion: "Abortion is the logical outcome of civilization; only the jungle gives birth and moulders away as nature decrees. Man plans"[151] (109). It is significant that Faber's vehement praise of abortion represents his point of view at the time of writing, hence after he has found out that Elisabeth was his daughter and therefore that Hanna had decided against an abortion. His seemingly rational view of abortion should justify his "refusal to shoulder responsibility" when he learned that Hanna was pregnant (Butler 116), which led to her rejection of marriage and indirectly to his incestuous behaviour and Elisabeth's death.

Faber's aversion to unpredictable nature carries over into his antipathy towards the arts and humanities, which he associates with mysticism, superstition, irrationality, emotionality (seen more as hysteria by Faber), and idleness—all marks of femininity as he views it—whereas science, rationality, work, and technology are all attributes of masculinity: "[T]he profession of technologist, a man who masters matter, is a masculine profession, if not the only masculine profession there is"[152] (78). Faber also links women with nature and death (and thus with the irrational and uncontrollable, that which cannot be mastered by technology). In the jungle he endorses Marcel's declaration: "'*Tu sais que la mort est femme!*' [...] '*Et que la terre est femme!*'"[153] (70). Here Faber unwittingly betrays that just as he fears nature and death, he fears binding relationships with women; he confirms this assumption when he uses the name of his last girlfriend (before meeting Elisabeth), Ivy, as an eponym for all women: "[E]very woman is like clinging ivy"[154] (93).[155] Characteristically, he uses the same weapon he employs to

151 "Schwangerschaftsunterbrechung: eine Konsequenz der Kultur, nur der Dschungel gebärt und verwest, wie die Natur will. Der Mensch plant" (130).

152 "der Beruf des Technikers, der mit den Tatsachen fertig wird, [ist] immerhin ein männlicher Beruf [...], wenn nicht der einzigmännliche überhaupt" (94).

153 "Tu sais que la mort est femme! [...] [E]t que la terre est femme!" (84).

154 "Ivy heißt Efeu, und so heißen für mich eigentlich alle Frauen" (111).

155 Frisch's statement about the main character of his play *Don Juan oder die Liebe zur Geometrie* confirms that Frisch's figure of Don Juan bears resemblance to Walter Faber: "If he lived in our days, Don Juan [...] would probably occupy himself with nuclear physics: in order to find out what is true. And the conflict with the feminine, that is, with the unconditional will to preserve life, would remain the same" ["Lebte er in unseren Tagen, würde Don Juan [...] sich wahrscheinlich mit Kernphysik befassen: um zu erfahren, was stimmt. Und der Konflikt mit dem Weiblichen, mit dem unbedingten Willen nämlich, das Leben zu erhalten, bliebe der gleiche"] ("Nachträgliches" 173). This quotation, when applied to *Faber*, illustrates the bonds

defend himself from nature: technological escapism, here represented by work, rationality, and progress:

> [Sabeth's] supposition that I was melancholy because I was alone put me out of humor. [...] I live, like every real man, in my work. On the contrary, that's the way I like it and I think myself lucky to live alone, in my view this is the only possible condition for men, I enjoy waking up and not having to say a word. Where is the woman who can understand that? Even the question as to how I have slept vexes me, because my thoughts are already beyond that, I'm used to thinking ahead, not backward, I'm used to planning.[156] (92)

Faber's inability and unwillingness to have fulfilling relationships with other people (not only romantic relationships but also friendships) is one of the consequences of his emotional repression and his avoidance of intense experiences. To rationalize this inability, he presents solitariness as "the only possible condition for men," meaning "real men" in his view, hence technologists. Technology, therefore, serves as an excuse for his evasion of engagement in life.

This idea is expressed explicitly in the novel by Hanna's view of "technology [...] as the knack of so arranging the world that we don't have to experience it"[157] (178). Faber uses technology to construct an identity for himself that enables him to lead a convenient life but without really tasting it. In Frisch's words, Faber "has made an image of himself [...] that hinders him from coming to himself"[158] (qtd. in Schmitz, *Max Frisch* 16). Technocracy is a facade that gives him the illusion of being able to control the world and which protects him from the uncontrollable: his feelings and unmediated experiences. Furthermore, it disguises his real identity.

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between Faber's rejection of nature and women: the feminine is here connected with procreation, a process that disgusts Faber in the jungle. Furthermore, in nature, breeding is always accompanied by extinction—hence the connection between women and death.

156 "Ihre Vermutung, ich sei traurig, weil allein, verstimmte mich. [...] Ich lebte, wie jeder wirkliche Mann, in meiner Arbeit. Im Gegenteil, ich will es nicht anders und schätze mich glücklich, allein zu wohnen, meines Erachtens der einzigmögliche Zustand für Männer, ich genieße es, allein zu erwachen, kein Wort sprechen zu müssen. Wo ist die Frau, die das begreift? Schon die Frage, wie ich geschlafen habe, verdrießt mich, weil ich in Gedanken schon weiter bin, gewohnt, voraus zu denken, nicht rückwärts zu denken, sondern zu planen" (111).

157 "Technik [...] als Kniff, die Welt so einzurichten, dass wir sie nicht erleben müssen" (211).

158 "[hat] von sich selbst ein Bildnis gemacht [...], das ihn verhindert, zu sich selber zu kommen

Faber's narrative unreliability stemming from his self-deceptive self-image is thus closely related to the existentialist theme of authenticity, a recurring topic in Frisch's works. Before the events of his report, Faber lives in what Butler calls "a false centricity": he is eccentric without being aware of it (111). Faber maintains the illusion of an authentic existence by leading an ordered life in which everything is "as usual"[159] (*Faber*, passim). He shields himself from direct experiences and emotions through habit and repetition, precluding himself from anything unexpected, and through technology that distances him from the world (for instance, his camera, his typewriter, and his electric razor). Technology and habit often function in unison in Faber's world, protecting him from stimulating sensations: "I smoked, gazing out of the window: below, the Gulf of Mexico, a multitude of little clouds casting violet shadows on the greenish sea, the *usual* play of colours, I had *filmed* it often enough"[160] (12; emphasis added). Symbolically, Faber's metaphorical and literal journey from eccentricity towards a more authentic existence begins with a technological failure (a malfunctioned airplane) and a break in his habits (during his stay in the desert where he is unable to work and where, importantly, he makes the whimsical decision to take a personal trip instead of his planned business one).

In *Stiller* and other works, Frisch depicts the difficulties encountered by those who wish to arrive at an authentic existence but are obstructed in their endeavour by the society and people around them. In the company of Frisch's other eccentric protagonists, Faber stands out as peculiar in distancing himself from authentic experience, rather than being hindered by a socially imposed role. Unlike Stiller/White, who struggles against an image people around him have generated, Faber has made a fixed image of himself. Also, his journey from this false identity towards his true self is to a great extent unconscious and unwilling. If we view Faber's self-image in the context of Stefan Glomb's reflection about the authentic, it becomes apparent that this self-image forms a barricade between him and his authentic individuality:

> "Authentic" can [...] mean almost anything, as long as it is understood as a counterpoise to the civilization processes that corrupt "human nature": whether it is the body, or more generally, the organic; or the primitive, archaic; or the unconscious or even madness,

159 "wie üblich" (passim)

160 "Ich rauchte, Blick zum Fenster hinaus: unter uns der blaue Golf von Mexico, lauter kleine Wolken, und ihre violetten Schatten auf dem grünlichen Meer, Farbspiel wie *üblich*, ich habe es schon oft genug *gefilmt*" (17).

which – as a natural action of protest – should embody the actually "healthy" element in a sick society.[161] (8)

Faber's aversion to nature and natural processes, his promotion of progress, civilization and technology, and his contempt for the irrational and the unconscious reveal his opposition to authenticity. His attitude changes in the "Second Stop," in which he decides to change his way of life (only a few weeks before his death). Nonetheless, signs of Faber's desire for authentic experiences appear even in the "First Stop" although here repression keeps this desire unconscious: symptoms of this repressed desire transpire in some of Faber's actions.

The Inconsistency of Faber's Self-Image: Faber as an Unreliable Narrator

Faber narrates the "First Stop" after his life has gone through turmoil: he has lost his protective routine. First, his encounter with Herbert makes him think about Hanna, the only woman he has ever loved, and sows the seeds of doubt in his mind about the appropriateness of his lifestyle. Second, meeting Elisabeth definitely lures him away from his routine and initiates his release from emotional repression. These changes indicate the falsity of Faber's self-image, which he, however, is reluctant to accept. On the contrary, he defends himself against the destabilization of his world-view, against the loss of the world's "familiarity anchored in his ability to account satisfactorily for its workings" (Butler 99). He clings to his old view of himself even in the face of substantial changes in his life. His unwillingness to let go of his self-image is partly due to the human tendency to strive for consistency and constancy in one's self-concept and to evade major revisions.[162] In writing the "First Stop," Faber seeks to renew the coherence of his ideas about life and about himself. In other words, this report is supposed to present a life story that justifies Faber's old self-concept.

However, the reader can detect cracks in Faber's self-image. His claim that he is not interested in novels expresses his disdain for the arts, but it is contradicted by the format of his narrative. He calls it a "report," but it turns out to be very similar to a novel.[163] Moreover, his contempt for the irrational and the

161 "'Authentisch' kann [...] vieles sein, sofern es als Gegengewicht zu den die 'menschliche Natur' korrumpierenden zivilisatorischen Prozessen verstanden werden kann: sei es der Körper, oder allgemeiner, das Organische; sei es das Primitive, Archaische; sei es das Unbewußte oder sogar der Wahnsinn, der – als natürliche Protestreaktion - das eigentlich 'Gesunde' in einer kranken Gesellschaft verkörpern soll."

162 See chapter 1.3 for an explanation of this tendency.

163 The title of the novel (*Homo Faber. A Report*) itself is ironic as both its parts designate something that proves to be nonexistent in the narrative: The protagonist sees himself

unconscious (represented by his professed lack of interest in dreams) is at odds not only with the repeated mentions of his dreams but also with his frequent confessions that he has no explanation for his actions. In addition, his narration bears resemblance to a dream in that the manifest content, that is, what the narrator conveys intentionally, is complemented by information that he provides inadvertently—as a result of the penetration of his repressed feelings and wishes into the narrative. As Mary E. Cock points out, "There is a strong contrast between Faber's desire for and attempt to create a factual 'Bericht' [report] and the emotional, associative arrangement of the document produced" (824). In other words, despite the narrator's endeavour to present himself as a rational man impervious to emotions, his self-reflective writing, which is at times hesitant (the order of events in the report is not guided by chronology but by the narrator's readiness to face the truth[164]) and at times passionate (because aiming at self-justification) proves this picture wrong, unbeknownst to Faber.

The numerous contradictions in Faber's report inadvertently disclose an alternative version of the story. These contradictions hint at his unreliability as a narrator. As in *Artist*, the narrator is mostly unreliable along the axis of knowledge and perception, that is, in his interpretations of events. More specifically, Faber's self-interpretation is incompatible with his actions. As a result, the link between narrative unreliability and the characterization of the narrating character is very strong in *Faber*: Faber's explicit self-characterization is contradicted by what the reader can infer from the reported events. Notably, Faber's depiction of himself as a purely rational man devoted to technology is challenged by his repeated irrational actions: for example, when he hides at the airport or impulsively decides to join Herbert on his journey to Guatemala. As Faber cannot find any rational explanation for these acts, he gives up on explaining them at all. For example, he states, "I had made up my mind to fly back to Mexico City. [...] I have no idea why I didn't do so"[165] (33). In compliance with his self-image, he does not reflect on any possibly unconscious motives for his choices.

Faber's fervent defence of his solitary life, which is triggered by Elisabeth's guess that he is sad because he is alone, shows another point of inconsistency in

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as "Homo Faber" (a man concerned mostly with work and able to control his own life with the help of available tools), but this self-concept proves to be self-deceptive. "A Report" stands for the intended, but not accomplished, absence of emotions in the text.

164 Cf. Henze 285.

165 "Ich war entschlossen [...] nach Mexiko-City zurückzufliegen. [...] Warum ich es nicht tat, weiß ich nicht" (41).

his account. The extensiveness and fierceness of his argument imply Faber's urge to defend his approach, an urge that stems from his own uncertainty; the fact that he continues to argue his points in an inner monologue even after Elisabeth has left discloses Faber's need to justify his view vis-à-vis himself. Besides, his discourse defies his will once again: the longer he talks, the more "his words reveal the reverse of what he wanted to say" (Butler 115). Thus, his monologue ends with a depiction of his lonely nights: "Then I just stand there with gin, which I don't like, in my glass, drinking; I stand still so as not to hear steps in my flat, steps that are after all only my own. The whole thing isn't tragic, merely wearisome. You can't wish yourself goodnight..."[166] (94). He tries to counter the pessimism of this utterance by immediately adding the rhetorical question "Is that a reason for marrying?"[167] (94). In his opinion the answer is clearly no. Ironically, his proposal to Elisabeth on that same night represents an unintentional affirmative answer to that question. In short, Faber's own reflections and actions undermine his interpretation of his solitude as desired.

Nevertheless, Faber's stance develops throughout the narrative. When writing the "First Stop," the narrator is still unaware of the change he is going through even though the reader can observe it. For example, Faber's aforementioned drunken conversation with Elisabeth about Joachim signifies a partial release from his emotional repression. It is characteristic of Faber's adherence to his self-image that he does not see the full significance of this breakthrough; he claims, "I don't know why I told her all this"[168] (85). Also, his strongly asserted disinterest in the arts and in dreams begins to crack when he sees the statue of *Head of a Sleeping Erinys,* which he describes as "magnificent, impressive, superb, profoundly impressive,"[169] thus betraying the intense effect this work of art has on him (114). His subsequent question, "'I wonder what she's dreaming about?'"[170], indicates that he has abandoned his indifference to dreams even though he might not be ready to admit it to himself yet (114). Similarly, his protective shield against nature breaks down several times, and thus he can experience the emotional impact of nature, particularly of the lunar eclipse in Avignon that "upset [his]

166 "Dann stehe ich einfach da, Gin im Glas, den ich nicht mag, und trinke; ich stehe, um keine Schritte zu hören in meiner Wohnung, Schritte, die doch nur meine eignen sind. Alles ist nicht tragisch, nur mühsam: Man kann sich nicht selbst Gutnacht sagen –" (113)

167 "Ist das ein Grund zum Heiraten?"(113)

168 "Wozu ich's erzählte, keine Ahnung" (102).

169 "Großartig, ganz großartig, beeindruckend, famos, tiefbeeindruckend" (136).

170 "'Was sie wohl zusammenträumt –? '" (136)

equilibrium"[171] (128) and of the seaside sunrise at Acrocorinth (157). Faber's depiction of this latter experience additionally creates the impression that this scene is his first glimpse of authentic life, his first experience of being here and now: "I shall never forget how she sat on that rock, her eyes closed, silent, letting the sun shine down on her. She was happy, she said, and I shall never forget the way the sea grew visibly darker [...], the first warmth and Sabeth, who embraced me, as though I had given her all this, the sea and the sun and everything, and I shall never forget how Sabeth sang!"[172] (157). As my following examination of Faber's unconscious motivation shows, it is not a coincidence that these breaches in his world-view usually emerge in his interactions with Elisabeth.

In the "Second Stop" the narrator's attitude has changed although he still retains some aspects of his self-image as a technocrat. These aspects manifest themselves, for instance, in Faber's indignation at having to write by hand when his typewriter is taken or in his lack of understanding for Hanna's analysis of his false self-image. His persisting dependence upon his electric razor—a symbol of technology—to help him ignore the seriousness of his medical condition suggests Faber's continuing reliance on his self-image to mask his death anxiety as the following correction of his earlier pessimism indicates: "P.S. I have just shaved and then massaged my skin. It's ridiculous the ideas you get into your head from sheer idleness! There's nothing to get upset about. I simply need fresh air and exercise, that's all"[173] (181). However, the shift in Faber's perspective is clear: he no longer stresses technology over everything else. He lets his emotions enter his consciousness, and consequently they become explicit in his narration. For example, whereas in the "First Stop" Faber emphasizes his hostility towards people, in the "Second Stop" he consciously acknowledges that he went to visit Herbert in the jungle "simply [...] to see him [...]; I hadn't all that many friends"[174] (175). Or while in the "First Stop" he contemptuously dismisses Marcel's reasoning as the raving of a communist, in the "Second Stop" he adopts

171 "brachte mich aus der Ruhe" (152).

172 "Ich werde nie vergessen, wie sie auf diesem Fels sitzt, ihre Augen geschlossen, wie sie schweigt und sich von der Sonne bescheinen lässt. Sie sei glücklich, sagt sie, und ich werde nie vergessen: das Meer, das zusehends dunkler wird, blauer, violett [...], die erste Wärme und Sabeth, die mich umarmt, als habe ich ihr alles geschenkt, das Meer und die Sonne und alles, und ich werde nie vergessen, wie Sabeth singt!"

173 "PS. Ich habe mich eben rasiert, dann die Haut massiert. Lächerlich, was man sich vor lauter Müßiggang alles einbildet! Kein Grund zum Erschrecken, es fehlt mir nur an Bewegung und frischer Luft, das ist alles" (214).

174 "bloß um ihn wiederzusehen [...]; man hat nicht soviel Freunde" (207).

Marcel's ideas about "the American way of life," that is, a life mediated by technology that cuts people off from their authentic existence. Faber's criticism of the "American way of life" is actually criticism of an inauthentic lifestyle. Thus, it is also self-criticism as he makes explicit in exclamations such as: "My anger with myself! (If only one could live over again.)"[175] (185). Clearly, Faber's world-view has undergone a transformation in the process of narration.

Yet it remains doubtful whether Faber really gets rid of his false self-image and achieves an authentic existence. He lacks understanding not only for Hanna and her arguments but also for Herbert: for example, he goes to great pains to repair Herbert's car even though it is obvious that Herbert will never use it again. These circumstances imply that despite significant development in Faber's perception of himself and the world, he has not completely left his false self-image behind. It seems likely that Faber does not become fully aware of the inauthenticity of his life until the last hours of his diary writing (and probably his life):

> Arrangements in case of death: all written evidence [...] [is] to be destroyed, none of it is true. To be alive: to be in the light. Driving donkeys around somewhere [...] – [...] our job [...]! The main thing is to stand up to the light, to joy (like our child [when she sang]) in the knowledge that I shall be extinguished in the light over gorse, asphalt and sea, to stand up to time, or rather to eternity in the instant. To be eternal means to have existed.[176] (210)

Faber's "none of it is true" suggests that he recognizes the mask under which he has been hiding his real existence and that he "realizes at the end of his life that he has not really lived"[177] (Stäuble 196). In addition, he accepts the idea of death for the first time; he grasps the importance knowing that he "shall be extinguished" has for the meaning of life.[178] However, the alternative to his former way of life that he presents is not satisfying as "[h]is craving for a simple life is nothing but a transformation from one form of denying the complexity of life

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175 "Mein Zorn auf mich selbst! (Wenn man nochmals leben könnte.)" (220)

176 "Verfügung für den Todesfall: alle Zeugnisse von mir [...] sollen vernichtet werden, es stimmt nichts. Auf der Welt sein: im Licht sein. Irgendwo [...] Esel treiben, unser Beruf! – aber vor allem: standhalten dem Licht, der Freude (wie unser Kind, als es sang) im Wissen, daß ich erlösche im Licht über Ginster, Asphalt und Meer, standhalten der Zeit, beziehungsweise Ewigkeit im Augenblick. Ewig sein: gewesen sein" (247). My modifications to the quotation in English bring it closer to the original version.

177 "erkennt am Ende seines Lebens, daß er nicht wirklich gelebt hat"

178 See Marcus 116n. for a discussion of the connection between the denial of death and inauthentic existence in the light of Martin Heidegger's philosophy.

(by reducing human beings to machines) and the questions it leaves unanswered to another" (Marcus 123). Furthermore, as W. Gordon Cunliffe argues, "Seen from an existentialist point of view, Faber's new, enlightened stance is just an arbitrary choice of a new role,"[179] which ignores the necessity of continuity in personal identity (120). Also, Faber never acknowledges the role of his unconscious motivation in the series of events he reports, which implies that he has not completely abandoned his view of himself as a purely rational person. In short, the extent to which Faber abandons deceiving himself about his self-concept remains indeterminate (cf. Marcus 124).

Nevertheless, despite this uncertainty the reader's initial unambiguous assessment of the narrator as unreliable shifts towards hesitance between the reliability and unreliability hypotheses. Phelan's categories of *bonding* and *estranging* unreliability prove helpful here. While estranging unreliability "underlines or increases" the effects of dramatic irony and thus broadens the gap between the narrator and the reader, bonding unreliability diminishes this gap (Phelan, "Estranging" 223–24). With regard to his self-deception concerning his self-image, Faber's unreliability is an example of Phelan's subtype of bonding unreliability that he calls "partial progress towards the norm" ("Estranging" 231). The effect of bonding between the narrating character and the reader that this partial progress towards reliability has is reinforced by Faber's development from an arrogant, ostentatiously self-assured and emotionally cold person towards a more likable character, with whom readers might not agree but who wins their sympathy by struggling against his inauthentic existence. To sum up, the reader's growing fondness of Faber is linked to the diminishing gap between the narrator's account and the fictional reality: with regard to his self-image, the narrator's unreliability changes from an estranging to a bonding type while he simultaneously becomes more agreeable as a character.

Neither Coincidence Nor Destiny: Faber's Unacknowledged Motivation

Faber's irrational behaviour—the choices for which he fails to provide any explanation—casts doubt not only on the authenticity of his self-image but also on the intended message of his narration: that he is innocent because the events that led to his incestuous relationship and the subsequent death of his daughter were coincidental. Faber deals explicitly with this topic in his reflections on coincidence and fate:

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179 "Vom existenzialistischen Standpunkt aus gesehen ist Fabers neue, aufgeklärte Haltung bloß die willkürliche Wahl einer neuen Rolle."

> I don't believe in providence and fate, as a technologist I am used to reckoning with the formulas of probability. What has providence to do with it? [...] I don't deny that it was more than a coincidence which made things turn out as they did, it was a whole train of coincidences. But what has providence to do with it? I don't need any mystical explanation for the occurrence of the improbable; mathematics explains it adequately, as far as I'm concerned.
>
> Mathematically speaking, the probable [...] and the improbable are not different in kind, but only in frequency, whereby the more frequent appears *a priori* more probable. [...] The term "probability" includes improbability at the extreme limits of probability, and when the improbable does occur, this is no cause for surprise, bewilderment or mystification."[180] (19–20)

Here it becomes clear that Faber's self-concept and his attempt at self-justification are interconnected: his identity as a technocrat should protect him from accepting any other explanation of what happened than that the whole chain of events was purely accidental.

Faber's contrasting of coincidence and providence enables him to discard all alternative explanations of coincidence as "mystical." Surely, the emergency landing, after which Faber got to know Herbert, can be considered coincidental, as can Elisabeth's presence on Faber's boat. But I wish to demonstrate that many of the other events resulted from "Faber's 'decision' – or, more precisely: the 'decision' of his unconscious"[181] (Meurer 26). Put differently, what might seem to be a mere coincidence is in fact influenced by Faber's unacknowledged wishes and desires. Fingarette's theory of self-deception[182] pertains to this situation: Faber does not spell out his own desires and fills the consequent gaps in his life story with a self-apologetic tale centred on the notion of coincidence. As a result, the explicit version of the story to a certain extent veils the fictional reality.

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180 "Ich glaube nicht an Fügung und Schicksal, als Techniker bin ich gewohnt mit den Formeln der Wahrscheinlichkeit zu rechnen. Wieso Fügung? [...] Ich bestreite nicht: Es war mehr als ein Zufall, daß alles so gekommen ist, es war eine ganze Kette von Zufällen. Aber wieso Fügung? Ich brauche, um das Unwahrscheinliche als Erfahrungstatsache gelten zu lassen, keinerlei Mystik; Mathematik genügt mir.

Das Wahrscheinliche [...] und das Unwahrscheinliche [...] unterscheiden sich nicht dem Wesen nach, sondern nur der Häufigkeit nach, wobei das Häufigere von vornherein als glaubwürdiger erscheint. [...]Indem wir vom Wahrscheinlichen sprechen, ist ja das Unwahrscheinliche immer schon inbegriffen und zwar als Grenzfall des Möglichen, und wenn es einmal eintritt, das Unwahrscheinliche, so besteht für unsereinen keinerlei Grund zur Verwunderung, zur Erschütterung, zur Mystifikation" (25–26).

181 "Fabers 'Entschluss' – oder genauer: der 'Entschluss' seines Unbewussten"

182 See chapter 1.3 for an explanation of Fingarette's theory of self-deception.

The finding that what Faber considers an externally motivated accidental sequence of events is actually partly motivated internally—by himself, his personality, and his ambitions—can be brought into the context of Frisch's reflections on coincidence contained in his *Sketchbook 1946-1949*: "Of course it is conceivable that we do not see and hear everything our potential allows us, in other words, there may be many chance happenings that we fail to see or hear, though they are relevant to us; but we experience none that are *not* relevant to us. In the final count it is always the most fitting thing that befalls us"[183] (301). Hanna's judgment of Faber, as reported by Faber himself, echoes this sentiment: Hanna says that "[i]t was no chance mistake, but a mistake that is part of me [Faber] [...], like my profession, like the rest of my life"[184] (178). Hanna is therefore aware of the connection between Faber's false self-image and his self-deception about the role of his desires in what happened. Significantly, she goes on to address the topic of death, as Faber reports:

My [Faber's] mistake lay in the fact that we technologists try to live without death. Her own words: "You don't treat life as form, but as a mere sum arrived at by addition, hence you have no relationship to time, because you have no relationship to death." [...] My mistake with Sabeth lay in repetition. I behaved as though age did not exist and hence contrary to nature. We cannot do away with age [...] by marrying our children."[185] (178–79)

Hanna relates Faber's unconscious motivation to his repression of death anxiety. Faber's repression of death anxiety takes various forms: it is included in his hostility towards nature as described above and is further expressed by his self-deception regarding his ageing and his illness, and by his interest in the young Elisabeth.

Faber's Ageing and Desire for Authenticity

Faber's behaviour when confronted with mirrors reveals his denial of ageing. For example, although he has convinced himself that his boss is mistaken in his

183 "Natürlich läßt sich denken, daß wir unser mögliches Gesicht, unser mögliches Gehör nicht immer offen haben, will sagen, daß es noch manche Zufälle gäbe, die wir übersehen und überhören, obschon sie zu uns gehören; aber wir erleben keine, die nicht zu uns gehören. Am Ende ist es immer das Fälligste, was uns zufällt" (750).

184 "Es ist kein zufälliger Irrtum gewesen, sondern ein Irrtum, der zu mir gehört" (212).

185 "Mein Irrtum: daß wir Techniker versuchen, ohne den Tod zu leben. Wörtlich: Du behandelst das Leben nicht als Gestalt, sondern als bloße Addition, daher kein Verhältnis zur Zeit, weil kein Verhältnis zum Tod. [...] Mein Irrtum mit Sabeth: Repetition, ich habe mich so verhalten, als gebe es kein Alter, daher widernatürlich. Wir können nicht das Alter aufheben, [...] indem wir unsere eigenen Kinder heiraten" (212).

belief that Faber needs a holiday to get better, he feels insecure and defensive in front of a mirror: "[T]he only thing that irritated me was the mirror facing me [...] I had circles under my eyes, that was all, apart from that I was sun-tanned, as I have said, not nearly so gaunt as usual; on the contrary I looked splendid"[186] (100). This metaphorical shutting of his eyes to age has a parallel in his literally closed eyes in the bathtub of Hanna's flat: "I lay with my eyes closed, to avoid seeing my aging body"[187] (141). Faber's attempt at forgetting about his physical ageing is accompanied by his discontent with his increasing age in general, which is expressed in his jealousy of young people: "[S]omething kept making me jealous although I made an effort to be young"[188] (111). On the boat, Faber's jealousy of Elisabeth's young friend involves discomfort with youth in general: "I don't know what Sabeth saw in him. [...] [O]nly I find it less and less easy to put up with these young people, their way of talking, their genius, though all the time they have nothing but dreams of the future to preen themselves about; they don't give a damn for what we have already achieved in this world; if you tell them, they just smile politely"[189] (83). Faber tries to convince himself that his achievements make him superior to the inexperienced, but his hostility reveals his envy of the future prospects of young people.

Faber's inability to come to terms with his ageing, as well as his wish to be young again, characterizes his attitude to time, symbolized by his mention of "clocks that were able to make time run backward"[190] (161). Furthermore, he confesses his envy for his daughter's ability to enjoy life and to look forward to the future. These observations reveal that Faber's longing to undo the past stems, apart from his fear of death, from his desire to make up for the authentic experience that he has been avoiding all his life. This desire, however, remains unconscious: Faber represses it as it clashes with his self-image.

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186 "was mich irritierte war lediglich der Spiegel gegenüber [...] Ich hatte Ringe unter den Augen, nichts weiter, im übrigen war ich sonnengebräunt, wie gesagt, lange nicht so hager wie üblich, im Gegenteil, ich sah ausgezeichnet aus" (120).

187 "ich lag mit geschlossenen Augen, um meinen Körper nicht zu sehen" (167).

188 "irgendetwas machte mich immer eifersüchtig, obschon ich mir Mühe gab, jung zu sein" (133).

189 "Ich weiß nicht, was Sabeth an ihm fand. [...] [N]ur vertrage ich immer weniger diese jungen Leute, ihre Tonart, ihr Genie, dabei handelt es sich um lauter Zukunftsträume, womit sie sich so großartig vorkommen, und es interessiert sie keinen Teufel, was unsereiner in dieser Welt schon tatsächlich geleistet hat; wenn man es ihnen aufzählt, lächeln sie höflich" (100).

190 "Uhren, die imstande waren, die Zeit rückwärts laufen zu lassen" (191).

Faber's unconscious desire guides his actions during the events described in the "First Stop," particularly those that he finds no explanation for. Again, the reader infers more information from the reliably reported events than the narrator: Faber misreads and underreads some occurrences, especially as far as their causes are concerned. For example, Faber does not know why he joins Herbert on his journey to the jungle, but one can deduce his unconscious wish to meet Joachim, the only real friend he has ever had. He does not acknowledge this reason so as not to jeopardize the consistency of his concept of himself as a man uninterested in human relationships and the past, always looking out to the future.

Furthermore, he does not know why he writes a letter to his lover, Ivy, in which he announces he is leaving her, when he actually intended to write a business letter to his boss. However, his later remark suggests that he has realized the absurdity of his relationship with Ivy after being reminded of Hanna: "I hadn't married Hanna, whom I loved, so why should I marry Ivy?"[191] (28). Faber's favouring Hanna over Ivy does not only mean a preference of love over "an existence based solely on sexual responses proved empty and void" that characterizes his relationship with Ivy (Zakrison 77). It also indicates Faber's unconscious craving for authenticity. Ivy is a married woman who works as a model, goes to a psychiatrist, and chooses "her clothes to match the color of the car [...] and the color of the car to match her lipstick or the other way round"[192] (*Faber* 29). The significance of her pursuit of happiness in superficiality and medical help come to light later in the "Second Stop," when Faber scorns "the American way of life": "[T]hey only live because there is penicillin, that's all, the fuss they make as though they were happy because they're Americans, because they have no inhibitions, and yet they're only gawky and noisy"[193] (185). As Jurgensen contends, "Ivy represents a social system and a way of life that Faber unconsciously seeks to escape"[194] (124). This unconscious desire is reflected in Faber's decision (again, unexplained and presented as coincidence) to take a boat instead of a plane and thus leave New York a week earlier—to make a voyage that he looks

191 "Ich habe Hanna nicht geheiratet, die ich liebte, und wieso soll ich Ivy heiraten?" (36).

192 "ihre Kleider nach der Wagenfarbe [...], die Wagenfarbe nach ihrem Lippenstift oder umgekehrt" (36).

193 "[S]ie leben, weil es Penicillin gibt, das ist alles, ihr Getue dabei, als wären sie glücklich, weil Amerikaner, weil ohne Hemmungen, dabei sind sie nur schlaksig und laut" (219–20).

194 "Ivy [wird] mit einer Gesellschaftsform und Lebensweise identifiziert, der Faber unbewußt zu entkommen sucht."

forward to with excitement "as though [he] were beginning a new life"[195] (*Faber* 65). By breaking his habit and deciding for a boat, Faber continues his journey from inauthentic existence into a "new life," and this decision plays a crucial role in the series of events that follow.

Faber's unconscious desire to flee from the society of mediated experience also comes through in his anger at the people attending a party in his New York flat: "'In your company a man could die,' I said, 'a man could die and you wouldn't even notice, there's no trace of friendship, a man could die in your company!' I shouted. 'What the hell are we talking to each other for at all?' I shouted. 'What the hell's the point of this party,' I could hear myself shouting, 'if a man could die without your noticing?'"[196] (67–68). Butler sees this as an instance when alcohol briefly frees Faber from repression (110). Butler also draws attention to the implicit meaning that has been lost in translation: in the German, *Gesellschaft* (translated as *party*) can mean both a celebration and society in a more general sense (Butler 164). Therefore, when Faber shouts "What the hell's the point of this party," he at the same time questions the purpose of modern society. The repressed content of his mind briefly surfaces and unveils his need for authentic experience, a need which motivates his actions, such as his journey to the jungle, his decision to travel by boat (to escape from Ivy and his American friends), and later his fascination with Elisabeth.

Apart from his distorted self-image, another source of the narrator's unreliability is his attempt to eliminate his sense of guilt for Elisabeth's death by "relat[ing] to himself as someone drifted by the wind: that is by external circumstances of which he has no control, and incapable of taking full responsibility for his life" (Marcus 123). Interestingly, the greatest gap between Faber's intended message and what the reader finds between the lines appears in his account of his relationship with Elisabeth: his view of this relationship as purely accidental is undermined by his unconscious motivations that the reader can infer. First, Faber repeatedly asserts that he was not interested in the young girl—that he "didn't run after her"[197] (74) and that external circumstances forced him to make her acquaintance: "I only noticed the girl because her pony-tail was dangling in

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195 "ein neues Leben zu beginnen" (78).

196 "In eurer Gesellschaft könnte man sterben, sagte ich, man könnte sterben, ohne daß ihr es merkt, von Freundschaft keine Spur, sterben könnte man in eurer Gesellschaft! Schrie ich, und wozu wir überhaupt miteinander reden, schrie ich, wozu denn (ich hörte mich selber schreien), wozu diese ganze Gesellschaft, wenn einer sterben könnte, ohne daß ihr es merkt –" (82).

197 "Ich stellte ihr nicht nach" (89).

front of my face for at least half an hour. [...] It was simply the waiting that forced me to look at her"[198] (70–71). However, while Faber is at sea, his thoughts revolve around Elisabeth, and he clearly yearns for her presence and even shows signs of jealousy: "What irritated me was [...] the way [a certain man] flirted with the young girl, who hadn't come over to the table on his account [...]. Why did he keep touching the girl all the time?"[199] (77–78). Moreover, the narrator's view does not tally with Elisabeth's utterance: "'You keep watching me all the time, Mr. Faber, I don't like it'"[200] (86).[201] As suggested above, when interacting with Elisabeth, Faber experiences a partial release from his self-deception: he tells her about Joachim's death, proposes to her, and sometimes consciously enjoys art and nature. The impact she has had on Faber's repetitive life is reflected, for instance, in his being "happier than [he] had ever been in Paris"[202] (107) and in his evident break with some of his habits. For example, he claims that he "ha[s] never [...] been as much as half an hour late for a conference on account of a woman" (99) and admits only a little later that he "was late for the conference" because of Elisabeth (104). The disruption of routine that Faber allows on account of Elisabeth betrays his wish for a more authentic life.

Faber's Wish to Turn the Clock Back

Faber's motivation is more complicated than a pure desire for intense experience. It proves to be of great significance that Elisabeth reminds him of Hanna, a girlfriend from his youth. To prove his innocence in matters of his relationship with his daughter, the narrator denies the resemblance between the two women, but again, a different version seeps through the surface of his discourse. Faber ponders over the similarities between Elisabeth and Hanna but rationalizes them as a trick of his mind: "I told myself that probably every young girl would somehow

198 "Das Mädchen bemerkte ich bloß, weil ihr Roßschwanz vor meinem Gesicht baumelte, mindestens eine halbe Stunde lang. [...] Ich war einfach durch diese Warterei gezwungen, sie zu betrachten" (85).

199 "Was mich aufregt, [ist] [...] seine Flirterei mit dem jungen Mädchen, das nicht seinetwegen an unseren Tisch gekommen ist [...]. Wozu faßt er das Mädchen immer an!" (93–94).

200 "'Sie beobachten mich die ganze Zeit, Mister Faber, das mag ich nicht!'" (104).

201 Elisabeth's and Hanna's utterances often function as a corrective of Faber's perspective: the narrator reliably reports the dialogues but usually underreads them in that he does not accept the relevance of Elisabeth's and Hanna's opinions.

202 "glücklich, wie noch nie in diesem Paris" (128).

remind me of Hanna"[203] (79). However, resemblances continually strike him, and when he reports proposing to Elisabeth, he recalls "[h]er Hanna-as-a-girl face"[204] (96). Consequently, the reader does not doubt whether Elisabeth actually reminds him of Hanna, and thus his apologetic speech is not to be trusted:

> If I had had the slightest suspicion on the ship (or later) that there might be any real connection between the young girl and Hanna, who was understandably on my mind after the business with Joachim, of course I should immediately have asked: Who is her mother? What is her name? Where does she come from? I don't know how I should have acted, but anyhow differently, that's obvious, I'm not pathological, I should have treated my daughter as my daughter, I'm not a pervert![205] (81)

In fact Faber has repressed his suspicion because he does not want to know; he falls into a kind of voluntary Oedipus-like blindness.

This condition first surfaces when Faber repudiates his thoughts about the resemblance between the two women some time after his first sexual intercourse with Elisabeth in Avignon: "Her likeness to Hanna struck me less and less frequently the more intimate we became, the girl and I. Since Avignon it had never occurred to me at all. At most I wondered how I could ever have thought she bore any likeness to Hanna at all"[206] (118). But if this statement were true, why would he ask about Elisabeth's mother's name just a short while later? And why would he then admit that the truth about this matter "didn't come as a surprise, it merely brought certainty"[207] (121–22)? Again, one can observe the workings of Faber's mind's main defence mechanism—repression: it would be unacceptable for him to think of Elisabeth as Hanna's daughter after having had sex with her, and so he does not allow this idea to become conscious (cf. Jurgensen 144).

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203 "Ich sagte mir, daß mich wahrscheinlich jedes junge Mädchen irgendwie an Hanna erinnern würde" (96).

204 "Ihr Hanna-Mädchen-Gesicht" (116).

205 "Hätte ich damals auf dem Schiff (oder später) auch nur dem mindesten Verdacht gehabt, es könnte zwischen dem Mädchen und Hanna, die mir nach der Geschichte mit Joachim begreiflicherweise durch den Kopf ging, ein wirklicher Zusammenhang bestehen, selbstverständlich hätte ich sofort gefragt: Wer ist Ihre Mutter? Wie heißt sie? Woher kommt sie? – ich weiß nicht, wie ich mich verhalten hätte, jedenfalls anders, das ist selbstverständlich, ich bin ja nicht krankhaft, ich hätte meine Tochter als meine Tochter behandelt, ich bin nicht pervers!" (98)

206 "Ihre Ähnlichkeit mit Hanna ist mir immer seltener in den Sinn gekommen, je vertrauter wir uns geworden sind, das Mädchen und ich. Seit Avignon überhaupt nicht mehr! Ich wunderte mich höchstens, daß mir eine Ähnlichkeit mit Hanna je in den Sinn gekommen ist" (142).

207 "Eine Überraschung war es ja nicht, bloß die Gewißheit" (145).

The second remarkable incident demonstrating Faber's voluntary blindness occurs after he has found out that Hanna is Elisabeth's mother:

> In the silence of my mind I calculated ceaselessly [...] until the sum worked out the way I wanted it: She could only be Joachim's child! How I worked it out, I don't know, I juggled the dates until the sum, as a sum, really worked out right. [...] I had picked the dates [...] in such a way that the sum was right; the only fixed date was Sabeth's birthday, the rest could be juggled till a weight was lifted from my heart.[208] (125)

In this case the narrator owns up to his past self's self-deception, but he does not reflect any further on this recognition. He therefore fails to better understand his role in the whole story.

To understand the significance of Faber's attraction to a girl who reminds him of Hanna, one needs to inspect his attitude towards Hanna and towards what happened between them about twenty years ago. Their relationship ended after Hanna, not feeling genuinely loved, refused to marry Faber at the last moment. The narrator broaches the subject of this relationship several times and tries to rationalize its outcome by repeating that "[i]t was really Hanna herself who didn't want to marry"[209] (31). But however he strives to marginalize his role in their separation, it turns out that his inappropriate reaction to the news of Hanna's pregnancy played an important part in the break-up: "I had said 'your child,' instead of 'our child.' That was what Hanna could not forgive me"[210] (48). Characteristically, the narrator finds an excuse for his behaviour in his would-be rationality: "I still contest her assertion that I was scared to death. I merely asked: Are you sure? A perfectly matter-of-fact and reasonable question"[211] (47). Furthermore, despite his claims to the contrary, it turns out that he in fact does feel remorse. Upon seeing Hanna as an independent woman, he admits: "I could see that the usual pangs of conscience you feel when you don't marry a girl were

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208 "Ich rechnete im stillen [...] pausenlos, bis die Rechnung aufging, wie ich sie wollte: Sie konnte nur das Kind von Joachim sein! Wie ich's rechnete, weiß ich nicht; ich legte mir die Daten zurecht, bis die Rechnung wirklich stimmte, die Rechnung als solche. [...] [I]ch hatte ja die Daten [...] so gewählt, daß die Rechnung stimmte; fix blieb nur der Geburtstag von Sabeth, der Rest ging nach Adam Riese, bis mir ein Stein vom Herzen fiel" (149).

209 "Im Grunde war es Hanna selbst, die damals nicht heiraten wollte" (39).

210 "Ich hatte gesagt: Dein Kind, statt zu sagen: Unser Kind. Das war es, was mir Hanna nicht verzeihen konnte" (59).

211 "Ihre Behauptung, ich sei zu Tode erschrocken, bestreite ich noch heute; ich fragte bloß: Bist du sicher? Immerhin eine sachliche und vernünftige Frage" (57).

superfluous"[212] (138). Marcus suggests that Faber's sense of guilt about the end of his relationship with Hanna amounts to one of the forces that motivate Faber's self-deception about the parentage of Elisabeth: "Faber's intimate relationship with Elisabeth stems, to a certain extent, from his unconscious attempt to turn the clock back and redress the balance, that is, compensate for his unwillingness to be devoted to her. This motivation explains not only his interest in Elisabeth, but also his impulse to marry her," an unexpected move from a person as hostile to marriage as Faber claims to be (115). Yet Faber's behaviour towards Elisabeth is also stimulated by his sense of a missed opportunity, revived by his thoughts about Hanna after meeting Herbert.

Faber says about Elisabeth: "She caught my attention. [...] I made her an offer of marriage without being in love, and we knew at once that it was stupid and we said good-by. Why did I look for her in Paris?"[213] (127). She catches his attention because she reminds him of Hanna; he makes her an offer of marriage and later looks for her in Paris because his desire for authenticity has been awoken by the chain of events starting with the emergency landing. Authentic experience is here represented by love; Faber thinks about his relationships with women and concludes: "Only with Hanna was it never absurd"[214] (102). He unconsciously hopes that marrying a young girl who reminds him of Hanna will undo his past mistake that robbed him of the opportunity for a fulfilling romantic relationship. This assumption is corroborated by Faber's surprisingly quick change of roles (and partners): Faber comes to Athens as Elisabeth's lover but promptly adopts the role of father and decides to marry Hanna (cf. Würker 29). In this sense, Faber does not commit incest as a consequence of pure chance as he purports. Instead, it is at least partly a result of his failure to accept the irreversibility of time. Once again, Faber's actions contradict his claims and give him away as an unreliable narrator.

As the analysis of how Faber's self-image develops has shown, the narrator to some extent becomes aware of his self-deception during his narration. In the "Second Stop," Faber seemingly accepts his guilt: "How can Hanna stand me,

212 "Ich sah schon: die üblichen Gewissensbisse, die man sich macht, wenn man ein Mädchen nicht geheiratet hat, erwiesen sich als überflüssig" (164).

213 "Sie war mir eingefallen. [...] Ich habe einen Heiratsantrag gemacht, ohne verliebt zu sein, und wir haben sofort gewußt, daß es Unsinn ist, und wir haben Abschied genommen. Warum habe ich sie in Paris gesucht!" (151–52)

214 "Nur mit Hanna ist es nie absurd gewesen" (122).

after all that has happened? [...] Why doesn't she tell me I have ruined her life?"[215] (203). However, he does not recognize the connection between his world-view and the mistake he made with Elisabeth. Despite changes in his world-view and his self-concept, he remains deluded in his conviction that the events he has described were caused by purely external factors and fails to recognize his own motives that contributed to the developments. In other words, although the degree of Faber's unreliability as a narrator decreases as the narration proceeds, his persevering self-deception about the role of his unconscious desires in the events that preceded his daughter's death prevents the closure of the gap between fictional reality and his rendering of it.

3.1.1 *Homo faber* and Ishiguro's novels

As regards the portrayal of fictional reality and the use of unreliable narration, *Faber* bears many similarities to Ishiguro's first three novels. In these three novels, as in *Faber*, the narrators are clearly unreliable, despite the fact that the degree of their unreliability remains indeterminate. The circumstances of narrating in *Faber* differ from those in *Pale*, *Artist*, and *Remains* in that Faber's narration concerns mostly recent events whereas Etsuko, Ono, and Stevens recall a more distant past. Yet in many ways the situation of the narrating characters is also similar: all of them experience a sense of guilt and waste concerning some developments in their lives, and their narration serves as a means of coming to terms with reality. By narrating, they wish to justify their actions but also approach the truth about themselves. This double motivation creates tension. For the purposes of self-justification, the narrators draw near certain danger zones that could yield information incompatible with the version they are willing to accept, and for the purposes of self-knowledge, they feel an urge to enter just such areas because they sense that they are crucial to their story. Textually, this conflict is represented as unreliable narration: the narrators' desire to excuse their actions makes them omit or distort some information, but their desire to know the truth compels them to provide facts. The reader then recognizes the gaps and fills them in with the information the narrator indirectly provides: the reader finds connections between seemingly unrelated facts, detects contradictions that the narrator disregards, and corrects or completes the narrator's mistaken or insufficient interpretations.

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215 "Wie kann Hanna nach allem was geschehen ist, mich aushalten? [...] Warum sagt sie's nicht, daß ich ihr Leben zerstört habe?" (240)

In terms of both the plot and the use of the unreliable narrator, *Faber* is the closest to *Remains*. Both Faber and Stevens come to regret the way they have lived: at first this regret manifests itself unconsciously in their actions (especially their journeys); towards the end of their narration, however, they explicitly own up to this feeling (Faber in Cuba and Stevens at the end of his journey in Weymouth). In the past they both led an inauthentic existence, were one with their role, and suppressed their true identity: Faber under the guise of a matter-of-fact technocrat and Stevens in the aspiration to become a "great butler." Faber's reliance on habit and technology has a similar function as Stevens's professionalism: both are constructs that are supposed to mask their strong repression of emotions in the past. Both narrators—to a great degree unconsciously—regret one of the consequences of their emotional repression: the missed opportunity for a fulfilling romantic relationship (Faber with Hanna, and Stevens with Miss Kenton). They both try to make up for this mistake: just as Faber's proposal to Elisabeth stems from his unconscious wish to relive his relationship with Hanna and change its outcome, the journey Stevens undertakes in order to visit Miss Kenton (now Mrs. Benn) is motivated by his "vain hope of undoing the past," a past in which his emotional repression drove Miss Kenton to a marriage with a man she did not love (Lodge 156). Stevens learns the harsh truth—that "there's no turning back the clock now"—directly from Mrs. Benn and, at last, acknowledges his past mistake and its irreversibility: "[A]t that moment, my heart was breaking" (*Remains* 239). In contrast, Faber never admits to himself that his relationship with Elisabeth was connected to his unconscious desire to undo the mistake he made with Hanna; even after Elisabeth's death, he does not accept that he has missed his chance and decides to marry Hanna. The irrevocability of his past decision is then imposed on him by his death.

Both Faber and Stevens feel uncomfortable about their past; they try to talk themselves out of a sense of having erred, just as Ono and Etsuko do. Faber feels the need to explain away his incestuous behaviour with his daughter; he disavows his responsibility by positing the events that preceded their relationship as pure coincidence. Stevens tries to cope with a sense of waste and guilt after he discovers he has dedicated his life to the service to a Nazi sympathizer by construing a concept of "dignity" that amounts to completely erasing his own identity and substituting it with the role of a butler who acts fully in compliance with his master's wishes and opinions. By recounting the instances in which he has displayed this kind of "dignity," Stevens strives to place form over content, as if the impeccable manner in which he served his master were more significant than the results of his employer's actions, to which he indirectly contributed.

In both novels the terms the narrators use to justify their past actions—"coincidence" and "dignity"—are revealed, against the narrators' will, to be used idiosyncratically. Recognizing and correcting the narrators' mis- and underreading of the reported events, the reader finds out that the "coincidence" Faber refers to is actually guided by Faber's unconscious desires and not by pure chance, and that Stevens's concept of "dignity" entails disclaiming the responsibility for one's own actions and avoiding one's own decisions and thus has little to do with dignity in the usual sense of the word.

Similarly, Ono tries to come to terms with the reinterpretation of his career as a painter by showing off his ability to make and pursue his own decisions against the opinion of the majority: as in Stevens's case, the form is supposed to make up for the content. Here, too, the narrator's own discourse, especially his mis- and underreading of the narrated events, betrays that his actions actually bear witness to the opposite of what he wants to prove. *Pale* diverges from this pattern: the narrator's sense of guilt and of a past mistake is even more pronounced here than in *Faber*, *Artist*, and *Remains*, but she does not try to avoid it by manipulating her self-image as the other narrators do. Still, she refuses to deal with her remorse explicitly and veils it in the story of another woman. Etsuko does not deny her sense of guilt; rather, she evades direct confrontation with it. Rather than rationalizing her actions, she avoids dealing with her recollections: she wants to make use of the healing effect of narrating without reviving her painful memories.

Further, both Faber and Stevens expose increasingly more information about certain events as their narration progresses; they return to subjects mentioned previously and revise their stance towards them. Butler recognizes a "triadic movement [...] in regard to four central episodes in Faber's report"[216] that "follow a roughly similar pattern: from initial obfuscation via a desperate ambiguity towards a greater honesty" (111). A comparable pattern exists in Stevens's narration, such as when he denies that his affection for Miss Kenton is the reason he journeys to the part of England where she is living. At the beginning of his narration, while interpreting her letter, Stevens projects into Miss Kenton/Mrs. Benn his own "deep nostalgia for [the old] days at Darlington Hall" and "sense of waste" (48).[217] Stevens's stance then develops towards admitting that he

216 These four episodes are, according to Butler, the failed relationship with Hanna, Faber's contemplation of his mirror image, and two key events in his acquaintance with Elisabeth—their first sexual intercourse in Avignon and Elisabeth's accident in Acrocorinth (111–13).

217 Cf. Salecl: "[H]e creates excuses that would prevent him from recognizing his own desire" in that "he presents it as the desire of Miss Kenton" (16).

might "have well read more into certain of her lines than perhaps was wise" and finally to spelling out his broken-heartedness at the end of the narrative (180). This gradual unfolding of truth is another consequence of the narrators' double motivation for narrating: self-justification and self-knowledge.

In *Artist* this process progresses differently but produces similar effects: Ono himself does not admit his personal guilt vis-à-vis his former pupil Kuroda, but some of the episodes he describes in the later stages of his narration and his commentary on them (notably his uncertainty about the source of his memories) enable the reader to infer information about Ono's denouncement of Kuroda that Ono has omitted from his narrative. In *Pale*, as in *Faber* and *Remains*, it is the narrator who concedes more at the end of the narrative. Yet although her slips of the tongue confirm the reader's suspicion that the story she tells concerns herself in some way, they do not provide any unambiguous narrative facts. Moreover, the narrator does not gradually progress towards greater reliability; she reveals the crucial information suddenly. Banks in *Orphans* also awakens from his self-deception very abruptly: his disappointment in the house where he had hoped to find his parents makes him realize that he had been mistaken, and soon afterwards he learns some other relevant information from Uncle Philip. Therefore, his unreliability as a narrator does not diminish gradually throughout the narration, as is the case with Stevens and Faber, but rather stops at once.

There are fewer resemblances between *Faber* and the two more experimental novels by Ishiguro (*Unconsoled* and *Orphans*). Still, some parallels can be observed, especially at the level of the plot and in the characterization of the narrators. Faber, who masks his lack of authenticity, especially his repression of feelings and his denial of death, with his fascination with technology and his habit-based lifestyle, resembles Ryder and Banks in that they also unconsciously choose a certain way of life (their professional missions) to conceal something they would rather not know. Ryder deceives himself about the reason for his frequent travels and concerts in various cities: his alleged duty to help the cities where he gives concerts disguises his obsession with the "wound" inflicted on him during his childhood. Banks masks his wish to find his parents by pursuing the career of a detective and later by hoping to save the world; his professional life thus amounts to an attempt to come to terms with a childhood trauma as well.

In addition, Banks's "mission" reminds one of Faber's wish to turn the clock back. Both characters unconsciously wish to relive a part of their life and change the outcome: Faber regrets his behaviour towards Hanna, and Banks wants to make up for his inability to prevent his parents' disappearance. In a way, both partly fulfil their wishes—Faber in his relationship with Elisabeth, and Banks in his detective work in Shanghai—before they are faced with a contradictory

reality. Each novel uses different techniques to depict this partial fulfilment of the narrating characters' dreams as each creates a different kind of fictional world. Although the many coincidences (not all of which are "guided") in Faber's story are unlikely to occur in the extratextual world and they are therefore to be read symbolically, the events are not impossible and the fictional world of the novel is perfectly verisimilar. Faber relives his past in the textual actual world of the novel but could have equally done so in the extratextual actual world. By contrast, Banks's reliving of the past that occurs in the textual actual world of *Orphans* could not happen in this form in the extratextual actual world: outside of fiction, people can only relive the past in this way in their imaginations. Accordingly, *Faber* presents a relatively uncomplicated case of unreliable narration whereas *Orphans* combines unreliability with unnatural narration.

3.2 The Man without a Past: Two Levels of Potential Narrative Unreliability in *Stiller*

While *Faber* features a narrator who starts to question his life-long self-concept as his narration progresses, Frisch's preceding novel, *Stiller*, begins after the narrator has discarded his past self-concept. The novel tells the story of Anatol Ludwig Stiller, a sculptor from Switzerland, who has returned to his homeland in 1952 after six years spent in the USA and Mexico. While abroad he experienced something special after a failed suicide attempt, an event that he refers to as having "met an angel." This incident made him realize how inauthentic his life had been and encouraged him to invent a new identity for himself—that of James White, an American citizen.

While he was abroad, Stiller was declared missing in his native Switzerland. Upon the protagonist's return (with an American passport in the name of White), he is arrested as suspicion arises that he is Stiller (who has been wrongly suspected of espionage). People who knew Stiller, including his wife, brother, friends, and former lover, are unshakeable in their belief that the prisoner is "their" Stiller, the Stiller of the past; thus, his past acquaintances refuse to acknowledge his new identity. Stiller/White[218] defends himself against this universal opinion because he feels that if he admitted that he was Stiller, he would not be able to

218 I use a combination of the protagonist's two names—*Stiller/White*—to talk about him at the time of his arrest (that is, the present of his narrative in part one) and *Stiller* to refer to the same character either in the past (before leaving Switzerland, hence the narrator's unacknowledged past self) or after his release from prison (that is, the present of the narrative in part two, which is narrated by a different character narrator).

keep his new, transformed self. One of the story-lines of the novel, which depicts the unhappy marriage of Stiller and the ballet dancer Julika before Stiller's disappearance, reveals that Stiller/White has good reasons for discarding his Stiller-identity. At the end of part one, narrated by Stiller/White, the protagonist has given up his endeavour to convince others of his new identity and admits to being Stiller; he has been released from prison after the charges against him have been dropped. Part two, narrated by the public prosecutor assigned to Stiller/White's case, Rolf, who has befriended Stiller/White, portrays Stiller's life after getting out of prison—his second attempt at a married life with Julika in the seclusion of an isolated house in the countryside of Vaud.

In this chapter I first discuss the convoluted narrative point of view and explain that the narrator chooses this way of narrating to keep a distance from his inconvenient past. I also elucidate why the other narrator's (Rolf's) account cannot be regarded as an unambiguous corrective of Stiller/White's perspective. Then I introduce two possible interpretations of Stiller/White as an unreliable narrator: one on the level of biographical facts and the other on the metaphorical level, that is, the level of the narrator's inner reality. I argue against the unreliability hypothesis on the level of facts: although Stiller/White's refusal of his past as Stiller obviously contradicts his personal history, one should acknowledge his wish for change that he tries to express in his new identity as White. I support this argument by examining the topics related to Stiller/White's identity crisis: social pressure and people's unwillingness to acknowledge changes in other people. I also point at the narrator's ironic attitude, through which the text encourages the reader's empathy with Stiller/White. Raising the question of the narrator's unreliability again, I contend that Stiller/White's failure to maintain his new identity casts doubt on its genuineness, of which he has been trying to convince the reader. This failure stems primarily from Stiller/White's wish to negate his social role rather than gain a natural distance from it and from his denial of his past as Stiller instead of incorporating this past into his transformed self. The narrator is therefore unreliable on the metaphorical level. However, the reader's empathy for Stiller/White weakens the traditional effect of unreliable narration—that is, the reader's pleasure at discovering the hidden version.

The Narrative Point of View as the Narrator's Means of Keeping Distance From His Past

The novel features a very complex point of view; its narration is multiperspective in more than one sense. The protagonist of the novel is also the narrator of the first part of the book, titled "Stiller's Notes in Prison," which takes up a

large majority of the work. This section is divided into seven chapters, each corresponding to one of the seven notebooks that Stiller/White keeps. The second part, "Postscript by the Public Prosecutor," is narrated by another character appearing in the first part—Rolf. Yet the perspective in the novel changes more often; different types of narrative point of view appear within the first part.

In the first notebook, Stiller/White writes mainly about himself at the present; the narrator here is clearly autodiegetic. Apart from descriptions of and reflections about the events and situations during Stiller/White's detention and those immediately preceding it, several independent stories are embedded in the narrative as well. Most of them depict Stiller/White's life in North America (some are obviously made up but reflect the narrator's experience). Although two of these stories—the story of Isidore (35–38/41–45[219]) and of Rip van Winkle (60–66/70–76)—seemingly do not concern Stiller/White, they amount to metaphorical paraphrases of his life and mental condition.

The second notebook depicts Stiller and Julika's relationship before he disappears. The narrator, still adamant in his claim that he is not Stiller, uses the information collected in conversations with "Frau Julika Stiller," Stiller's wife, to reconstruct the story. Of course, the story features Stiller, that is, the narrator's biographically past self, but Stiller/White refuses to be identified with this character. Thus, he describes the events as if from an outsider's point of view—as if he were not one of the characters and therefore not a diegetic narrator within this embedded story (in Genette's terms, on the metadiegetic level) but an extradiegetic narrator recording the story as Julika tells it. This configuration emphasizes Stiller/White's disunion with his past self by denying any connection between the character of Stiller and the narrator: the discord on the level of story is thus repeated on the level of discourse. Because the narrator distances himself from Stiller, he can view his past self as if from the outside: as Friedrich Dürrenmatt—adopting the role of a critic—aptly puts it, "the *I* becomes an object"[220] (12). In this way, the narrator attempts an objective assessment of Stiller and his marriage to Julika. Furthermore, the narrative strategy highlights the topic of personal identity and the role of other people in its construction: what we get is not Stiller's or Stiller/White's own portrait of himself or his past self but rather the image people around him have of him. As Wulf Koepke points out, the narrator "has really told only what others consider to be his story (with some hints

219 The first page reference refers to the English translation, the second to the German original.

220 "das Ich wird ein Objekt"

about his own perspective) and what others expect or do not expect to hear" (64). In short, the perspective structure used in the second notebook strongly supports its contents.

Nevertheless, the narrator inserts comments on the story or comes up with his own interpretations of some incidents or the whole situation of Stiller and Julika. Yet the narrator means these comments to come across as the insights of a nonparticipant in the story, inferred from what Julika tells him during her visits, as Stiller/White emphasizes: "Looking at these two people from the outside, one has the impression..."[221] (77). The peculiarity of this narrative situation becomes especially striking when Stiller/White reconstructs Stiller's feelings: "The missing Stiller (I have little interest otherwise in being in agreement with the missing man) may unconsciously have felt the same thing"[222] (86). Stiller/White makes an effort to convince the readers of his notes that his perspective is objective and to play down the significance of his interpretative activity by presenting it as a mere time-killer: "I have no wish to play the arbitrator between the beautiful Julika and her lost husband; but since she is always talking about these unhappy times, one naturally tries to guess at connexions, if only to pass the time as one might do a crossword puzzle. What else can I do in my cell?"[223] (93). This remark aims to camouflage the fact that Stiller/White is actually very much occupied with his past as Stiller.

Stiller/White's reflection on the process of writing in the seventh notebook (in which he has given up denying his past as Stiller) sheds new light on earlier accounts of Stiller's personality: "At times I have the feeling that one emerges from what has been written as a snake emerges from its skin. That's it; you cannot write yourself down, you can only cast your skin"[224] (289). By recording what others say about Stiller, Stiller/White reconstructs his past; his analyses of Stiller are actually his interpretations of his own past self, albeit as if from the outside.

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221 "Als Fremder hat man den Eindruck..." (89)

222 "Unbewusstermaßen mag der verschollene Stiller (es liegt mir sonst wenig daran, mit dem Verschollenem einig zu sein) ähnlich empfunden haben" (100).

223 "Ich habe kein Verlangen danach, den Friedensrichter zu spielen zwischen der schönen Julika und ihrem verschollenen Mann; da sie jedoch jedesmal von diesen leidigen Zeiten redet, versucht man natürlich, Zusammenhänge zu erraten, und wäre es auch nur zur Unterhaltung, so wie man etwa Kreuzworträtsel ausfüllt. Was soll ich in meiner Zelle sonst tun!" (107)

224 "Zuweilen habe ich das Gefühl, man gehe aus dem Geschriebenem hervor wie eine Schlange aus ihrer Haut. Das ist es; man kann sich nicht niederschreiben, man kann sich nur häuten" (330).

He does not intend to write an autobiography, but the picture of his past self and its implications surface from the text. In this sense, Stiller/White illustrates Frisch's point that "to write is to read one's own self"[225] (*Sketchbook* 12). Despite the narrator's effort to show disinterest and lack of involvement in the story, his narration actually imposes on him some insight into his own past.

Stiller/White also plays down the importance of his interpretative inferences because he wishes to reinforce his claim that he has nothing to do with Stiller. As Karlheinz Braun notes,

> The moment [...] the reader believes to learn the story not from one of the persons involved (Julika, Rolf, Sibylle, etc.) but from the one who writes down the story, the suspicion arises that he, Mr. White, is the missing man after all. That is why the following moments are the most dangerous for the narrator White: when he immerses himself too much in the story to be narrated and embellishes it according to his own opinion and thus indicates that he knows more than he has been told.[226] (86)

Moreover, as Stiller/White's interpretation is mostly critical of Stiller, it underlines his resentment of his rejected past self. Yet in spite of Stiller/White's denial of any involvement in the story, it remains unclear to what extent his own perspective influences the account—that is, to what extent his own memories of his life as Stiller affect his reproduction of Julika's version.

This uncertainty precludes unambiguous answers to many questions surrounding the story of the couple's unhappiness. For example, claiming to be only reproducing what Julika has told him, Stiller/White reports that "Julika enjoyed the sense that for the first time she had met a man of whom she did not feel afraid"[227] (76). This utterance can hardly be ascribed to Julika if one is to take seriously Stiller/White's later assertion that "Julika never mentions the word anxiety when she is talking about her wretched marriage with the vanished Stiller"[228] (77).

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225 "Schreiben heißt: sich selber lesen" (361).

226 "In dem Augenblick [...], in dem der Leser die Geschichte Stillers als nicht von einer der beteiligten Personen (Julika, Rolf, Sibylle etc.) zu erfahren glaubt, sondern von dem, der die Geschichte aufschreibt, wird sofort der Verdacht lebendig, dieser, Mr. White, sei doch der Verschollene. Deshalb sind die Augenblicke für den Erzähler White am gefährlichsten, wenn er sich zu sehr in die zu erzählende Geschichte vertieft, sie nach eigenem Gutdünken ausschmückt, damit zu erkennen gibt, daß er davon mehr weiß, als ihm erzählt wurde."

227 "Julika genoß es, eigentlich zum ersten Mal einen Mann getroffen zu haben, vor dem sie sich nicht fürchtete" (89).

228 "[Julika] redet [...] gar nicht von Ängsten, wenn sie von ihrer bedauerlichen Ehe mit dem verschollenem Stiller erzählt" (90).

Also, Stiller/White's interpretation of the marriage is suspiciously similar to Stiller's explanations uttered during his last visit to Julika in the sanatorium—about which she tells Stiller/White only later. Here, the narrator interferes with his own perspective; this move casts doubt on, among other things, Julika's frigidity, which Stiller/White presents as unquestionable but which might actually be Stiller's projection of his uncertainty about his masculinity: according to Ursula Haupt, "on closer inspection the seemingly objective judgement that Julika is frigid confirms above all Stiller's self-evaluation—his own feelings of inferiority"[229] (48). These incongruities complicate not only the reconstruction of the story of the marriage but also Stiller/White's present conviction that he has no prejudices towards Julika.

In the third and fifth notebooks, like in the first, Stiller/White describes his present circumstances—what happens in prison and during his hours out with Julika while on furlough. As in the first notebook, he inserts invented stories that reflect his past experiences or present situation. The fourth notebook contains the story of public prosecutor Rolf's marital crisis, reported by Stiller/White to whom Rolf has recounted it. Here the indirect narration is less problematic than in the second notebook because the narrator's past self, Stiller, does not really take part in the story and thus Rolf's account amounts to Stiller/White's only source of information. The conflict of perspectives that becomes apparent in the sixth notebook, in which some parts of Rolf's story are depicted from his wife Sibylle's point of view, is an interesting feature of this manner of story mediation. There are differences in Rolf's and Sibylle's accounts of the same events. Stiller/White comments on one of these discrepancies: "The unfortunate meeting in his office [...] [naturally] looked quite different through his wife's eyes from the way Rolf [...] described it"[230] (251). This remark explicitly alerts the reader to the subjectivity of the accounts and the impossibility of discovering what really happened.

In the sixth notebook the narrative situation approaches that of the second notebook. Stiller/White records Sibylle's tale from her point of view as she related it. Based on his record of it, it is as if he were not present in the story although

229 "Das scheinbar objektive Urteil, Julika sei frigide, bestätigt also bei genauem Hinsehen vor allem Stillers Selbsteinschätzung, seine eigenen Minderwertigkeitsgefühle."

230 "Die unselige Begegnung in seinem Büro [...] wurde von seiner Frau natürlich etwas anders erlebt, als Rolf, mein Staatsanwalt, sie dargestellt hat" (289). In the English translation the word *natürlich* (meaning *of course* or *naturally*) is left out. As a result, the warning about the difficulty of looking for an objective version of the story is not that conspicuous.

Stiller appears in the role of the woman's lover. Again, Stiller/White emphasizes his status as an outsider to the story, for example, by repeating the remark "I record the facts"[231] (e.g., 257). Unlike with Julika's story, he does not often interpret or comment on the parts of the story that depict Sibylle's relationship with Stiller. This difference stems from the narrator's present attitude to the two women: he feels in love with Julika and would like to start a relationship with her whereas he does not have the same interest in Sibylle. Consequently, he is more emotionally involved in recounting Julika's story. On the other hand, Sibylle's story reveals a great deal about Stiller because it contains long monologues by Stiller (recounted by Sibylle and subsequently by Stiller/White). In addition, Sibylle has much deeper insight into Stiller's character than Julika, and so her opinions about her ex-lover are very informative and help the reader reconstruct Stiller's story.

The seventh notebook features an autodiegetic narrator, once again. Like all the odd-numbered notebooks, it deals with Stiller/White's present and, through stories, with his past. Yet the narrator's portrayal of his past differs considerably from that in the previous notebooks: although he still denies being Stiller, he talks about Stiller's experiences in the first person (the reader knows about some of the events from the previous notebooks, but now they are presented from Stiller/White's own perspective). In other words, there is a shift in Stiller/White's claim: he owns up to his past as Stiller but insists that a radical break has been made from it and that he has a new identity in the present. Despite having been legally sentenced to being Stiller, he distances himself from the court's decision: "The judgement of the court as expected: I am (*for them*) identical with the Anatol Ludwig Stiller"[232] (334; emphasis added). By stating that the court's decision only refers to other people's views of him ("for them"), the narrator demonstrates his insistence on his new identity despite a lack of understanding from his fellow human beings. More precisely, he has acknowledged his factual unity with Stiller but continues to reject the correspondence in terms of his inner reality. He adheres to the symbol of his transformation, the angel, wishing to persevere in his new identity. At the end of his last notebook, he proclaims, "My angel, keep me on the alert"[233] (335). In short, he has given up his effort to convince those around him of his change but wants to retain his new self for himself.

The second part, the "Postscript by the Public Prosecutor," is narrated by Rolf, who functions as an observer here: although he figures in the plot too, the

231 "Ich protokolliere" (e.g., 295).

232 "Das Urteil, das gerichtliche, wie erwartet: ich bin (*für sie*) identisch mit dem [...] Anatol Ludwig Stiller" (381).

233 "Mein Engel halte mich wach" (382).

narration is centred upon Stiller. Some critics claim that this observer status results in Rolf's account being objective (e.g., Petersen, *Max* 50–52, 56). However, Rolf actually does not restrict himself to descriptions of what he sees but inserts his interpretations and judgements. He expresses, among other things, his opinion about Stiller/White's notes in prison, pointing out their lack of objectivity:

> The mischievous element in Stiller's notes, his subjectivity which occasionally did not shrink from falsification, seem to me obvious enough, as the report of a subjective experience they may be honest. The picture which these notes give of Frau Julika amazes me; it appears to me to reveal more about the person who drew the picture than about the person who is so grossly misinterpreted by it. Whether there is not something inhuman in the very attempt to portray a living human being is a major question, and one that applies substantially to Stiller. Most of us do not keep notebooks, but perhaps we do the same thing in a less manifest way, and the result is in every case bitter.[234] (356)

First, to the reader, who only has Stiller's notes to consult, the subjectivity of these notes does not seem that obvious because only a few apparent contradictions emerge in the text—and so Rolf's comment further highlights the impossibility of finding out a universal truth. Rolf's own depiction of Julika (as observed during his visit in Vaud) confirms rather than refutes Stiller/White's view—for example, his remark that her "face that was no longer a face"[235] reveals a masklike quality in the woman (355). Second, Rolf's admission that most people provide distorted portraits of the people around them implies that he, too, might be misrepresenting Stiller in his writing. In this context, we may read Stiller/White's remark in one of his notebooks as an implicit warning or instruction with regard to Rolf's postscript: "So what my public prosecutor stated earlier on is not quite true [...]. I only mention this as an example of the fact that even a public prosecutor, in an entirely voluntary statement, does not manage altogether to

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234 "Die Mutwilligkeit seiner Aufzeichnungen, seine bewusste Subjektivität, wobei Stiller auch vor gelegentlichen Fälschungen nicht zurückschreckt, scheinen mir offenkundig genug zu sein; als Rapport über ein subjektives Erlebnis mögen sie redlich sein. Das Bildnis, das diese Aufzeichnungen von Frau Julika geben, bestürzte mich; es verrät mehr über den Bildner, dünkt mich, als über die Person, die von diesem Bildnis vergewaltigt worden ist. Ob nicht schon in dem Unterfangen, einen lebendigen Menschen abzubilden, etwas Unmenschliches liegt, ist eine große Frage. Sie trifft Stiller wesentlich. Die meisten von uns machen zwar keine Aufzeichnungen, aber wir machen auf eine spurlose Weise vielleicht dasselbe, und das Ergebnis wird in jedem Fall bitter sein" (407).

235 "dieses Gesicht, das schon keines mehr war" (405)

avoid contradicting himself, as they expect us to do during an interrogation"[236] (200–01). Third, one can doubt whether Rolf really is absolutely free from any motivation to distort due to his own issues.

Butler, who divides the major characters of Frisch's novels into three categories according to their "eccentricity,"[237] includes Rolf and his wife, Sibylle, in the group of characters "who have experienced a comparable sense of alienation from themselves and society but who have settled for an uninspiring, melancholy compromise" (11). Rolf's self-estrangement is symbolized by an episode that takes place in Genoa, where he spends several days after he finds out about his wife's adulterous relationship. He is struck by severe jealousy, a feeling that stands in direct contradiction to his theoretical ideas on marriage and thus to his image of himself as a husband tolerant of his wife's affairs. Here, in this Italian city, Rolf finds himself with a parcel of flesh-pink cloth that he cannot get rid of. Rolf himself points out the metaphorical meaning of the Genoa incident:

> Most of us have a parcel of flesh-pink cloth – namely, our feelings – that from our intellectual level we should like to ignore. There are two ways out of the difficulty that lead nowhere: *either we kill our primitive and therefore unworthy feelings*, as far as we can, at the risk of killing our emotional life altogether, *or we simply give our unworthy feelings another name*. We lie about them, disguise them as something else. We label them to satisfy the wishes of our consciousness.[238] (281; emphasis added)

The two means of dealing with unwanted emotions correspond to two Freudian defence mechanisms of the mind: repression and displacement. Killing our unworthy feelings corresponds to repression (the feelings are made and kept unconscious), and giving the undesired feelings another name refers to displacement (the feelings get into the consciousness masked as a different, more desired emotion). Rolf flushes the hated parcel (and with it his intolerable feelings) down

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236 "Es stimmt also nicht ganz, was mein Staatsanwalt zuvor behauptet hat [...]. Ich erwähne das nur als Beispiel, dass selbst ein Staatsanwalt in seinen durchaus freiwilligen Berichten nicht ganz so widerspruchlos redet, wie sie es von unsereinem in den Verhören erwarten" (231).

237 For an explanation of Butler's term "eccentricity," see the introduction.

238 "Die meisten von uns haben so ein Paket mit fleischfarbenem Stoff, nämlich Gefühle, die sie von ihrem intellektuellen Niveau aus nicht wahrhaben wollen. Es gibt zwei Auswege, die zu nichts führen; wir töten unsere primitiven und also unwürdigen Gefühle ab, soweit möglich, auf die Gefahr hin, daß dadurch das Gefühlsleben überhaupt abgetötet wird, oder wir geben unseren unwürdigen Gefühlen einfach einen anderen Namen. Wir lügen sie um, wir etikettieren sie nach dem Wunsch unseres Bewußtseins" (321).

a toilet at the Genoa railway station and decides to return to his wife and conceal his disconcertment behind an ostensible mask of composure; as Stiller/White reports, "Rolf tried to prove that, true to his theory, he granted Sibylle complete independence"[239] (193). Similarly to Walter Faber, Rolf represses his feelings and "[l]ike every man of action who cannot deal with an awkward part of his inner life, [he] did not plunge into introspective brooding, but into work, into useful and impersonal work"[240] (198). At the time of his narration, Rolf is convinced that he has overcome his self-estrangement, accepted himself, and created a genuine relationship with Sibylle. But his theory of marriage has not changed much, and his jealousy has not disappeared either: he is eager to find out whether Sibylle reunited with Stiller during her years in New York. Moreover, his marriage seems to be a conventional arrangement "rather than a warm, living relationship" (Butler 84). These circumstances are likely to affect Rolf's narration about Stiller: they imply that he has adjusted to the "limits placed upon us by society" and wants Stiller to do the same (Koepke 63). He strives to justify his own decisions by presenting such conformation as the only solution to Stiller's problem.

For these reasons Rolf's narrative cannot be regarded as an unambiguous corrective of Stiller/White's perspective. Nonetheless, Rolf's view of some parts of Stiller/White's account as false retrospectively reinforces the reader's doubts about Stiller/White's claim that he is only reporting what others have said, without adding or modifying anything. All in all, this complex point of view precludes the reader from taking anything in the book for granted—the reader has to actively look for the meaning, yet it is impossible to arrive at an unambiguous conclusion. As Alfred White observes, "These elements that need completion by the interpreting reader" can be understood as "Frisch's first execution of the project [...] of introducing a Brechtian *Verfremdungstechnik* into narrative" (206). Frisch writes about this idea in his *Sketchbook 1946-1949*: he stresses the "artistic" nature of the alienation effect that "prevents self-identification, does not carry one away, destroys illusions—meaning the illusion that the story being told 'really' happened, and so on"[241] (206). A major objective of the original alienation effect of epic theatre, as Bertolt Brecht writes in his text "A Short Organum for

239 "[Rolf] wollte [...] beweisen, daß er Sibylle, getreu seiner Theorie, die vollendete Selbständigkeit zubilligte" (222).

240 "Wie alle Männer der Tat, wenn sie einen heiklen Teil ihres Innenlebens nicht erledigen können, stürzte Rolf sich nicht in Grübelei über sich selbst, sondern in Arbeit, in nützliche und sachliche Arbeit" (228).

241 "[der] die Einfühlung verhindert, das Hingerissensein nicht herstellt, die Illusion zerstört, nämlich die Illusion, daß die erzählte Geschichte 'wirklich' passiert sei usw." (601).

the Theatre," is to facilitate social change by defamiliarizing that which seems too established to be changed: "to free socially-conditioned phenomena from that stamp of familiarity which protects them against our grasp today" because "it seems impossible to alter what has long not been altered" (192; pars. 43–44). By contrast, Frisch's alienation effect does not directly aim at social change: rather, it makes the reader pay more attention to the inner reality of a character, to try and see through the fictions of one's life story to the quintessence of the personality.

Like the alienation effect in theatre, the "multi-faceted structuring"[242] of the novel *Stiller* prevents its readers from succumbing to "unnecessary simplifications or illusions"[243] (Stromšík 154). It forces them to re-examine the narrated and thus thwarts perceiving the story straightforwardly. These observations indicate that unreliable narration could be a potent tool in achieving the kind of alienation effect in prose fiction that Frisch describes in his sketchbook. In *Stiller* two levels exist on which narrative unreliability might potentially be perceived: the level of biographical facts and the metaphorical level of the narrator's inner reality.

Stiller/White as a potentially unreliable narrator I: The level of facts

Right from the first paragraph of the novel, the reader has reason to mistrust the narrator. He claims not to be able to tell the truth unless he drinks alcohol and then continues narrating even though he is sober: "[O]therwise I shall remain sober; then they can question me as much as they like, they won't get anything out of me – or at any rate, nothing that's true"[244] (7). Furthermore, although he emphasizes that he is not Stiller, his need for alcohol betrays the insecurity of his White-identity: "For experience has taught me that without whisky I'm not myself, I'm open to all sorts of good influences and liable to play the part they want me to play, although it's not me at all"[245] (7). The reader might doubt the narrator's assertion that he is not Stiller if the narrator himself cannot be sure that he will not fall out of his purported self and play the role expected of him.

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242 "facettenhafte Strukturierung"

243 "unnötige Simplifikationen oder Illusionen"

244 "[...] ansonst ich eben nüchtern bleibe, und dann können sie mich verhören, wie sie wollen, es wird nichts dabei herauskommen, zumindest nichts Wahres" (9).

245 "Denn ohne Whisky, ich hab's ja erfahren, bin ich nicht ich selbst, sondern neige dazu, allen möglichen guten Einflüssen zu erliegen und eine Rolle zu spielen, die ihnen so passen möchte, aber nichts mit mir zu tun hat" (9).

Moreover, although Stiller/White continues in his emphatic denial of being Stiller, he implicitly owns up to his biographical unity with Stiller, Julika's husband, when he decides to tell her the story of Isidore, "adapting it to the case of my beautiful visitor by omitting the five children and making free use of a dream I had recently: when Isidore turned up at home he did not fire at the birthday cake, but merely showed his two hands covered with scars"[246] (48). In the original version of the tale, Isidore is a man who has returned after several years of absence, throughout which his relatives and friends knew nothing about his whereabouts. He shoots into a birthday cake and leaves his family again after his wife asks him a question that he cannot stand: "Where have you been all this time?"[247] (37). By spelling out that he is adapting the story to Julika's case, Stiller/White suggests that Julika's situation is similar to that of Isidore's wife (her missing husband has returned) and therefore that he, Stiller/White, is the returning husband. The omission of the shooting can only be understood with the help of information that we learn later in the novel (and if Stiller/White really knew nothing about Stiller, as he insists, he could not have made this apt modification). One of the main sources of Stiller's fatal lack of self-confidence is a memory of what he regards as his biggest failure: his inability to shoot at the enemy during the Spanish Civil War. The scars on Isidore's hands (the German word used here, *Wundmal*, i.e., scar, is also used in the phrase *Wundmale Christi*, i.e., stigmata) come from Stiller/White's dream in which both Stiller and Julika show their scarred hands and "[i]t is obvious [...] that the point is to show who is the cross and who the crucified, though none of this is put into words"[248] (54). By showing his wife his wounded hands, Isidore and by proxy Stiller/White claim to be the crucified. Stiller/White's adaptation of the Isidore tale symbolically expresses an aspect of Stiller's story (which, again, becomes known only later)—the couple's unuttered dispute over who is the victim and who the victimizer; they "try to assert moral superiority over each other by becoming the victim and making the other feel guilty" (Alfred White 194). Julika asks Stiller/White virtually the same question as the woman in the tale: "Where have you been all these years?"[249] (51). She thus

246 "dem Fall meiner schönen Besucherin angepasst, also unter Weglassung der fünf Kinder und unter freier Verwendung eines Traums, den ich neulich hatte: Isidor gibt, sooft er auftaucht, keine Schüsse in die Torte, sondern zeigt nur seine beiden Hände mit Wundmalen" (56).

247 "[W]o bist du nur so lange gewesen?" (43)

248 "wobei es offenbar [...] zwischen den beiden darum geht, wer der Kreuz ist und wer der Gekreuzigte, all dies unausgesprochen" (63).

249 "Wo bist du nur all die Jahre gewesen?" (59)

inadvertently confirms that Isidore stands for Stiller/White and she for Isidore's wife.

To sum up, it is not difficult to see through Stiller/White's denial of his biographical identity as Stiller—even in the first notebook where his resistance is the strongest.[250] Consequently, one could describe the narrator as unreliable on the basis of the reader's recognition of a different version of the story than the one the narrator wants to convey: that he is Stiller while claiming to be White. More specifically, Phelan's category of bonding unreliability that involves partial progress towards reliability, already mentioned in the context of *Faber*, pertains to the narrator of the notebooks ("Estranging" 231). Namely, the narrator's initial, very strong refusal of the Stiller-identity gradually weakens. For example, in the fifth notebook he considers playing the role of Stiller "without ever confusing myself with the part"[251] (210). The gradual abandonment of his refusal of the Stiller-identity radically picks up pace in the seventh notebook when Stiller/White admits his past as Stiller, and culminates in his recognition of Stiller's stepfather as his own when he refers to him as "my stepfather"[252] (331). As a result, the gap between the fictional reality and the narrator's claims on the level of facts closes.

However, a closer reading reveals that Stiller/White's aim is not to convince his narratees that his curriculum vitae has nothing to do with the Swiss citizen Stiller. He wants the people around him to accept that it is not this physical unity that matters but the disunion of Stiller/White and Stiller on a deeper, inner level. Yet most of the other characters (probably all but Rolf) are incapable of understanding—or even considering—this attitude; hence he has chosen to disown even the biographical identity of Stiller. By the same token, even though it becomes clear that Stiller/White's stories from Mexico and the United States do not correspond to factual reality, one ought to bear in mind that Stiller/White does not want his narratees and readers of his notes to take these tales literally but uses

250 Another inconsistency in the narrator's account is his use of Swiss German expressions, such as *Coiffeur* and *Vélo*, which contradicts his claim that he is an American of German origin. However, as these slips are left unnoticed by any of the characters who could have recourse to them in order to prove the prisoner's being Swiss, they seem to be the result of an inaccuracy on the part of the author rather than the narrator: to resolve the inconsistency, the reader is likely to employ the genetic principle of Yacobi's model. See also Schenker 296–97.

251 "ohne dass ich mich selber je damit verwechsle" (241)

252 "Meinem Stiefvater" (378)

them to convey the inner reality of his life. He acknowledges that "those are just circumlocutions"[253] (57), mere metaphors that clothe reality in words.

When narrating a story about the Carlsbad Caverns to his warder, Knobel—the only person who naively believes all his stories—he admits that he does not directly feature in the story: "But what I've been through myself, you see, was exactly the same – exactly"[254] (148). Once again, the germ of this idea can be found in *Sketchbook 1946–1949:*

> [E]very experience basically defies description as long as we try to express it through the actual example that has impressed us. I can express what I want to say only by means of an example that is as remote from me as it is from the listener, that is to say, an invented one. Essentially only fiction—things altered, transformed, shaped—can convey impressions and that is the reason why every artistic failure is always linked with a stifling feeling of loneliness.[255] (259)

This reflection is similar to Wolfgang Iser's assumption concerning "evidential experiences" (such as love): "Evidential experiences teach us that consciousness cannot adequately cover human experiences. Staging then entails giving them form, but this form can only be a simulacrum that highlights the inadequacy of form when it comes to providing appearance for such an experience, which far exceeds the capacity of consciousness" (300). Stiller/White, too, is not able to express some of his experiences through language and so tries to stage them—to translate them, so to speak, into fictional stories or into a symbol (the angel). The impalpability of an experience is not conquered by such a paraphrase or metaphor though: as Stiller/White says, "'Of course I don't mean an angel with wings' [...]. 'Not an artist's angel like you see in sculptures and the theatre. It may be that people who first invented this image of the angel had experienced something like I experienced, that is to say something incommunicable. All I really know is that I experienced something –'"[256] (320). The presentation of Stiller/White's inner experience is only possible through parables—through fiction or staging—and

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253 "das alles sind ja nur Umschreibungen" (66)

254 "Aber was ich selber erlebt habe, sehen Sie, das war genau das gleiche – genau" (172).

255 "[J]edes Erlebnis bleibt im Grunde unsäglich, solange wir hoffen, es ausdrücken zu können mit dem wirklichen Beispiel, das uns betroffen hat. Ausdrücken kann mich nur das Beispiel, das mir so ferne ist wie dem Zuhörer: nämlich das erfundene. Vermitteln kann wesentlich nur das Erdichtete, das Verwandelte, das Umgestaltete, das Gestaltete – weswegen auch das künstlerische Versagen stets mit einem Gefühl von erstickender Einsamkeit verbunden ist" (703).

256 "'Ich meine natürlich nicht einen Engel mit Flügeln' [...], 'nicht einen Kunst-Engel wie in der Bildhauerei und im Theater. Kann sein, daß die Menschen, die dieses Bild

even this kind of depiction remains a helpless substitute for the indescribable reality. For this reason Stiller/White's stories are not to be regarded as lies but rather as attempts at expressing his experiences.

The Narrator's Ironic Portrayal of Other Characters

Considering the narrator unreliable because of the incompatibility of his stories with reality (in the surface structure of the tales) would mean misreading Stiller/White's narrative in the same way Stiller/White's defending counsel, Dr. Bohnenblust, does and thus laying oneself open to ridicule as the counsel's absurd claims and obtuse reactions are a source of humour in the novel. Often it is Stiller/White's ironic comments on Bohnenblust's opinions that create the humorousness, such as this remark on the counsel's indignation at Stiller/White's dream about being in the army: "The army seems to be sacred, even in Switzerland, and my counsel could not tolerate someone dreaming badly about it"[257] (151). This kind of irony corresponds to the narrator's active "knowing irony," as opposed to the "unknowing irony"[258] typical of unreliable narration, in which the narrator is the butt of irony (Fludernik, "Unreliability" 56). Unlike the unreliable narrator subject to unknowing (dramatic) irony, "the ironic narrator is openly ironic – he wants the narratee to understand his irony"[259] (56). Therefore, while unknowing irony involves the reader's privileged knowledge vis-à-vis the narrator, knowing irony aims at "a kind of meeting with other minds," hence at a bond between the narrator on the one hand and the narratee and the reader on the other (Booth, *Rhetoric of Irony* 13). As will be seen later, *Stiller* contains both types of irony, but the bond between the narrator and the reader established by Stiller/White's active, knowing irony considerably reduces the effect of the unknowing irony stemming from the reader's recognition of the narrator's unreliability.

One of the targets of Stiller/White's knowing irony, the character of Bohnenblust, represents, almost as a caricature, people who live inside the narrow boundaries of convention that preclude them from authentic experience and reflections beyond the surface of things. Like Faber before his breakthrough or Stevens before reading Miss Kenton's letter, these people unquestioningly identify

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des Engels einmal erfunden haben, etwas Ähnliches erfahren haben wie ich, etwas ebenso Unsägliches. Ich weiß eigentlich nur, daß ich etwas erfahren habe –'" (365)

257 "Militär scheint auch in der Schweiz etwas Heiliges zu sein, und mein Verteidiger kann's nicht dulden, daß man schlecht davon träumt" (174).

258 "wissentliche und unwissentliche Ironie"

259 "[...] der ironische Erzähler [ist] offen ironisch – er will, dass der Adressat seine Ironie mitbekommt"

with their social role, under which they have buried their real feelings and wishes. According to Bohnenblust, the solid facts of one's biography form the truth about the person in question and reveal the quintessence of the individual's personality. Stiller/White reports:

> And if I just stick to the facts, says my counsel, we'll get truth in the corner so to speak, where we can grab it. Where could truth escape to, if I write it down? And by facts, I think my counsel means especially place-names, dates that can be checked, details of jobs, and other sources of income, for example, duration of residence in different towns, number of children, number of divorces, religion, and so on.[260] (15)

By contrast, Stiller/White views truth, especially truth about himself, in a different way: the truth about an individual's life does not lie in facts but in experience, which is invisible from the outside and indescribable. As he states, "You can put anything into words, except your own life"[261] (55). Language cannot express the essence of one's existence.

A fine example of this difference between Stiller/White's and Bohnenblust's attitudes surfaces in the counsel's attempts to prove that Stiller/White is Stiller by showing him photographs depicting Stiller. Stiller/White says: "I won't deny that there was a certain outward likeness between the missing Stiller and myself; nevertheless, I see myself very differently"[262] (56). This statement supports the view that Stiller/White does not intend to dispute his biographical unity with Stiller but strives for the acknowledgement of his change: even though the outer reality—the facts— seems to convict him of being Stiller, he sees himself differently because he regards his real self as disconnected from Stiller. Similarly, Stiller/White refuses to accept the outer reality, here represented by the photographs, as authentic: "[I]t all depends what you mean by living. A real life, a life that leaves a deposit in the shape of something alive, not merely a photograph album yellow with age [...]. It's difficult to say what makes a real life a real life. I call it reality, but what does that mean? You could say it depends on a person

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260 "Und wenn ich mich bloß anständig an die Tatsachen halte, meint mein Verteidiger, haben wir ja die Wahrheit schon im Gehege, sozusagen mit den Händen zu greifen. Wo sollte die Wahrheit, wenn ich sie niederschreibe, denn hin? Und unter Tatsachen, glaube ich, versteht mein Verteidiger insbesondere Ortsnamen, Daten, die man nachprüfen kann, beispielweise Angaben über Beruf oder sonstiges Einkommen, Dauer von Aufenthalten, Anzahl der Kinder, Anzahl der Scheidungen, Konfession usw." (18).

261 "Man kann alles erzählen, nur nicht sein wirkliches Leben" (64).

262 "dass zwischen dem verschollenem Stiller und mir gewisse äußere Ähnlichkeiten vorliegen, will ich nicht bestreiten; trotzdem sehe ich mich sehr anders" (65)

being identical with himself"[263] (56). In other words, being able to state the dates, places, and numbers of one's life as Bohnenblust requires does not suffice for Stiller/White. Life for him means to be oneself, a state of being that he cannot find words for. Consequently, he attempts to express the reality of his life with various circumlocutions.

In this context the distinction between one's curriculum vitae and biography (*Lebenslauf* and *Biographie*) comes to mind, that is, between a list of facts about one's life and a selection of certain moments, which "is not [...] necessarily restricted to the data objectively given in the empirical curriculum vitae" and which "from the perspective of those who take only the empirical curriculum vitae for real" will be seen "as fictions"[264] (Hahn 13; cf. Glomb 25–26). The contrast between Stiller/White's and Bohnenblust's approaches reflects this dichotomy. The counsel has no sympathy for the prisoner's stories and is only interested in what Stiller/White considers side-issues, that is, the facts that are important in a standard life history, such as the names of places or partners, but which are absolutely insignificant from Stiller/White's point of view. Bohnenblust's questions irritate Stiller/White, such as the following one about a girlfriend he had in America: "'Who is Helen?' 'A woman,' I said, angered by his knack of always entangling me in side-issues, and by his Eversharp, with which he immediately made a note of the name"[265] (54). To put it differently, Bohnenblust is reluctant to leave the sphere of "legally attested 'reality'"[266] and so does not respond to Stiller/White's efforts to convey the deeper implications of his life, his "personally experienced 'truth'"[267] (Jurgensen 64).

Bohnenblust is an extreme example of a person unable or unwilling to look beneath the surface of the apparent reality; many more such people are present in Stiller/White's life. Stiller/White views such people as dead as the

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263 "[E]s hängt alles davon ab, was wir unter Leben verstehen! Ein wirkliches Leben, ein Leben, das sich in etwas Lebendigem ablagert, nicht bloß in einem vergilbten Album [...]. Daß ein Leben ein wirkliches Leben gewesen ist, es ist schwer zu sagen, worauf es ankommt. Ich nenne es Wirklichkeit, doch was heißt das! Sie können auch sagen: daß einer mit sich selbst identisch wird. Andernfalls ist er nie gewesen!" (65–66)

264 "beschränkt sich [...] nicht notwendig auf die objektiv durch den empirischen Lebenslauf gegebenen Daten. [...] die aus der Perspektive dessen, der nur den empirischen Lebenslauf für wirklich hält, als Fiktionen"

265 "'Wer ist Helen?' 'Eine Frau!' sage ich ärgerlich über sein Geschick, mich stets in Nebensachen zu verwickeln, und über seinen Eversharp, womit er sofort den Namen notiert" (63).

266 "amtlich beglaubigte 'Wirklichkeit'"

267 "persönlich erfahrene 'Wahrheit'"

above-mentioned photographs because they cannot give up their rigid view of him, and thus they neither accept nor understand his change. Using Butler's division of Frisch's figures into three categories, this conflict can be seen as a clash between two poles of eccentricity. Stiller/White, who was "suddenly brought face to face with the hollowness of everyday life" and has attempted to escape from it into a new, truer self, stands in opposition to those who "live on the surface of life, clinging to facts or ideologies as guarantees of stability" (Butler 14). The latter group of characters feel no need to question their own existence and thus fail to grasp Stiller/White's struggle altogether. The possibility of a radical change of personality has never occurred to them; as a result, they are blind to Stiller/White's transformation.

A case in point is Julika, who, in the narrator's words, "is convinced that she knows her husband better than he knows himself"[268] (42). In that Julika thinks she knows her husband better than he himself, she fails to acknowledge not only his capacity for change but also the elusiveness of the human character. She insists on her fixed image of her husband and thus perpetrates the offence she protested against earlier (before Stiller's disappearance): "You've made an image of me [...], a complete and final image, and there's an end of it. You just won't see me any other way, I can feel that. [...] Every image is a sin. [...] Thou shalt not make unto thee an image of me!"[269] (130). Ironically, it is Julika who pronounces the accusation central to Stiller/White's resentment of the way people around him see him; later it is the "complete and final image" she has made of her husband that largely contributes to Stiller/White's resignation. The image-simile does not originate in Julika's mind; she hears it from her fellow patient in the Davos sanatorium—a Jesuit seminarian. She only thinks of the image Stiller has made of her and does not consider the possibility of herself being the perpetrator of this "sin." This kind of thinking substantiates the seminarian's observation that Julika "is always seeing [her]self as a victim"[270] and therefore keeps "wallowing in infantile innocence,"[271] a criticism that she radically refuses (115). The reader thus questions Julika's innocence on the basis of her own narration as recorded by Stiller/White: like Bohnenblust, Julika is portrayed ironically by the narrator.

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268 "ist überzeugt, ihren Mann etwas besser zu kennen, als er sich selber kennt" (50).

269 "Du hast dir einmal ein Bildnis von mir gemacht [...], ein fertiges und endgültiges Bildnis, und damit Schluss. Anders als so, ich spüre es ja, willst du mich jetzt einfach nicht mehr sehen. [...] Jedes Bildnis ist eine Sünde. [...] – du sollst dir kein Bildnis machen von mir!" (150).

270 "sich selbst nur immerzu als Opfer sieht" (133).

271 "sich in einer infantilen Unschuld zu baden" (133).

Julika's speech about image-making fails to convince Stiller: as Butler states, "Because she has not applied the lesson to herself, the truths she utters have a hollow ring" (70). Nevertheless, the passage thematizes a crucial theme in the novel and a recurring motif in Frisch's oeuvre. Frisch introduces the idea of *Bildnis* (image) in interpersonal relationships in the epilogue to his play *Als der Krieg zu Ende war* (*When the War Was Over*), where he claims that the biblical commandment "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image" is not to be understood only in religious terms: "The commandment that you shall not make any graven image of God does not lose its meaning if we understand God as the living part of every person, that which is not ascertainable, the unnameable, which we can only tolerate if we love; otherwise we always make an image"[272] ("Nachwort" 279). This view is reflected in Stiller/White's fight against the deadness of images (symbolized by the photographs), the deadness that inhibits authentic experience. In Frisch's conception, authenticity can only be achieved if one is true to one's self and does not try to live up to a false persona. Stiller/White feels that fixed images in interpersonal relationships lead to "a mechanism at work in human relations which [...] immediately takes all the life out of them, all the immediacy"[273] (211). Indeed, Stiller/White's interactions with Stiller's friends who visit him in prison do not leave any space for a different reaction than the expected one. A person who has made an image of someone else will not perceive it when this other person changes: Stiller's friend Sturzenegger seems not to see Stiller/White but only his own image of his old friend: "[A]ll his friendliness [...] is a sum of reflexes geared to an absent person [...]. It seems he has no antenna for anything else, anything I broadcast on my own wavelength, so to speak"[274] (211–12). Sturzenegger's way of communicating, or rather lack of communicating, confirms in the worst possible way Stiller/White's fear that his relatives and friends are not going to accept his change.

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272 "Das Gebot, man solle sich kein Bildnis machen von Gott, verliert wohl seinen Sinn nicht wenn wir Gott begreifen als das Lebendige in jedem Menschen, das Unfassbare, das Unnennbare, das wir als solches nur ertragen, wo wir lieben; sonst machen wir uns immer ein Bildnis."

273 "eine Mechanik in den menschlichen Beziehungen, die [...] alles Lebendige sofort verunmöglicht, alles Gegenwärtige ausschließt" (242).

274 "[Ü]berhaupt seine ganze Freundschaft ist eine Summe von Reflexen auf eine abwesende Person [...]. Denn für alles andere, was ich sozusagen auf meiner eigenen Wellenlänge sende, hat er einfach keine Antenne, scheint es" (243).

In *Sketchbook 1946-1949* Frisch develops his idea that love is the only type of relationship in which one does not make an image of the other person and is therefore willing to perceive one's partner in all the possible variations (17/369). This explains why Stiller/White emphasizes his flexible view of Julika: "Julika, now that I have seen her more often, is quite different from what I thought at our first meeting. Just what she is like, I should find it hard to say"[275] (59). He thus convinces himself that a fresh start with Julika is possible. He refers to this new beginning as "contact in the realm of truth,"[276] by which he means a relationship that leaves both partners the freedom to be what they really are, without the rigid images of one another that ruined Stiller's and Julika's marriage (50). For the same reason he demands Julika see him without "her fixed idea,"[277] as a man and not as her husband, Stiller (49). In order to be able start a successful relationship, they both must be free of the roles they had played in their marriage and not expect each other to play these same parts again. In contrast, image-making in human interaction forces individuals to play a role imposed on them by those around them as well as by society, thus cutting them off from their authentic self. When Stiller/White is arrested, he is told "that they would soon let me know who I really was"[278] (8). The message of this statement, reported by Stiller/White with irony, is that individuals have no right to choose who they want to be but must adhere to largely predefined parts.

The constraints imposed on one's identity by society—that is, the difficulty of avoiding the images of oneself proposed by society— is one of the aspects of life in Frisch's homeland to which he objects.[279] The fact that the novel is narrated in the first person by Stiller/White, who reports the story of a Swiss citizen, Stiller, but himself acts as a foreigner, enables an ironic view of Swiss society, providing "a double perspective: Switzerland from outside and inside" (Koepke 64). Pretending to be a foreigner, Stiller/White acts as if he does not understand the system that feels natural to someone who has always lived in the country.

Stiller/White's opinion about his prison cell also expresses his critical approach to Switzerland: "My cell [...] is small, like everything in this country,

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275 "Julika, je öfter ich sie sehe, ist doch sehr anders, als ich nach dem ersten Besuch meinte. Wie sie ist, wüßte ich nicht zu sagen" (68).

276 "eine Begegnung in Wahrheit" (58–59)

277 "ihrer fixen Idee" (58)

278 "man werde mir schon sagen, wer ich in Wirklichkeit sei" (10).

279 Stiller/White's criticism of this aspect of Swiss society has a parallel in Frisch's critical remarks about his homeland in *Sketchbook 1946-1949* and in his critical rewriting of the Swiss national myth in *Wilhelm Tell für die Schule*.

so clean one can hardly breathe for hygiene, and oppressive precisely because everything is just right. No more and no less. Everything in this country is oppressively adequate"[280] (12–13). The ubiquitous adequacy of Switzerland makes it a perfect place for people like Bohnenblust because Swiss society supports those who do not step out of line. The proud Swiss (again, represented by Bohnenblust) boast about the degree of freedom in their society, but Stiller/White has a different opinion. Bohnenblust says that Stiller/White "too [...] would be free, if only [he] had the sense to be their missing Stiller"[281] (171). In essence, individuals can be free as long as they stick to the identity that is expected of them: society purportedly guarantees freedom to everybody but paradoxically does not offer its members the freedom to choose who they want to be. Not surprisingly, people who fail to fit the "standardized forms of role play"—for instance, the model of masculinity (like Stiller who was not brave enough to shoot in the Spanish Civil War)—develop identity crises (Berger and Luckmann 78; cf. Koepke 53).

Contrasting the characters of Bohnenblust, Sturzenegger, and Julika as examples of those who have succumbed to "the blind self-deception that lies in a person's full identification with his role"[282] (Salins 22) with Stiller/White striving for authenticity is another way in which Frisch voices his criticism of Swiss society. As portrayed in the novel, this society supports those who do not question their lives led in self-estrangement, lives lacking in authentic experience. Ronald Laing presents a similar claim about modern society in general in an essay[283] published thirteen years after *Stiller*:

> What we call "normal" is a product of repression, denial, splitting, projection, introjection and other forms of destructive action on experience [...]. It is radically estranged from the structure of being. [...] The "normally" alienated person, by reason of the fact that he acts more or less like everyone else, is taken to be sane. Other forms of alienation that are out of step with the prevailing state of alienation are those that are labelled by the "normal" majority as bad or mad. (23–24)

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280 "Meine Zelle [...] ist klein wie alles in diesem Land, sauber, so dass man kaum atmen kann vor Hygiene, und beklemmend gerade dadurch, dass alles recht, angemessen und genügend ist. Nicht weniger und nicht mehr! Alles in diesem Land hat eine beklemmende Hinlänglichkeit" (15–16).

281 "auch ich [...] wäre frei, wenn ich bloß die Vernunft hätte, ihr verschollener Schweizer zu sein" (198).

282 "die blinde Selbsttäuschung, die in der völligen Identifizierung des Menschen mit seiner Rolle liegt"

283 "The Politics of Experience" (1967).

Bohnenblust, Sturzenegger, and Julika are successful and considered normal (Stiller had the chance to join their ranks) whereas Stiller/White, whose self-estrangement leads him to attempting to cast away his life devoid of authentic experience, is regarded as unreasonable. As Andrew White contends, "in an alienated world the only means of liberation is an act of calculated alienation" (292). Yet Stiller/White's "calculated alienation," that is, his refusal of the Stiller-identity, cannot stand up to the opposition of the "alienated world" and thus brings only temporary liberation.[284]

Stiller's split with his identity commences with the incompatibility of his creative instincts with his wish to comply with the kind of art praised socially. He participates in the Spanish Civil War to escape from the expectations of society and his self-alienation resulting from these expectations: "'One day you wake up and read in the newspaper what the world expects of you. The world! In actual fact, of course, it was only written by a well-meaning snob. But suddenly you're a white hope. [...] But there you stand with your delusions of grandeur – until, thank God, a Spanish Civil War breaks out'"[285] (230). Influenced by the illusory reality constructed by the mass media, Stiller abandons his "hope of being able to realize [him]self in clay or plaster" for "ambition [...], delight at the prospect of recognition, worry over possible rejection"[286] (293). He replaces his genuine desire for self-fulfilment through art with attempts to gain success as an artist. As result of this change, Stiller places excessive demands on himself: after reading his name in the paper, he creates an image of himself as a renowned artist, an image that he strives to live up to even though it does not correspond to his authentic self. His "flight from himself"[287] into the Spanish Civil War amounts to an attempt at escaping from this imposed self-image (121).

However, Stiller fails to break free of the excessive demands he has imposed upon himself. He merely substitutes his image of himself as a successful artist with an image of himself as a masculine man, which is again a role incompatible with his natural predisposition. When Stiller/White analyzes his past (after he has given up denying his past as Stiller), he does not use the expression "excessive demands

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284 The question whether Stiller achieves self-acceptance after Julika's death cannot be unambiguously answered. If he does, it is at the price of social isolation.

285 "Eines Tages erwachst du und liest es in der Zeitung, was die Welt von dir erwartet. Die Welt! Genau besehen ist es natürlich nur ein freundlicher Snob, der das geschrieben hat. Aber plötzlich bist du eine Hoffnung! [...] Aber da stehst du nun mit deinem Größenwahn – bis endlich, Gott sei Dank, so ein Spanischer Bürgerkrieg losgeht" (264).

286 "Hoffnung, in Lehm oder Gips mich verwirklichen zu können; [...] der Ehrgeiz [...], die Freude in Hinsicht auf Anerkennung, die Sorge in Hinsicht auf Geringschätzung" (335).

287 "Flucht vor sich selbst" (139).

on oneself"[288] as Rolf does, but he talks about not being alone: once again, he paraphrases his experience (281). The excessive demands Stiller makes of himself are mostly linked to women, whether they are present physically or only in his mind. Stiller wants these women to see him not as what he is but as adhering to his false self-image. In Spain he wishes to prove his masculinity to Anja, a Polish girl he is in love with, but he does not pass his "ordeal by fire"[289] when he fails to use his gun; later he marries the cold Julika with the aim of reviving her in order to overcome this blemish on his self-respect (121). Stiller tells Julika in Davos: "'If it hadn't been for that defeat in Spain,' he said, 'if I had met you with the feeling of being a complete and proper man – I should have left you long ago [...]. I was in love with your shyness, your fragility, your muteness, which set me the task of interpreting and expressing you. [...] I made you my test. [...] My crazy idea was to make you blossom out'"[290] (127). Not only does Stiller fail to awaken Julika and hence to prove his masculinity to himself, but their marriage produces another source of insecurity for him: a tactless remark made by his new wife on their wedding night causes him to think of himself as "a stinking fisherman with a crystal fairy"[291] (93). The people around Stiller seem to confirm his disgust with himself: Julika herself with her sham innocence and her (possibly fake) physical fragility as well as the couple's friends who regard Julika as a wonderful person, a person too good for Stiller. Consequently, Stiller continues living a self-alienated life, unable to distinguish his authentic self from the image of himself he and others have created.

Stiller/White as a Potentially Unreliable Narrator II: The Level of Inner Reality

Stiller/White wins the reader's sympathy because the people around him misunderstand him;[292] the reader is tempted to trust him entirely. Stiller/White's

288 "Selbstüberforderung" (321)

289 "Feuerprobe" (139)

290 "'Wäre nicht diese Niederlage in Spanien gewesen,' sagte er, 'wäre ich dir mit dem Gefühl begegnet, ein voller und richtiger Mann zu sein – ich hätte dich schon längst verlassen [...]. [I]ch war verliebt in deine Spröde, in deine Zerbrechlichkeit, in deine Stummheit, die es mir zur Aufgabe machte, dich zu deuten und auszusprechen. [...] Ich machte dich zu meiner Bewährungsprobe. [...] Dich zum Blühen zu bringen, [...], das war mein schlichter Wahnsinn'" (146–47).

291 "ein stinkiger Fischer mit einer kristallenen Fee" (108)

292 Empirical research has shown that readers indeed find Stiller the most likeable figure of the four main characters (Stiller, Julika, Rolf, and Sibylle) (Karmasin, Schmitz, and Wünsch 501).

narration is thus an instance of bonding unreliability that Phelan refers to as "*literally unreliable but metaphorically reliable*," which he exemplifies with a passage from Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, in which the narrator, Chief Bromden, talks about Nurse Ratched's ruling over time in the mental home ("Estranging" 226). Phelan elucidates how the Chief, despite his misreporting and misreading, "nevertheless captures some underlying truths about the life on the ward and about Nurse Ratched's role in that life" and is therefore "reliable in his evaluation" ("Estranging" 227). Similarly, Stiller/White's misreporting of the events of his past and his insistence on being White could be seen as reflecting the truth of his inner reality in the face of the rigidity of the people around him and of society. While the Chief believes what he says and his unreliability is caused by his mental state, Stiller/White is, so to speak, unreliable on purpose—he bends the facts in order to prove his point by externalizing his inner transformation. What is common to both narratives is that they invite the reader to make inferences beyond the literal meaning of the narrator's discourse, yet without encouraging the reader to feel superior to the narrator.

But can we read Stiller/White as a metaphorically reliable narrator? When Julika and Stiller's friends impose their images on Stiller/White, they fail to acknowledge his transformation. But does this mean that the persistence of the protagonist's new self is hindered altogether? Could his new self not resist the view of the others and stay White? And does Stiller's post-trial repetition of his unhappy marriage not mean that he has never actually abandoned his identity as Stiller in the first place? Frisch writes in *Sketchbook 1946-1949* that the image made by those around an individual about that individual predestines his fate, almost like a curse: "Some fixed idea in the minds of our friends, our parents, our teachers—that too can prey on one like the oracle of old. [...] To a certain degree we are really the person that others have seen in us, friends as well as foes"[293] (18). According to Frisch, fixed images partly form one's personality in that they affect the person's behaviour and make it harder for him to change. Stiller/White strives to escape from his image-affected old self into what he sees as his new identity.

Stiller/White's Insufficient Role Distance

Stiller/White, by completely refusing the role that the people around him ascribe to him (expressed in his "I'm not Stiller!"), throws out the baby with the

293 "Irgendeine fixe Meinung unsrer Freunde, unsrer Eltern, unsrer Erzieher, auch sie lastet auf manchem wie ein altes Orakel. [...] In gewissem Grad sind wir wirklich das Wesen, das die andern in uns hineinsehen, Freunde wie Feinde" (370–71).

bathwater. The reason is simple: the role one plays when interacting with others comprises a part of one's self. The self is not something one is born with, "but [it] arises in the process of social experience and activity, that is, develops in the given individual as a result of his relations to that process as a whole and to other individuals within that process" (Mead 135). Furthermore, identity does not stay intact during one's life; it involves a continuous "process of constructing and revising of self-concepts that takes place at the intersection of social interaction and individual biography"[294] (Glomb 27). Therefore, the self is not given and stable but rather "a reflexive project that the individual 'works on'" (McAdams, "Personality" 297). Self-definition cannot take place without interacting with other people: to be able to form an identity, individuals need to be mirrored in fellow humans (Luckmann 299). The novel's protagonist's White-identity is on the contrary a kind of *tabula rasa* identity (cf. Butler 61), symbolized not only by the chosen name itself (*white* in the sense of fresh, unstained, blank) but also by the protagonist's "rebirth" after his suicide attempt, that is, what he refers to as his angel experience. Stiller/White's aspiration to maintain this new identity thus stems from a delusion: Stiller/White disregards the fact that forming an identity without social interaction, an identity not reflected in other people, is an unattainable goal. The need for a social mirror is also one of the reasons why the protagonist comes back to his hometown and tries to prove his new identity to others. This observation questions Stiller/White's belief that he is not Stiller even on the plane of his inner reality—because his identity is necessarily co-created by the images of the people around him.

As one's identity cannot be separated from social interaction, individuals cannot exist without their social roles. Every person thus has a private and a public self that together form their personal identity. According to Helmuth Plessner, both parts are vital to one's personality: nobody can efface this duplicity without also effacing their humanity ("Problem" 20). A person cannot exist without a social role; however, the role alone does not define the self. On the contrary, it enables the individual to gain distance from her social existence and to keep a private self, "a zone of privacy"[295] (Plessner, "Soziale" 25–26). In other terms, there exists an "'I' which is aware of the social 'me'" (Mead 173). The private self, the "I," can only be conveyed to other people through the "me," the public self. This condition corresponds to the inexpressibility of one's inner reality that Stiller/

294 "am Schnittpunkt von gesellschaftlicher Interaktion und individueller Biographie stattfindende[r] Prozeß der Konstruktion und Revision von Selbstkonzepten."

295 "Zone der Privatheit"

White discusses in his notes. Living in a society and communicating with other people is unthinkable without having a role: "An existence in a role is apparently the only way in which people can live in permanent contact with each other"[296] (Plessner, "Problem" 19). Stiller/White therefore cannot have both: his refusal of social roles is incompatible with his return to his hometown and to Julika.

Yet Stiller/White is not ready to accept the inevitability of playing social roles and thus sharing with others a different image of himself than what he considers to be his authentic self: he refuses to be "condemned to play a part that has nothing to do with me"[297] (72). As Andreas Schäfer argues, "In his radicalness, Stiller[/White] would not actually like to remodel the role behaviour that is expected of him but to negate it altogether. He does not remain within the borders of the socially accepted rules of the game, which explains the futility of all his efforts"[298] (195–96). If Stiller/White does not want to live in isolation from other people, he has to accept the duplicity of the human personality, that is, the coexistence of the public self, expressed in the role, and the private zone. To be able to do so without losing his self in the social role (like Bohnenblust, Sturzennegger, and Julika, who mistake their roles for their entire personality), he would have to be able to "establish and maintain an equilibrium, a balance between the private and the public half"[299] of his personality (Plessner, "Soziale" 31). He needs to be able to detach himself from the public self and thus achieve *role distance*—a situation "where a role is played deliberately without inner identification, in other words, where the actor has established an inner distance between his consciousness and his role-playing" (Berger 135). It is the lack of role distance that leads Stiller/White to rejecting his social role altogether.

Stiller/White's Self-Deception about His New Identity

While incarcerated, Stiller/White gradually becomes aware of the necessity of role distance, of "be[ing] capable of passing without spite through their

296 "Existenz in einer Rolle ist offenbar die Weise, in welcher Menschen überhaupt in einem dauerhaften Kontakt miteinander leben können."

297 "dazu verdammt, eine Rolle zu spielen, die nichts mit mir zu tun hat" (84)

298 "In seiner Radikalität möchte Stiller nicht eigentlich das von ihm erwartete Rollenverhalten umgestalten, sondern gänzlich negieren. Er hält sich nicht im Rahmen gesellschaftlich anerkannter Spielregeln auf, was die Vergeblichkeit all seiner Bemühungen erklärt."

299 "ein Gleichgewicht, einen Ausgleich zwischen der privaten und der öffentlichen Hälfte [...] herzustellen und durchzuhalten"

confusion of identities, playing a part without ever confusing oneself with the part,"[300] but he admits that he is unable of achieving it (210). He acknowledges that to keep an authentic private self, regardless of the role one plays when interacting with others, one has to believe in something transcendental. More specifically, he speaks about holding religious beliefs. Yet to believe in God he would have to reconcile himself to the idea of his own insignificance, and he is "simply not prepared to be a negligible man."[301] He does not want to accept himself as is; he desires to change: "I am forever hoping that God (if I meet Him half-way) will make me a different, namely a richer, a deeper, more valuable, more important personality"[302] (283). He is unable to come to terms with himself as a person with shortcomings. Stiller/White's aspiration to change casts doubt on the validity of his White-identity: he himself admits that he does not have an alternative to his rejected identity: "I know I am not the missing Stiller. [...] I swear it, even if I do not know who else I am"[303] (292). He has not really created a new identity but only discarded an old, undesirable one. The narrator's purported new identity actually corresponds to his image of what he would like to be: "The figure of White is not an identity, but a role hiding negative characteristics" (Alfred White 228). Therefore, the White-identity seems not to be the protagonist's true self but just another role, albeit one that he prefers to the Stiller-role, and hence his tough fight against being seen as Stiller does not follow a real change but rather his self-deception about a change.

Another aspect of Stiller/White's struggle supports this interpretation: his denial of his past as Stiller. Again, Stiller/White has no alternative available: "I'm not their Stiller. [...] I'm [a] person with no life behind him, none at all"[304] (41). In one of Stiller/White's tall tales, the story of the Carlsbad Caverns, a cowboy named Jim White (the similarity of names is not coincidental) kills his friend in a cave. Stiller/White tells this story to illustrate his belief that he killed Stiller

300 "man müßte imstande sein, ohne Trotz durch ihre Verwechslung hindurchgehen, eine Rolle spielend, ohne daß ich mich selber je damit verwechsle" (241).

301 "einfach nicht bereit, ein nichtiger Mensch zu sein" (324). My translation (the sentence is missing from Bullock's translation).

302 "Ich hoffe eigentlich nur, daß Gott (wenn ich ihm entgegenkomme) mich zu einer anderen, nämlich zu einer reicheren, tieferen, wertvolleren Persönlichkeit machen werde" (324).

303 "Ich weiß, daß ich nicht der verschollene Stiller bin. [...] Ich schwöre es, auch wenn ich nicht weiß, wer ich sonst bin" (334).

304 "Ich bin nicht ihr Stiller. [...] Ich bin ein [...] Mensch, der kein Leben hinter sich hat, überhaupt keines" (49).

during his angel experience. His comment about the cowboy's friend is meant to be extended to Stiller: "'I don't think this missing person will ever turn up!'"[305] (148). Yet the missing person (Stiller) is bound to turn up if only as part of other people's past lives. Stiller/White's demand that everybody accept the erasure of Stiller from the world is implausible: once he has decided to return to the life of other people (notably Julika), he must also accept their unwillingness to delete Stiller from their life story.

Our life stories are inevitably intertwined with the life stories of other people. Although we can transform our own story by narrating it differently, we cannot count on the people around us confirming that change as confirmation would entail changing their own story as well.[306] In addition, as Rolf says, "we can't switch over to another life when things go wrong. After all, it's our life that has gone wrong. Our one and only life"[307] (372). One can decide to change one's present life by weaving the past into the transformed self, but not to abandon it completely; otherwise one ends up floating in a vacuum because there is no other life, no second chance. As Butler aptly puts it, "A genuine transformation [...] must subsume the past, not destroy it. It is a question of creating a new synthesis out of the totality of experience"(76).[308] Stiller/White's denial of his past thus questions the invalidity of his spiritual change: it again comes to light that he would like to become someone else instead of accepting himself, what he is, and what he was in the past.

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305 "Ich denke, dieser Verschollene wird sich auch nicht mehr melden!" (172).

306 One case of this conflict of stories reveals Stiller/White's insistence on a rupture with his past as simply cruel: he denies knowing Alex, Stiller's young friend who committed suicide, face-to-face with Alex's parents, who are desperate to learn more about their son's motivation for killing himself (Alex mentioned a conversation with Stiller as a stimulus to his act).

307 "wir [können] ja nicht einfach, wenn's schiefgeht, auf ein anderes Leben hinüberwechseln [...]. Das vor allem. Es ist ja doch unser Leben, was da schiefgegangen ist. Unser allereigenstes und einmaliges Leben" (425).

308 An interesting parallel to Stiller/White's angel experience and his radical break with the past comes up in Iris Murdoch's *The Black Prince*. Here the narrator, Bradley, also insists on having been transformed by a strong and indescribable experience (falling in a "different" kind of love with someone). Most of the other characters do not believe in Bradley's change. As one of his friends claims, one of the things he finds impossible is the narrator's abandonment of the past: "No wonder you tried to forget it all. But, Bradley, one is responsible for one's actions, and one's past does belong to one. You can't blot it out by entering a dream world and decreeing that life began yesterday. You can't make yourself into a new person overnight" (308).

Another clue pointing to Stiller/White's untrustworthiness as regards his disconnection from Stiller is his attitude towards Julika. First, the fact that he voluntarily returns to Switzerland and wants to start a new relationship with her suggests that he has not reconciled himself to the failure of their marriage and that he wishes to remedy Stiller's appalling treatment of his wife that he likens to murder. Second, although he wants Julika to view him without her fixed image of him and to understand his transformation, "he is himself not ready to accept his beloved Julika as she is" (Koepke 50). He supposes that she has undergone a change as well: "This woman has nothing to do with the dreary story I have partially recorded during the last few days"[309] (149). His belief, however, seems to be mistaken as Julika's actions betray an absence of any deeper reflection on her part; she has never understood Stiller's problem and hence grasps neither the idea of identity transformation nor the need for change in their marriage: "Julika still can't understand why Stiller, her missing husband, suddenly talked about a 'Spanish defeat' on the occasion of their last meeting at Davos. Why defeat? [...] [N]ow it was suddenly a defeat, a thing that weighed in the scales as the beginning of all evil, as a curse, an ill omen, by which Stiller also explained the unhappiness of their marriage. Why?"[310] (123). Her reaction to Stiller/White's outburst of anger in Stiller's sculpture studio (where Stiller/White is taken during his imprisonment) also reveals her insistence on repeating old patterns: she stays perfectly calm and asks "'What now?'"[311] (330), exactly the same question that she asked after Stiller's speech concerning their marriage in the Davos sanatorium. This reaction entails a refusal to think about what her husband has said or done. Clearly, Stiller/White's hope for a fresh start with Julika is misguided because of her unwillingness to accept any change.

However, although Stiller/White consciously tries to see Julika differently, one can doubt whether he has freed himself from his past self's fixed image of her. His description of her appearance reveals that he does not approach Julika without any previous knowledge. Stiller/White's conclusion that Julika "seems

309 "Diese Frau hat mit der öden Geschichte, die ich in den letzten Tagen einigermaßen protokolliert habe, überhaupt nichts zu tun!" (172).

310 "[Es] ist [...] Julika noch heute unbegreiflich, wieso Stiller, ihr verschollener Mann, anläßlich jener letzten Begegnung in Davos plötzlich von einer 'Niederlage in Spanien' redete. Wieso Niederlage? [...] [J]etzt war es plötzlich eine Niederlage, eine Sache, die in die Waagschale fällt als Anfang aller Übel, als Fluch, als Unstern, womit Stiller sich auch die Unglücklichkeit ihrer Ehe erklärte. Wieso?" (142)

311 "Und jetzt?" (357)

to see herself as completely fragile" and that she "banks on being protected"[312] is unlikely to be a true first impression; however, it does correspond to Stiller's view of his wife (48). Even more importantly, Stiller/White has not eliminated the image of Julika as a representative of the excessive demands that he lays on himself. His escape from Switzerland did not help him flee this burden: Julika was figuratively with him on the boat to the USA, for there he imagined her disgust with his sweating. Later, when Stiller was living in Oakland, Julika was substituted by Little Grey, the cat that "was there even when she wasn't there,"[313] just as Julika was present in his thoughts all the time (53). Stiller's neighbour, Florence, scolds him for not loving the cat. Florence's admonishment stands for Stiller and Julika's friends' suggestions that Stiller is not good enough for Julika. Stiller/White's insistence on a new beginning with Julika at least partly results from his inability to break free from the unaccomplishable task of reviving her. Moreover, he still needs her to accept his new identity—as if to confirm it. This need not only indicates that Stiller/White has not fully liberated himself from his past as Stiller but also hints at his uncertainty with his would-be new identity. Again, this new identity appears to be the result of Stiller/White's self-deception rather than an actual transformation.

This analysis has shown that two different levels of potential narratorial reliability exist in *Stiller*: the level of facts (the narrator's biography) and the metaphorical level (the level of the narrator's inner reality). The narrative encourages the reader to read the narrator's notes not as a literal report but as a circumlocution of his inner reality, thus precluding a simplistic conclusion that the narrator is unreliable just because he denies that his name is Stiller. The difficulty of Stiller/White's battle against the rigidness of the other characters and against the restraints placed on the individual by society, as depicted in the novel, tempts the reader to believe in the genuineness of the White-identity and to regard the narrator as reliable. However, Stiller/White's insecurity concerning his new self betrays a lack of an actual alternative to the discarded self and confirms the unreliability hypothesis on the metaphorical level.

In the end the narrator has not convinced his readers that he is not Stiller: this belief is incompatible with the narrative facts. Despite his failure and his self-deception, Stiller/White is portrayed as a likable character, for he at least tries to change his life in order to lead a more authentic existence—as opposed

312 "[...] sie [kommt] sich selbst, scheint es, ganz und gar zerbrechlich [vor] [...] Sie spekuliert auf Schonung" (56).

313 "sie war zugegen, auch wenn sie nicht zugegen war" (62).

to Julika, who leaves her successful life in Paris, returns to an unhappy marriage because convention dictates it, and fails to see the necessity of change. Moreover, the bonding effect of the narrator's active irony also prevents the reader from making harsh judgements. To sum up, the negative picture of some of the other characters (especially Julika and Bohnenblust) and of society that the novel presents through the mouthpiece of the narrator elicits the reader's empathy for the narrator, empathy that consequently diminishes or even erases the reader's pleasure gained from discovering the narrator's unreliability. As is the case with Ishiguro's novels, Frisch's innovative use of unreliable narration in *Stiller* facilitates a vivid portrayal of his character narrator's inner conflicts without encouraging the reader to condemn the unreliable narrator.

3.2.1 *Stiller* and Ishiguro's novels

Like *Faber* and Ishiguro's novels featuring unreliable narrators (*Pale*, *Artist*, *Remains*, and *Orphans*), *Stiller* is narrated by a self-deceived individual who is motivated to convince himself of something even though evidence against his belief exists and who thus has to hide some information from himself. Stiller/White is dissatisfied with his previous life; he does not want to be the Stiller of the past any longer, and so he has created a new identity for himself. His self-deception then lies in his false belief that he can discard his old self completely and start a new life devoid of a personal history. Stiller/White's endeavour is not dissimilar from what Ishiguro's narrators try to do. Their self-deception, too, concerns their self-concepts: they project an image of themselves that is influenced by their (mostly unconscious) wish to emphasize some features of their personality and to conceal others. In a way they also construct a new, or at least a revised, identity.

Ono's wish to appear as having exerted great influence and having risen above the average in the past motivates him to construct an alternative, more successful self that he then takes for his true identity. Stevens tries to endow his life with meaning by fabricating an identity of a "great butler," which is meant to obscure the fact that his social role had totally swallowed his own self. Banks constructs a self-concept that shows him as unaffected by the loss of his parents. The narratorial unreliability of Ono, Stevens, and Banks thus results from the discrepancy between their self-characterization on the one hand and the characterization of their personalities that transpires from other elements of the text on the other. Thus, these four novels share with *Stiller* a focus on the narrating character's personality and the tension between his self-image and the image other characters have of him; this focus is, however, stated much more explicitly in *Stiller*.

The largest differences between the individual narrators lie in the way they construct their false self-images. Ono, Stevens, and, to a certain extent, Banks (in the verisimilar elements of the narrative) do not construct their self-concepts through a radical detachment from their old selves like Stiller/White but through their narratives, in which they adjust their memories so that the narrative yields their cherished self-image. They do not attempt to break from their past but to recreate it so that they can incorporate it into a life story coherent with their current self-concept. These adjustments mainly involve the misinterpretation of the significance of the reported events (mis- and underreading) and the omission of important parts of the story (underreporting). Stiller/White also defines his White-identity via narratives, yet these quasi-memories are not just misread but consciously invented: although some of his stories metaphorically depict his spiritual experiences (such as the story of the Carlsbad Caverns), many of them only represent his wishes (such as the story about Florence). These wish-fulfilment stories do not reflect his actual self; they only mirror his image of an ideal personality. Stiller/White admits that his stories are invented, but he deceives himself into believing that these stories are compatible with his true identity—the White-identity (*Stiller* thus previews *Gantenbein*, where the narrator's identity is depicted through invented stories). Whereas Ono, Stevens, and Banks shape their self-concepts by unconsciously fiddling with their memories, Stiller/White creates a new self-ideal for himself by consciously inventing memories. Although he does not insist on the authenticity of these memories, he is convinced that the self-ideal his stories reflect corresponds to his actual identity.

In fact Stiller/White tells two self-narratives: one composed of his tall tales and the other compiled from the narratives of the other characters and his own comments on them. The former is supposed to generate his wished-for identity whereas from the latter the narrator's rejected past self transpires. Stiller/White uses invented stories to paraphrase the indescribable truth; by recounting strangers' accounts of his past, he tries to keep his distance from his past self, but this narrative method also enables him to get to know his past self without the necessity of remembering events that he would rather delete from his life story. Further, it gives him the illusion of objectiveness. Both paraphrase and a seemingly external perspective are employed by Etsuko in *Pale* as well, albeit in a different form. As telling some things directly would cause too much distress, Etsuko encodes them into the story of Sachiko. By projecting her own memories onto Sachiko, she paraphrases events of her own life with the help of another person's story; at the same time, she can see herself as if from the outside. Hence, despite the huge difference in the incentives to their narration, parallels in the narrative strategies of Stiller/White and Etsuko exist.

The metaphorical meaning of Stiller/White's stories (and of the White-identity as such), which are meant to support his new identity, is reminiscent of Banks's career as a detective and his mission as a saviour of the world. These aspects of Banks's life, too, bear a symbolic significance: they stand for his wish to have the power to put things right and to bring back his parents after the tragedy of his childhood. However, while Stiller/White's stories do not leave the realm of his private worlds, Banks's activities constitute a part of the textual actual world of the novel. In *Stiller* the fictional reality, although it remains to a certain extent unknown to the reader, is independent of the narrator's wish-worlds. In *Orphans*, by contrast, Banks's wish-worlds co-create the fictional reality.

So far I have examined two works by Frisch, both of which project a verisimilar fictional world that enables the naturalization of the inconsistencies in the narrative by attributing them to the narrator's unreliability. In the following chapter I scrutinize a novel that, like *Unconsoled*, crosses the borders of unreliable narration because of the unnatural mode that operates its fictional world.

3.3 The Search for a Story: The Narration of Possibilities in *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*

In the last of his three best-known novels, *Mein Name sei Gantenbein*, Frisch takes up and further develops topics introduced in *Stiller* and *Faber*, such as personal identity. The lack of faith in mimetic representation of an individual's personality, already thematized in *Stiller*, is especially marked in *Gantenbein* and shapes not only the content but also the form of the novel. As a result, *Gantenbein* is probably Frisch's most experimental piece of fiction.

The plot of the novel is difficult to describe as it does not consist of a single story, yet the choice and ordering of the individual scenes it contains are far from arbitrary. The three main threads concern the characters of Enderlin, Gantenbein, and Svoboda, respectively; another name that appears in all three threads is Lila (Lila, however, is more the male characters' projection of their idea of womanhood than a character in her own right). Not only do these threads contradict each other but contradictions also arise even within the individual stories. The use of the grammatical first person makes for another complication. Although the "I" sometimes refers to an independent character, at other times it applies to Gantenbein, Enderlin, or "the strange gentleman." These characters are referred to both in the first and the third person, often within one sentence.

The Enderlin thread features an academic who has received an offer from Harvard but is reluctant to accept it; he becomes the lover of Lila, Svoboda's wife, and accidentally thinks that he only has one more year to live. The Gantenbein

thread tells the story of a man who, following an accident, decides to feign blindness. Everyone believes in his blindness: when people are around him, they do not bother to hide what they would normally hide, or on the contrary, they pretend to be something they are not, expecting Gantenbein not to see through their sham. Gantenbein is married to Lila, an actress (the same and yet not the same woman as in Enderlin's story). By pretending to be blind, Gantenbein hopes to avoid jealousy: his feigned blindness frees Lila from having to conceal her lover, and Gantenbein thus manages to evade painful uncertainty. He also spares Lila the necessity of lying by letting her believe that he cannot see the clues to her infidelity. Different versions of this marriage are presented in which, for example, Lila performs various jobs, Gantenbein stops playing a blind man, Lila and Gantenbein are parents, or Lila and Gantenbein are Baucis and Philemon. The Svoboda thread mainly concerns Svoboda's reaction to his wife Lila's affair with Enderlin.

Apart from these three threads, many other stories are scattered throughout the book; these do not directly refer to the main characters (Enderlin, Gantenbein, Svoboda, and Lila) but are thematically related. Some of them are narrated in the first person, others in the third person.

This chapter focuses on the narrative strategy employed in *Gantenbein* and its significance for the interpretation of the whole work. I suggest that not fictionally real, but possible[314] stories are narrated in the novel; I classify this narrative method as the narration of possibilities or subjunctive narration. My analysis of the novel's form reveals links between the narrative technique and the crucial topics of the work: no textual actual world exists because the novel proposes that it is impossible to narrate the truth of one's life by recounting facts. The whole text then represents a paraphrase of the narrator, who, however, does not exist as a character in the stories. Although there are three kinds of *I* that appear in the narrated possibilities, the narrator himself is not present in the fictional world. However, he sometimes adopts the role of some of the characters, including the character referred to by the pronoun *I*. The unnaturalness of the narrative in *Gantenbein* thus resides primarily in the following two features. First, as all the narrated stories are not fictionally real events but mere possibilities, the novel contains no textual actual world (and hence an interpretation as unreliable

314 Throughout this chapter, I use the words *possible* and *possibility* in the sense of an alethic, not epistemic, possibility. Petersen speaks in this context about "pure possibility as opposed to the possibility conceived of as possible reality" ["reine Möglichkeit im Gegensatz zu der Möglichkeit, die als mögliche Wirklichkeit gefaßt wird"] ("Wirklichkeit" 141).

narration is ruled out). Second, the narrator has a body and a personality, yet is at the same time the creator of the fictional world. In the second part of this chapter, I examine the narrator's motivations for narrating, which can be summarized as his wish to get to know himself and his concurrent desire to flee from repetition in his life.

The marriage of Content and Form: The Enacted Impossibility of Narrating One's Life

In the previous chapter I mention Frisch's attempt at applying the Brechtian alienation effect to narrative prose in *Stiller*: the complicated perspective structure of the novel requires an active reader who questions the veracity of the narrated events and never arrives at a definitive version of the story. *Gantenbein* develops the breaking of realistic illusion even further, forcing its readers to reflect on the possible meanings of the novel instead of mentally relocating themselves into the fictional universe and getting emotionally engaged in the story as if it really happened in their own actual world.[315]

The reader's immersion in the storyworld does not outlast the opening paragraph of the novel. This first paragraph describes the unexplained death of an unnamed man, ironically almost in the style of a detective novel, thus giving rise to the reader's expectations of a real life-like story, more specifically, a mystery with a clear solution at the end. But the reader's expectations are frustrated by the sentences immediately following this quasi-exposition of a story:

> I imagine:
>
> That's how Enderlin's end might be.
>
> Or Gantenbein's?
>
> More likely Enderlin's.
>
> Yes, I say too, I knew him. What does that mean! I imagined him, and now he throws my imaginings back at me like old junk; he doesn't need stories like clothes any more.[316] (8)

315 Cf. Ryan's concept of recentring described in chapter 1.2.

316 "Ich stelle mir vor:

So könnte das Ende von Enderlin sein.

Oder von Gantenbein?

Eher von Enderlin.

Ja, sage ich auch, ich habe ihn gekannt. Was heißt das! Ich habe ihn mir vorgestellt, und jetzt wirft er mir meine Vorstellungen zurück wie Plunder; er braucht keine Geschichten mehr wie Kleider" (8).

The narrator breaks the realistic illusion by disclosing that the initial story does not describe a past event but merely expresses a possible way of letting a character die and by admitting that he is not even sure which character this kind of death would fit the best. This revelation makes it clear that the dead man is not an actual person; it reminds readers that they are reading fiction and their mental relocation is disturbed. What is more, the narrator puts "knowing" someone on the same footing as "imagining" someone and thus warns the reader about the blurred boundary between fact and imagination within the fictional world of the novel. The deceased man's refusal of the narrator's "imaginations" because he no longer needs "stories" then implies that the stories of Enderlin and Gantenbein, which follow later, are nothing more than the narrator's imaginations.

Thus, the novel arrives at a double breaking of illusion. First, the reader is prevented from reading the narrative as if it were an account of real events: we are not allowed to play the game of make-believe and pretend to forget that the account is fictional, a product of the author's mental activity. Second, we realize that even within this fiction, the plot and the characters are products of the fictional narrator's mind. We are reading fiction within fiction. This arrangement by itself is not unusual in literature: a character's dream, fantasy, or invented story often forms a part of the plot, and in some cases these elements are presented as fictional reality—the reader only finds out about the unreality of the sequence after having read it (for example, when a character wakes up from her dream). The peculiarity of *Gantenbein* lies in the fact that there is no plane of fictional reality that frames the unreal part.There is no boundary between the real and the imaginary, such as waking from a dream, as the narrator's comment in a metanarrative passage towards the end of the book confirms: "The awakening (as though all this had never happened) proves to be a deception; something has always happened, but differently"[317] (297). "All this," that is, all that has been narrated so far, is neither fully real nor fully unreal: on the one hand, one cannot discard it as pure imagination ("as though all this had never happened"); on the other hand, it is not what actually happened (it happened "differently").

Paraphrasing the Truth: Depicting Experience through Invented Stories

The novel's form is closely connected to its main topic, which is best summed up by the following metanarrative remark in the book: "A man has been through

317 "Das Erwachen (als wäre nichts geschehen!) erweist sich als Trug: es ist immer etwas geschehen, aber anders" (282).

an experience, now he is looking for the story of his experience..."[318] (8). This comment calls to mind Stiller/White and his stories through which he tries to communicate his experiences, as well as an observation Frisch shares in an interview: "There is apparently no other way of depicting experience than telling stories"[319] ("Max" 26). Frisch goes on to say: "If people have more experience than incidents that could be stated as their cause, it manifests itself clearly: they spin a tale. [...] They sketch, they invent something that makes their experience readable"[320] (26). The narrator in *Gantenbein*, too, invents stories that match his experience because, as he says, "you can't live with an experience that remains without a story"[321] (11). One of the central metaphors of the novel is brought out by the recurring comment "I try on stories like clothes"[322] (21 and passim). Stories are like clothes because they "clothe" the experience: just as "you can't go about the world naked,"[323] it is impossible to exist without a life story (20). The narrator, by trying on stories like clothes, sketches possible versions of events that could express his experience. He is looking not only for stories but also for people that could live out the stories that go with his experience: "I often used to imagine that someone else had exactly the story to fit my experience"[324] (11). The narrator ends up inventing these figures together with their stories—they become the characters and the content of the novel. He creates variations that could give expression to his inner reality.

As a result, the whole book consists of possible but not fictionally real stories: "[T]he narrator does not mean to *re*construct reality, but to construct possibilities"[325] (Petersen, "Wirklichkeit" 131). In terms of possible-world theory, this kind of narration projects a fictional world only consisting of possible worlds and containing no textual actual world. The absence of a fictional reality

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318 "Ein Mann hat eine Erfahrung gemacht, jetzt sucht er die Geschichte seiner Erfahrung..." (8).

319 "Offenbar gibt es kein anderes Mittel, um Erfahrung darzustellen, als das Erzählen von Geschichten."

320 "Wenn Menschen mehr Erfahrung haben als Vorkommnisse, die als Ursache anzugeben wären, offenbart es sich deutlich: sie fabulieren. [...] Sie entwerfen, sie erfinden, was ihre Erfahrung lesbar macht."

321 "man kann nicht leben mit einer Erfahrung, die ohne Geschichte bleibt" (11).

322 "Ich probiere Geschichten an wie Kleider" (20 and passim).

323 "man kann ja nicht nackt durch die Welt gehen" (19).

324 "manchmal stellte ich mir vor, ein andrer habe genau die Geschichte meiner Erfahrung" (11)

325 "der Erzähler [gedenkt] nicht die Realität zu *re*konstruieren, sondern Möglichkeiten zu konstruieren [...]."

makes it clear that the narration in this novel differs profoundly from that in Frisch's *Faber* and *Stiller* and Ishiguro's *Artist*, in which the reliability of the narrators' version is measured against the textual actual world. Although the text is composed of invented stories, *Gantenbein* does not encourage an interpretation in terms of unreliable narration since the yardstick needed for determining the narrator's potential unreliability is missing altogether.

Even though I have described the characters and plot of the novel as a product of the narrator's mind, a psychological explanation, in the sense that everything is a figment of a character's imagination, does not apply here. The fact that there is no realistic frame in the narration is complemented by the ambiguous status of the narrator. There is an "I," but it not only narrates but also acts in the obviously imagined stories. This "I" therefore belongs to the fiction within a fiction just like the other characters, and just like the other characters, this "I" is only a possibility and not a (fictional) person.The "I" is hence narrating and being narrated at the same time: it is narrating itself into existence. An apt example of the double role of the "I" as creator and the created can be found in its simultaneous omniscience and limited knowledge as demonstrated in the following remark made when "I" visits Enderlin in hospital: "I can't know that this morning Enderlin considers himself a man dedicated to death"[326] (143). The narrator simultaneously knows and does not know something, or rather, the narrating "I" knows something that the experiencing "I" does not.

As a result, the narrator has a double form of existence: the novel seems to be narrated by an extradiegetic narrator—an impersonal narrative instance rather than a narrating character—but the narrator is at the same time narrated as a character.[327] As the plot consists of possible stories and not fictionally real events, all the characters, including the one referred to as "I," are only figments of the narrator's mind. It is a paradox: the stories are designed by a narrator who seems to be present in them and who thus appears to be a figment of his own imagination. As Heinz Gockel rightly argues:

> The fictions of the novel, which include the characters, are an expression of the book-I's experience. This book-I itself, however, eludes depiction. Otherwise the play of alternatives would have to be given up. There would be the story of a person who sketches fictions for his experience. In this case, the character would require a story; the character

326 "Ich kann ja nicht wissen, daß Enderlin sich seit heute vormittag für einen Todgeweihten hält" (136).

327 In the sense of the impersonal narrative instance, it would be more precise to refer to the narrator as *it*. I opt for *he* for the sake of clarity and because it is not always possible to distinguish between the narrative instance and the narrated "I."

would have to become tangible. The narrative principle of alternatives would be nullified since a person cannot appear as an alternative of him- or herself.[328] (28)

Consequently, the whole narration is an indirect description of a person who is absent from the narrative. His personality emerges from the stories that could be part of his life but which indeed are not; the fictive events express his inner reality.

Frisch aims to

> [...] show the reality of a man by having him appear as a white patch outlined by the sum of fictional identities congruent with his personality. Such an outline, I thought, would be more precise than any biography which is based, as we know, on speculation. [...] The story is not told as if an individual could be identified by his factual behaviour; he betrays himself in his fictions.[329] ("Ich" 325)

This way of portraying a personality bears resemblance to the word-guessing game Taboo, in which one player has to describe a word without using that particular word and other words listed on a card that are closely related to the given word. The player's partners thus have to infer the word from the first player's descriptions. The word is not uttered by the explaining player, but it emerges as a white spot in the middle of its associations. Similarly, the personality of the person depicted in *Gantenbein* is not shown with the help of the facts most closely connected to him—his biographical facts—but it manifests itself as an empty centre amidst invented stories that concern him indirectly, by association. As such, this person cannot exist as a character in the narration, and hence he cannot be equated with the character called "I." The "I" therefore exists on the same plane as Enderlin or Gantenbein, that is, in the fiction within a fiction.

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328 "Die Fiktionen des Romans, die die Figuren einschließen, sind Ausdruck der Erfahrung des Buch-Ich. Dieses Buch-Ich aber entzieht sich selbst der Darstellung. Andernfalls wäre das Spiel der Varianten aufzugeben. Es wäre die Geschichte einer Person zu erzählen, die für ihre Erfahrung Fiktionen entwirft. Als so entwerfende Figur im Roman müßte sie eine Geschichte haben, müßte sie greifbar werden. Das Erzählprinzip der Varianten wäre aufgehoben, da eine Person nicht als Variante ihrer selbst erscheinen kann."

329 "[...] die Wirklichkeit einer Person [...] zeigen, indem sie als weißer Fleck erscheint, umrissen durch die Summe der Fiktionen, die dieser Person möglich sind. Und dieser Umriß, so meinte ich, wäre präziser als jede Biographie, die, wie wir wissen, auf Mutmaßungen beruht. [...] Es wird nicht erzählt, als lasse sich eine Person durch ihr faktisches Verhalten zeichnen; sie verrate sich in ihren Fiktionen." Translation by Butler (123).

This narrative strategy results from Frisch's view—already voiced in *Stiller*—that one's official biography is an insufficient means of getting to know or describing a person: *Gantenbein* is an attempt to portray a (fictional) individual's inner reality while withholding the facts of this individual's life. As Frisch states: "It happens that a man cannot identify with his biography. [...] To express himself in words, he has to invent stories: he is making sketches for an ego that he tries out in fictive situations. The only thing the book is about is this attempt to identify oneself while inventing stories"[330] ("Ich" 329). The novel effaces the opposition of biography and facts versus fiction and invented stories, claiming that what is normally regarded as facts may be fabrications too: "Sooner or later everyone invents for himself a story which he regards as his life, [...] or a whole series of stories"[331] (*Gantenbein* 47). In other words, one cannot narrate the truth of one's life because the human need to create coherent and meaningful stories out of the medley of human experience makes it impossible to distinguish between truth and imagination.[332]

One can only discern a "pattern of experience" (*Erlebnismuster*) that crystallizes from the stories one tells: "[P]erhaps a man has two or three experiences, [...] that's what a man has had when he tells stories about himself, when he tells stories at all: a pattern of experience – but not a story"[333] (46). The pattern of experience is the common denominator of one's experiences, the unchangeable core coming up in all the events of one's life and in all the stories one contrives about oneself. This pattern results from the individual's self-image: "[T]he way one experiences oneself compulsively leads to similar situations, again and again"[334] (Frisch, "Ich" 332–33). Thus, our experiences are guided by an unconscious wish to adhere to what we regard as our identity; in this sense, "[e]xperience is not

330 "Das kommt vor, daß ein Mensch sich nicht mit seiner Biographie identifizieren kann. [...] Um sich auszudrücken, muß er fabulieren: er macht Entwürfe zu einem Ich, das er in fiktiven Situationen ausprobiert. Nur von diesem Versuch, fabulierend sich zu identifizieren, handelt das Buch."

331 "Jeder Mensch erfindet sich früher oder später eine Geschichte, die er für sein Leben hält" (45).

332 See also section 3.3.1, where I link the novel's approach to reality to literary modernism and postmodernism.

333 "[V]ielleicht sind's zwei oder drei Erfahrungen, was einer hat, [...] das ist's, was einer hat, wenn er von sich erzählt, überhaupt wenn er erzählt: Erlebnismuster – aber keine Geschichte" (45).

334 "die Art, wie einer sich erlebt, führt zu immer wieder ähnlichen Situationen zwanghaft."

derived from the experienced situation, but from self-interpretation"[335] (Gockel 20). Frisch's views[336] are thus even more radical than those of the proponents of identity as life story:[337] not only does our self-image together with our desire for coherence and consistency shape the story we tell about ourselves but it also affects what happens to us and what we experience.

In *Gantenbein* the story of the *Pechvogel*, a man who "imagined he was dogged by bad luck"[338] and had indeed been extremely unlucky all his life, illustrates this belief (48). When he won a great amount of money in the lottery, he was not able to fit this incident into his life story. He unconsciously desired avoiding the necessity of revising his self-image and his life story, and this unconscious wish eventually led to confirmation of his invented *Pechvogel*-identity:

> He couldn't grasp the fact that he was not dogged by bad luck, wouldn't grasp it and was so confused that on his way back from the bank he actually lost his wallet. And I believe he preferred it that way [...]. Otherwise he would have had to invent a different ego for himself [...]. [H]e would have had to abandon the whole story of his life, live through all its events again and differently, since they would no longer have gone with his ego – (49)[339]

The pattern of experience, which in this case amounts to being extremely unlucky, stays preserved following the man's desire to prevent his self-image from being challenged. The *Pechvogel* anecdote also exemplifies Frisch's conviction that telling stories is the only way to get to know oneself; as he writes, "otherwise we will never know our pattern of experience, our experience of the self"[340]

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335 "Erfahrung wird nicht aus der erlebten Situation abgeleitet, sondern aus der Selbstinterpretation."

336 Some of the ideas expressed in *Gantenbein* come up (sometimes using the same phrasing) in Frisch's essay "Unsere Gier nach Geschichten" (1960) and in Horst Bienek's interview with Frisch ("Max Frisch").

337 For an explication of the theory of identity as a life story, see chapter 1.3. Cf. Bruner, "Self-Making," and McAdams, "Identity."

338 "bildete sich ein, ein Pechvogel zu sein" (47).

339 "Er konnte es nicht fassen, daß er kein Pechvogel sei, wollte es nicht fassen und war so verwirrt, daß er, als er von der Bank kam, tatsächlich seine Brieftasche verlor. Und ich glaube, es war ihm lieber so, [...] andernfalls hätte er sich ja ein anderes Ich erfinden müssen [...]. [E]r müßte die ganze Geschichte seines Lebens aufgeben, alle Vorkommnisse noch einmal erleben, und zwar anders, da sie nicht mehr zu seinem Ich passen –" (47)

340 "anders bekommen wir unsere Erlebnismuster, unsere Ich-Erfahrung, nicht zu Gesicht."

("Unsere" 263). The narrator's wish to discover his pattern of experience is one of the raisons d'être of the narrative and its specific form.

As the boundary between fictional reality and invention is blurred, it is clear that not only the stories that one takes for one's life but also other situations that one can imagine for oneself generate the pattern of experience. As Butler contends, "it is an essential Frisch insight that 'experience' is not just something that has 'happened' but is also coloured by what has been neglected, by the fact that certain paths, certain decisions have not been taken" (122). The idea of the significance of actions not taken as well as of the incongruity of a person's biography and inner reality comes into view in the Piz Kesch episode, in which the "I" cannot forget a deed (murdering a Hitler sympathizer at the top of Piz Kesch mountain) that he actually did not commit: "It seems that more than anything else it is our real deeds that most easily slip our memories; only the world, since it knows nothing about my non-deeds, has a predilection for remembering my deeds, which really only bore me"[341] (56). The narrator is more interested in alternative scenarios that did not take place than in his factual biography; these alternatives express what is possible in his life—the scope of experience that his self-image enables. As Chloe Paver points out, "In this way he is able to envisage a possible future in which he might break free of the constraints of habitual behaviour" (50). His fabrications express these unfulfilled possibilities of his life; by including his non-deeds in the account of his past, he expresses his hope for a change in the future: "It is only as an unforgettable future, even if I displace it into the past as an invention, a figment of the imagination, that my life doesn't bore me – as a figment of the imagination: if I had pushed the man on the Kesch over the cornice..."[342] (56). To put it differently, the narrator flees from the facts of his life to counterfactual possible worlds, which materialize in the form of the novel's plot. The inclusion of these possible worlds points to another explanation of the atypical form of the novel: besides wishing to get to know his pattern of experience, the narrator longs for a different life.

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341 "Es scheint, daß es vor allem die wirklichen Taten sind, die unserem Gedächtnis am leichtesten entfallen; nur die Welt, da sie ja nichts weiß von meinen Nicht-Taten, erinnert sich mit Vorliebe an meine Taten, die mich eigentlich bloß langweilen" (54).

342 "Nur als unvergeßbare Zukunft, selbst wenn ich sie in die Vergangenheit verlege als Erfindung, als Hirngespinst, langweilt mich mein Leben nicht – als Hirngespinst: wenn ich den Mann am Kesch über die Wächte gestoßen hätte" (54).

Subjunctive Narration: The Equality of Possibilities

Many critics see a majority of this novel to be imagined by the narrator but consider some sections of *Gantenbein* to be fictionally real.[343] In this interpretation the narrator is a man sitting in an empty flat in a recurring scene. The other supposedly real scenes include those in which this man talks to a barman, follows people that could express his experience in the streets of Paris and New York, dreams of a dying horse, has a car accident, visits Jerusalem, and enjoys life in Italy (in the last paragraph of the novel). These and a few other scenes depict, according to these critics, what really happens to the narrator; the other episodes are figments of his imagination—the product of his search for a story that could express his experience. This arrangement would mean that the structure of the novel's fictional universe does not formally differ considerably from that of a realist text: it consists of a textual actual world (formed by the above-mentioned "real" scenes) and the possible worlds of the characters, one of them being the homodiegetic narrator. This reading contradicts the generally accepted assumption of the novel's experimental form: as Jürgen Graf reasons, "these interpreters attempt to implicitly recover a sound, consistent plot that they earlier expressly rejected"[344] (7). To naturalize the untraditional form by reading the novel almost conventionally does injustice to its originality.

It is easy to see the appeal of considering to be fictionally real the episodes in which the figure "I" explicitly thematizes the story-telling process, such as in his dialogue with the barman. However, this scene later develops into a scene in which Enderlin meets Lila in the bar (here, the man referred to as "I" starts to alternate with "the strange gentleman," who is later given the name Enderlin) and therefore into a clearly invented (fictionally fictional) event. In other scenes that might at first seem to feature a homodiegetic narrator, such as the car accident and the search for characters in the streets of Paris and New York, allusions to some of the undoubtedly invented stories appear. For instance, the driver of the crashed car mentions Burri (who later plays chess with Gantenbein) and the offer from Harvard that plays a role in Enderlin's story. As far as the reiterative scene in the empty flat is concerned, the comment that introduces its last recurrence suggests its inventedness: "I open my eyes again to see [what is being

343 See, for example, Balle 158, Butler 127, Jurgensen 184, Paver 49, and Alfred White 305.

344 "[...] diese Interpreten [versuchen], eine von ihnen im ersten Schritt ausdrücklich verworfene schlüssige, konsistente Handlung im zweiten Schritt implizit doch noch wiederherzustellen."

played there]"[345] (298). This statement implies that the scene is being enacted as if on a stage, thus hinting at its imaginative status.

However, even without these clues, all the scenes containing "I" as a character should be regarded as invented if we take into account one of the metanarrative comments incorporated into the novel: "Every story is an invention, [...] every ego that expresses itself in words is a rôle –"[346] (46). Every ego, every "I" (*jedes Ich*) that talks about itself, is a part of the tale that one spins in order to account for one's inner experience. Moreover, the novel proposes that even what one takes for the facts of one's life "is nothing but a self-sketch"[347] (Petersen, "Wirklichkeit" 148). This insight transpires from how "I" replies to an accusation made against him during the interrogation towards the end of the novel: "'What you are telling us is a lot of inventions.' 'What I experience is a lot of inventions'"[348] (298). Thus, even if in some cases (notably the last paragraph of the novel[349]) there is no apparent contradiction of reality, interpreting the form in accordance with the content speaks against dividing the work into the realms of the fictionally real and the merely possible. The quoted dialogue also neatly summarizes the difference between unreliable and unnatural narration: if the narrator were only narrating inventions, he would be unreliable. As he is *living* his inventions (and what he is living is the content of the book), he cannot be unreliable because he is creating and not merely referring to the fictional world.

The special form of existence of the narrator necessitates separating the narrating self from the experiencing self of the narrator. The latter, that is, the "I" as a character, emerges in several shapes: as a projection of the narrator into Enderlin or Gantenbein (or Gantenbein's alter ego, Philemon), as the narrator's self-sketch referred to as "I" without alternating with the third person, and as a complementary figure that enables other characters to show certain aspects of their personality and behaviour (for example, the "I" that visits Enderlin in

345 "[Ich] öffne [...] nochmals meine Augen, um zu sehen, was da gespielt wird" (283). My modified translation is in the square brackets.

346 "Jede Geschichte ist eine Erfindung, [...] jedes Ich, das sich ausspricht, ist eine Rolle –" (44).

347 "nichts als ein Selbstentwurf"

348 "'Sie erzählen lauter Erfindungen.' 'Ich erlebe lauter Erfindungen'" (283).

349 A plausible reading of the final paragraph is provided by Markus Werner: "[O]ne could very well interpret the concluding friendly idyll as a compensatory utopia of someone who is no more able to take delight in his existence" ["[S]ehr wohl ließe sich das freundliche Schluss-Idyll interpretieren als kompensierendes Wunschbild dessen, der seines Daseins nicht mehr froh zu werden vermag"] (*Bilder* 67).

hospital helps the reader see the way Enderlin copes with his diagnosis in interaction with a friend).[350] Hence, the "I" that appears in the fictional world is strictly speaking not a "self" at all as it has no identity of its own. The narrating self, on the other hand, does not exist as a character at all; it is not a part of the fictional world but creates the fictional world as normally extradiegetic narrators do. This arrangement is unnatural: while extradiegetic narrators are traditionally seen as devoid of corporality (cf. Stanzel 124), in *Gantenbein* we sense that the narrator corresponds to a person with a body and a fully-fledged personality. Yet unlike homodiegetic narrators, this narrator does not become a character in the fictional world. Rather, the whole narrative constitutes an indirect description of this extradiegetic narrator with a body and personality.

In some cases the difference between the narrator and the "I" as a self-sketch blurs. For example, the narrator's power similar to that of an authorial narrator is manifested in the recurring sentence "Let my name be Gantenbein" as this sentence expresses both the fact that the figure of Gantenbein is a draft of the narrator's alternative self and the narrator's will that this is so: the sentence is an illocutionary speech act of the narrator. But the pronoun "my" in the quoted sentence refers not only to the narrator but also to the "I" that takes up the role of Gantenbein in the fictional world. Further, the narrator's voice is sometimes present in the experiencing "I" ("I" as a self-sketch): the "I," although invented like the other characters, has a different status because the narrator uses the "I" to indicate his perceived unity with or would-be detachment from the individual characters in particular situations. By referring to a character as "I," the narrator "provisionally identifies himself with one of the figures who are projections of certain aspects of himself [...] and narrates as if he actually were one of these figures, only later to return to anonymity" (Botheroyd 96). This identification can concern unnamed characters as well, for instance, the person who travels to Jerusalem.

An example of a situation in which the narrator attempts to detach himself from one of the projected characters is the scene in the bar, during which the "I" distances himself from "the strange gentleman" who is conversing with Lila. The short paragraph at the end of the scene is a case in point: "I turned on my heel – I don't want to be the ego that experiences my stories, stories that I can imagine – I turned on my heel in order to part, as quickly as possible, from the

350 The last two types can coincide, such as in the episode in which the "I" is a friend whom Gantenbein visits at his home—here the "I" is a self-sketch but at the same time a figure that enables the portrayal of Gantenbein in the role of a friend.

strange gentleman"[351] (63). This situation happens in the fiction within the fiction, in which the narrator cannot be present because the whole situation is his invention and a possibility, not an actuality. The narrator does not actually turn on his heel, nor does he sit at the bar beforehand; it is an imagined possible "I" in imagined possible circumstances that experiences these things. The narrator slips into the role of the invented "I" to articulate his will as to how the narrative should continue but does not participate in the action in the fictional world. In this case, the narrator voices his will through the invented "I" but cannot perform this will by uttering it—for the invented "I," whose role the narrator has adopted for the duration of the utterance, does not have the world-constructing power of the narrator. The effect of this state of affairs is that despite being the narrator's creations, the characters paradoxically seem to disobey him; this circumstance makes it possible to depict the narrator's futile attempts to project an alternative to his customary behaviour. The narrator's pattern of experience is narrated without him necessarily being aware of it and often without his consent.

As there is no immanent fictional reality in the novel, the situation is similar to that in works that offer two or more possible endings without preferring any of them—such as Fowles's *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, about which Ryan makes the following claim: "The textual universe is freed from the dictatorship of the modal structure, in which one world is singled out to rule over all the others" (*Possible Worlds* 166). Yet while in Fowles's book the absence of a "ruling" world concerns just the last part of the narrative, it involves the whole of the *Gantenbein* text.[352] As mentioned above, the novel's fictional universe consists only of possible worlds, none of which has more validity than the others. In Ryan's theory this state of affairs corresponds to "[t]he empty center": "The text limits its assertions to worlds at the periphery, avoiding the representation of an actual world. [...] This effect can be achieved by modalizing propositions with adverbs

351 "Ich drehte mich auf dem Absatz – ich möchte nicht das Ich sein, das meine Geschichten erlebt, Geschichten, die ich mir vorstellen kann – ich drehte mich auf dem Absatz, um mich zu trennen, so flink wie möglich, von dem fremden Herrn" (60–61).

352 In this sense *Gantenbein* resembles the Chinese novel described in Borges's short story "El Jardín de senderos que se bifurcan" ("The Garden of Forking Paths"): "In all fictions, each time a man meets diverse alternatives, he chooses one and eliminates the others; in the work of the virtually impossible-to-disentangle Ts'ui Pen, the character chooses—simultaneously—all of them" (125). However, unlike Ts'ui Pên's novel, not all possible alternatives are realized in *Gantenbein* as not all of the "forking paths" are relevant to the person indirectly pictured by the narrative.

of possibility [...], or by linking them through an 'or' operator" (*Possible Worlds* 39). In *Gantenbein*, contradictory episodes are often put beside each other without one of them being favoured over the others. The mere possibility of propositions is further signalled not only by adverbs of possibility, as suggested by Ryan, but mainly by the recurring sentence "I imagine" and the grammatical use of the subjunctive (the German *Konjunktiv*, expressing subjectivity or possibility) instead of the indicative mode.[353] Even in the novel's title, *Mein Name sei Gantenbein* (which translates approximately as "Let my name be Gantenbein"), the subjunctive *sei* draws attention to unreality (and aptly also to the issue of identity). The sentence reappears several times in the text of the novel; there the subjunctive makes it clear that Gantenbein is merely the narrator's projection, a hypothetical ego, and not his real identity.

But it is not only the use of the subjunctive mode that classifies *Gantenbein* as subjunctive narration.[354] Subjunctive narration, as defined by Kay Kirchmann, is a mode that does not include "the virtual [...] only as a *latent* co-presence of other options"[355] but in which different alternatives are inherent (162). This proposition certainly applies to *Gantenbein* if we accept that the entire plot is constituted by the virtual as opposed to the actual: possible worlds are not presented as unfulfilled alternatives of the actual but make up the entire fictional world. As his reflections on theatre reveal, Frisch wants to avoid "imitation of life, which is characterized by the fact that at a given moment always only a single one of all possibilities becomes reality"[356] ("Dramaturgisches" 16). He strives to take into account more than one definitive version of events: "We know that things happen only if they are possible, but also that a thousand things, which are possible too, do not happen, and that everything could always occur quite differently. We know that, but it does not show as long as just one single course of events takes place on the stage (as in reality). What happened to those other equally possible variants?"[357] (9). A predominant course

353 As Wai Chee Dimock contends, "A still-undecided past and a still-hypothetical future are housed by [the subjunctive]: counterfactual, not often accredited, but available all the same as virtual sites, thinkable versions of the world" (243).

354 This classification is inspired by Graf's work.

355 "das Virtuelle [...] allein als latente Ko-Präsenz anderer Wahloptionen"

356 "Imitation von Leben, das ja dadurch gekennzeichnet ist, daß in diesem Moment immer nur eine einzige von allen Möglichkeiten sich realisiert."

357 "Wir wissen, daß Dinge geschehen, nur wenn sie möglich sind; daß aber tausend Dinge, die ebenso möglich sind, nicht geschehen, und alles könnte immer auch ganz anders verlaufen. Das wissen wir, aber es zeigt sich nicht, solange auf der Bühne (wie

of events is not present in *Gantenbein*, which incorporates into its plot more alternative possibilities of what could happen under the given circumstances. Thus, the novel employs subjunctive narration even when the indicative mode is used grammatically.

The Narrator's Motives for Narrating: Self-Knowledge and Self-Escape

Most episodes in the novel metaphorically express the narrator's experience or present a counterfactual yet conceivable version of his past or projections of an imaginable future. Another group of scenes, however, reflects the narrator's present: in these scenes the "I" is the narrator's self-projection into possible situations congruent with his present state of mind. Furthermore, these are metanarrative scenes in that they metaphorically render the narrator's motivation for narrating the incongruent narrative consisting of mutually exclusive stories—for "trying on stories like clothes." The narrator's two main motives that emerge from these scenes are his attempt to achieve self-knowledge and his desire to escape the pattern of his experience, that is, his habitual behaviour (cf. Pulham 233–34).

Self-knowledge

In one of the metanarrative passages the narrator, through the mouthpiece of the I-figure, discloses that he is looking for a story that would "clothe" his experience because stories enable one to perceive oneself as if from the outside: "'One can't see oneself, that's the trouble, stories only exist from outside,' I say, 'hence our greed for stories'"[358] (47). This desire to see oneself from the outside in order to explain the events in one's life is a strong incentive to tell stories about oneself: it is only possible to understand one's own experience if one can see it, and it is only possible to see the experience in stories in which it is reflected. In the novel this longing to gain an external view of oneself is expressed on the symbolic level as well by the frequent occurrence of mirrors. Just as one's reflection in the mirror is not one's real self, the "I" of one's stories is but a reflection of one's genuine identity; yet these reflections are the only possible way to catch a glimpse of one's face or of one's identity. The narrator's self-revealing story-telling encompasses not only stories about himself but all the stories he tells because all the stories he can imagine in some way reflect his experience, as the following introduction to

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in der Realität) nur ein einziger Verlauf stattfindet. Wo bleiben die ebenso möglichen Varianten?"

358 "'Man kann sich selbst nicht sehen, das ist's, Geschichten gibt es nur von außen', sage ich, 'daher unsere Gier nach Geschichten'" (45).

an Enderlin-focused story demonstrates: "What I can imagine: (because I have experienced it)"[359] (146). By contrast, he cannot imagine things that clearly do not represent, even in a transformed version, anything he has been through, such as the "easy death"[360] of the man in the first paragraph (8). By inventing stories that he can imagine, the narrator is "making sketches for an ego,"[361] sketches that should, among other things, expose his pattern of experience to himself so that he gets a better understanding of himself and his life (115).

Frisch's idea of a person's pattern of experience anticipates Ricoeur's notion of narrative identity. Ricoeur suggests that when readers identify with fictional characters, they are interpreting themselves: "It is [...] by means of the imaginative variations of our own ego that we attempt to obtain a narrative understanding of ourselves, the only kind that escapes the apparent choice between sheer change and absolute identity. Between the two lies narrative identity" ("Life" 33). The pattern of experience, too, unites the ever-changing elements of one's life (i.e., various life events) with one's relatively stable self-concept; the narratives readers imaginatively transpose themselves into in Ricoeur's theory are correlative to the stories the narrator can imagine in *Gantenbein*.

The narrator's lack of understanding of his own life manifests itself plainly in the scene in which the "I" is sitting in the flat that he and his partner deserted some time ago. In this scene, again, the "I" is a self-sketch representing the narrator's present state of mind: his feelings of estrangement from a part of his life that he does not understand. The estrangement surfaces in the detached observations about the indications of erstwhile life in the flat: "I'm sitting in a flat – my flat... It can't be a long time since someone lived here; I see a residue of burgundy in a bottle, little islands of mould on the velvet-red wine, and also remnants of bread, but as hard as brick. [...] As to the people who once lived here, it is clear that one was male and one female"[362] (18–19). Also, he refers to the man who once lived in the flat as "[t]he gentleman of my name"[363] (19). The narrator's lack of understanding is most obviously reflected when the "I" compares the flat to Pompeii:

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359 "Was ich mir vorstellen kann: (weil ich es erfahren habe)" (139).

360 "ein leichter Tod" (7)

361 "Entwürfe zu einem Ich" (109)

362 "Ich sitze in einer Wohnung: meiner Wohnung... Lang kann's nicht sein, seit hier gelebt worden ist; ich sehe Reste von Burgunder in einer Flasche, Inselchen von Schimmel auf dem samtroten Wein, ferner Reste von Brot, aber ziegelhart. [...] Von den Personen, die hier dereinst gelebt haben, steht fest: eine männlich, eine weiblich" (17–18).

363 "Der Herr meines Namens" (19)

"[H]ere it's as at Pompeii: everything still present, only time has gone away. As at Pompeii, you can wander through rooms with your hands in your pockets and imagine how people once lived here, before the hot ashes buried them"[364] (19). The only thing the "I" is sure about is that the people who used to live in the flat were a man and a woman; all the rest he has to imagine as if it was veiled in secrets like at an ancient site.

Similarly, the narrator tries to imagine the events that could have led to his present situation.[365] However, just as the "I" "can't imagine how people used to live here, even less than at Pompeii,"[366] the narrator is unable to put his finger on what really happened in his life as he does not regard any specific story as the story of his life (19). The remark "I" makes to the barman in the aforementioned bar scene is indicative of the narrator's inability to describe his life: "'Have you a story?' I ask, after he has just told me what he obviously considers to be his story, and say: 'I haven't one'" (47). Like Stiller/White, who knows that "you cannot write yourself down, you can only cast your skin"[367]—that you can emerge out of your narration but not narrate your life as it was—the narrator of *Gantenbein* recognizes the impossibility of producing an accurate account of one's own past (Frisch, *Stiller* 289).

The narrator's mistrust towards factual biography, displayed in how the "I" reflects upon story-telling and in the Piz Kesch story, is also mirrored in Gantenbein's notion of truth. Gantenbein's conception of truth stands out especially when contrasted with the view represented by another character, Camilla, to whom he tells stories every time she gives him a manicure. She is only interested in true stories, stories that really happened, thus resembling warder Knobel in *Stiller*. As long as Gantenbein presents his invented stories as facts, she considers them true. Her attitude illustrates the illusory nature of conventionally regarded facts. Her proclaimed profession also demonstrates how the impression something makes is more important than the actual state of affairs: she gives out

364 "[H]ier ist es wie in Pompeji: alles noch vorhanden, bloß die Zeit ist weg. Wie in Pompeji: man kann durch Räume schlendern, die Hände in den Hosentaschen, und sich vorstellen, wie hier einmal gelebt worden ist, bevor die heiße Asche sie verschüttet hat" (18–19).

365 The narrator's situation is not made known in the text—the empty flat scene does not depict his experience but only presents a situation conceivable in the narrator's life. The narrator's actual situation might have nothing to do with a broken-up relationship.

366 "kann mir nicht vorstellen, wie hier gelebt worden ist, weniger als in Pompeji" (19).

367 "man kann sich nicht niederschreiben, man kann sich nur häuten" (330).

business cards indicating she works as a manicurist but people tacitly understand that she is actually a prostitute (Gantenbein is probably her only manicure customer as he uses his feigned blindness to pretend he does not see through her trick). Likewise, the policeman who comes to Camilla's flat regards Gantenbein's manicure session with suspicion but believes Gantenbein's certificate of blindness, evidence of a seemingly unquestionable fact that is actually fake.

Once, when Gantenbein admits to Camilla that he is not sure about what he has just said (concerning his wife's possible adultery with Enderlin), Camilla is disappointed. Gantenbein's reply and comment signify the superiority of the imagined over what appears to be fact: "'I can only imagine it.' That's the true thing about the story"[368] (111). The truth is not the outer reality but the inner, existential reality of the speaker: "The truth of the story does not lie in the fact that it really occurred but that the storyteller sees himself mirrored in the narrated"[369] (Petersen, "Wirklichkeit" 147). Frisch believes that it is not hard facts but imagination that help find the truth. He shares his view on the matter: "I never know how it was. I know it in a different way. Not as a story, rather as future. As possibility. As a game of imagination. [...] I can tell how it was when I fled from a situation in life and settled in a strange city from the way I imagine that it would be if I fled and settled in a strange city today"[370] ("Unsere Gier" 262). By the same token, the narrator does not content himself with trying to reconstruct his personal history but instead attempts to gain more knowledge about his past through fictional stories. The characters function as sketches of his self and their stories represent possible developments in his life—that is, possible in the sense of imaginable.

Self-escape

The "I" sitting in his flat in the scene discussed above imagines setting the flat on fire if only he had matches on him: his past would be annihilated along with the flat. But the "I" acknowledges that this wish to obliterate the past is unfeasible:

368 "'Ich kann es mir nur vorstellen.' Das ist das Wahre an der Geschichte" (106).

369 "Die Wahrheit der Geschichte beruht nicht darauf, daß sie tatsächlich vorgefallen ist, sondern darauf, daß der Erzählende sich im Erzählten gespiegelt sieht."

370 "Ich weiß nie, wie es war. Ich weiß es anders. Nicht als Geschichte, eher als Zukunft. Als Möglichkeit. Als Spiel der Einbildung. [...] Wie es war, als ich aus einer Lebenslage floh und mich in einer fremden Stadt niederließ, erkenne ich daran, wie ich mir vorstelle, daß es sein würde, wenn ich heute flöhe und mich in einer fremden Stadt niederließe."

"[I]t can't be done with matches, it would be simply ludicrous"[371] (20). The impossibility of erasing one's personal history and existing without a story is expressed symbolically by the tale of a naked man running away from hospital. This man, too, experiences a moment of estrangement from life: standing naked in front of a nurse, he "hears himself say: I'm Adam and you're Eve!"[372] (13). For a brief while he sees himself as Adam in paradise, who, having no personal history, does not feel the need to cover his nakedness with clothes. For a passing moment he is rid of his self-consciousness and of the necessity of a life story to "clothe" his experience, a story that always involves playing a role. His running naked through the city and being pursued by the police, a scene that ends with him accepting a king's costume to cover his nakedness (while waiting in the opera), stands for a person's vain attempt to escape his story and social role. One cannot live in society unless one plays a role: "[T]he whole commotion is over only when the naked person, draped with a costume, plays a role like the others, when he dresses (up) like the others"[373] (Petersen, "Wirklichkeit" 154). This outcome of the story can be again related to the theory of identity as life story, more specifically to Eakin's observation (based on work by Charlotte Linde) that our life stories not only define us socially (without a self-narrative we appear to others as having no identity) but are also a prerequisite for being seen as normal (30). When trying to escape his story (i.e., when naked), the man is chased by society (represented by the police), which subsequently normalizes him by imposing a story (i.e., clothes) on him.

The man in the story explains his action by saying that "[h]e had wanted to scream,"[374] (17) alluding to a vision of a horse's head in granite voiced earlier in the novel by the "I": "Out of this granite there suddenly comes like a cry, but soundless, a horse's head with eyes wide open, foam on its teeth, whinnying, but without a sound, a living creature, it has tried to jump out of the granite, which it didn't succeed in doing at the first attempt and, I can see, never will succeed in doing"[375] (11). This vision signifies the narrator's failed effort to escape his life

371 "es ist nicht mit Streichhölzern zu machen, es wäre bloß lächerlich" (19).

372 "[hört] sich selbst sagen [...]: Ich bin Adam und Du bist Eva!" (12)

373 "Die ganze Aufregung ist erst vorbei, als der Nackte, mit einem Kostüm behängt, wie die anderen eine Rolle spielt, sich wie die anderen (ver)kleidet."

374 "Er habe einen Schrei ausstoßen wollen" (17).

375 "[A]us diesem Granit stößt wie ein Schrei, jedoch lautlos, plötzlich ein Pferdekopf mit weitaufgerissenen Augen, Schaum im Gebiß, aufwiehernd, aber lautlos, ein Lebewesen, es hat aus dem Granit herauszuspringen versucht, was im ersten Anlauf nicht gelungen ist und nie, ich seh's, nie gelingen wird" (11).

lacking in authenticity, his "abortive leap out of the grey, featureless petrification of his everyday life into a more vital form of existence" (Butler 125). The living creature of the vision can never leave the granite that confines it, just as the naked man (and any person in general) cannot run away from his story.

The figure of Enderlin embodies this endeavour to flee from a life devoid of authenticity. His hesitation to accept Harvard's invitation expresses his highlighted awareness of his own role-playing: "[O]nly when a special success comes his way is he dismayed by the rôle which he has evidently been playing up to now –"[376] (37). Enderlin's success makes him realize that he has been living in accordance with other people's expectations instead of staying faithful to his authentic self; the facts of his life differ from his inner reality: "Enderlin doesn't believe in [the invitation] himself, and no document that he carries in his pocket and can show to people – as Gantenbein shows his certificate of blindness – is any help... [...] Enderlin is simply not the man to whom this invitation to Harvard applies [...]. [...] [H]e appears to himself as a swindler"[377] (112). Similarly to the formerly naked man in the opera who takes fright when he sees himself clothed in the mirror (i.e., he views himself from the outside), Enderlin is shocked by his role that he has suddenly become aware of and that he perceives as a disguise.

The naked man's experience in the hospital and Enderlin's fright at his role are two representations of the narrator's epiphanic moments in which he senses his authentic self and desires to flee from the social role-playing that masks his authentic self, to attempt an escape as depicted in the vision of the horse. These moments correspond to the experience described in the seemingly unrelated short paragraph between the story of the naked man and the scene in the flat: "It's like falling through a mirror, that's all you know when you wake up, like falling through all the mirrors there are, and afterwards, shortly afterwards, the world is put together again as though nothing has happened. And nothing has happened"[378] (18). Nothing has happened in the world, but something has

376 "erst als ein besonderer Erfolg sich einstellt, erschrickt er über die Rolle, die er offenbar gespielt hat bisher –" (36).

377 "Enderlin glaubt selbst nicht daran, und da hilft kein Dokument, das er in der Brusttasche trägt und vorzeigen könnte – wie Gantenbein seinen Blinden-Ausweis... [...] Enderlin ist einfach nicht der Mann, dem dieser Ruf nach Harvard gilt [...]. [...] [Er] kommt [...] sich wie ein Schwindler vor" (107).

378 "Es ist wie ein Sturz durch den Spiegel, mehr weiß einer nicht, wenn er wieder erwacht, ein Sturz wie durch alle Spiegel, und nachher, kurz darauf, setzt die Welt sich wieder zusammen, als wäre nichts geschehen. Es ist auch nichts geschehen" (17).

happened in the person, in his inner reality; it is a sudden realization that can easily vanish (the man in the opera knows that he wanted to scream but has already forgotten why) and yet can have an impact on one's view of oneself: "Only for Enderlin [...] has something happened, not for the first time incidentally and probably not for the last. Before insight comes to him from this occurrence, a lot of little moments of dismay will be needed"[379] (39). "Falling through all the mirrors there are" symbolizes seeing through all the mere reflections that purport to be the self and abandoning a false self-interpretation. It strongly resembles Stiller/White's angel experience, which left him with a feeling of a new, *tabula rasa* identity and led him to reject his former life: this, too, is an attempt to "go about the world naked," without the story of one's life.

However, unlike Stiller/White, who hopes to be able to keep his new identity, the narrator of *Gantenbein* "knows that although one can invent different ways of living, one cannot actually live through the many possible lives"[380] (Mayer, "Mögliche" 318). In Frisch's world it is impossible to live in society without a story that is compatible with a given role: Stiller/White is sentenced to being Stiller, the naked man in *Gantenbein* is given a costume, and the protagonist of another inserted story, milkman Otto, is put into a lunatic asylum once he falls out of his role. One of the stories Gantenbein tells to Camilla features a corpse in the Limmat River that almost manages to "[float] away without a story"[381]—without anyone finding out its identity and its role in society; however, the body is eventually retrieved by the police (*Gantenbein* 303).[382] No escape route is available—very person living among other people has to play a social role.

Likewise, one cannot escape one's pattern of experience, that is, the recurring elements in all the stories in one's life. The narrator voices this observation by way of a metaphor in which the "I" reflects on buying new clothes: "I shall buy

379 "Nur für Enderlin [...] ist etwas geschehen, übrigens nicht zum ersten und wahrscheinlich nicht zum letzten Mal. Bis eine Einsicht draus entsteht, braucht es viele kleine Schrecken" (38).

380 "weiß, daß man sich zwar andere Lebensweisen erfinden, aber die vielen möglichen Leben nicht real durchleben kann"

381 "Abzuschwimmen ohne Geschichte" (288).

382 One could say that, unlike the characters striving to get away without a story, the narrator manages to do so: it is impossible to reconstruct the narrator's past experience as the stories that reveal this past simultaneously veil it—the stories are like clothes that give us an idea about his personality but at the same time conceal his nakedness, his real experience (cf. Reich-Ranicki 328). Consequently, the narrator and his life remain elusive.

new clothes, but all the time I know it won't help; it's only in the shop-window that they look different. [...] I know how everything will look in three months. [...] Whether it is cheap or dear, English or Italian or native makes no odds; the same creases always develop in the same places, I know that"[383] (20). As the recurring sentence "I try on stories like clothes" reveals, the clothes that always crease at the same places represent one's stories, that is, the possibilities of one's experience: however one tries to change one's habitual behaviour, one's pattern of experience will always reappear.

Nevertheless, the narrator still tries to imagine (and narrate) an escape from this pattern. He does so primarily through the two main projections of his self: by depicting Enderlin's struggle to break free from the routine of his life and by sketching "[a]nother life"[384]—the role of Gantenbein, the cuckolded husband who almost literally turns a blind eye on his wife's affairs (20). The development of both threads confirms the futility of the narrators' attempts to change his pattern of living— he ends up with the same "creases" in his stories.

Apart from Enderlin's existential crisis after receiving the invitation from Harvard, the narrator's search for authenticity finds expression in Enderlin's fight against time, which manifests itself in his yearning to preserve the present moment and to avoid "stories." The term *stories* here stands for repetition, stereotype, and loss of newness. Enderlin's desire to stay eternally in the now shows most explicitly in his behaviour on the morning after the first night spent with Lila: "[H]e wanted to go to the museum. In order not to be in the world. He wanted to be alone and beyond time"[385] (69). In the museum, an institution that preserves objects as they were in the past, he can temporarily repress his awareness of the power of time by closing "his eyes like the child who has said it will shut its eyes now so that the darkness of the night shall not enter its eyes and extinguish them"[386] (73–74). Yet he is not able to prevent time from transforming the present moment into a mere memory and the fresh and lively encounter with Lila into a stereotypical, lifeless story: "It will come to an end if they see

383 "Ich werde mir neue Kleider kaufen, dabei weiß ich: es hilft nichts, nur im Schaufenster erscheinen sie anders. [...] [Ich] weiß [...] wie alles aussehen wird in einem Vierteljahr. [...] Ob billig oder teuer, englisch oder italienisch oder einheimisch, bleibt einerlei; immer entstehen die gleichen Falten am gleichen Ort, ich weiß es" (19).

384 "[e]in anderes Leben" (20)

385 "[E]r wollte ins Museum gehen, um nicht in der Welt zu sein. Allein und jenseits der Zeit wollte er sein" (66).

386 "die Augen wie das Kind, das gesagt hat, es schließe die Augen jetzt, damit die Finsternis der Nacht nicht in seine Augen falle und die Augen auslösche" (70).

each other again, and it will come to an end if he flies off for ever; in any case, he knew that, it will come to an end, and there is no hope against time..."[387] (69). We cannot beat time; it will always turn a lively, authentic-feeling experience into a worn-out story.

This fear of repetition can be extended to a fear of getting old: the narrator dreads most living "with the knowledge of what happens next: without the curiosity as to what happens next, without the blind expectation, without the uncertainty that makes everything bearable,"[388] of which "[e]xperience is a foretaste"[389] (119). Ageing, associated with gaining experience, is portrayed as increasing boredom and the gradual exhaustion of lust for life (cf. Holthussen 1077). For this reason the "I" distances himself from the man who is about to go through something that the "I" already knows (as it is part of the pattern of experience) and thus is not interested in: "[T]he strange gentleman," later called Enderlin, "who was boring me even more than [he was Lila], since I wasn't listening to his remarks for the first time,"[390] starts a love affair against the will of the "I" (62). This occurrence represents the narrator's vain struggle against the relentless reappearance of his pattern of experience.

The pattern's repetition is accompanied by the loss of freshness of experience: "[Enderlin] didn't know how to ward off the future – because the future, he knew, that's me, [Lila's] husband, I am the repetition, the story, the finitude and the curse in everything, I am the process of ageing minute by minute..."[391] (70). In this sense the narrator's imagined "flight from time [...] does not only mean avoiding reality, but primarily an escape from his own I"[392] (Jurgensen 197–98). This contention is confirmed by the narrator's giving up the Enderlin thread after Enderlin has missed the chance to change his life that the narrator granted him

387 "Es hört auf, wenn man einander wiedersieht, und es hört auf, wenn er weiterfliegt, für immer; in jedem Fall, das wußte er, hört es auf, und es gibt keine Hoffnung gegen die Zeit..." (66).

388 "mit dem Wissen, wie es weitergeht: ohne die Neugierde, wie es weitergeht, ohne die blinde Erwartung, ohne die Ungewißheit, die alles erträglich macht" (113)

389 "Erfahrung ist ein Vorgeschmack" (114).

390 "[D]er fremde Herr, der mich noch mehr langweilte als [Lila], da ich seine Reden ja nicht zum ersten Mal höre" (59).

391 "[Enderlin wußte] nicht [...], was machen gegen die Zukunft: – denn die Zukunft, das wußte er, das bin ich, ihr Gatte, ich bin die Wiederholung, die Geschichte, die Endlichkeit und der Fluch in allem, ich bin das Altern von Minute zu Minute ..." (66–67).

392 "Flucht vor der Zeit [...] bedeutet nicht nur ein Ausweichen vor der Wirklichkeit, sondern vor allem ein Entrinnen vor dem eigenen Ich."

in the form of Enderlin's false conviction that he only has one more year to live. Enderlin's resemblance to the narrator's self leads the narrator to the conclusion that Enderlin's story turns out to be too similar to the narrator's own experience to serve as a model of a different life: "There are other people I can't give up [...]. They grip me all life long through my idea that they, if placed in my position, would feel differently and act differently and come out of it differently from me, who cannot give up myself. But I can give up Enderlin"[393] (153). As Enderlin is not a character in its own right but a sketch made up by the narrator, it is clear that Enderlin's failure to present an alternative results from the narrator's lack of control over his own narration. Thus, we are led back to one of the essential ideas underlying the whole work: that one's pattern of experience cannot be evaded, neither in living nor in story-telling.

The narrator also attempts to project an alternative to his inauthentic way of life in the story of Gantenbein: a story of a man playing a role so consistently that he never shows his true self to others. By inventing Gantenbein, the narrator is trying to find "a solution to the problem of being trapped in a socially imposed role [...]. Since Gantenbein's blindness is only a charade, a role which he has chosen himself, he remains secure in the knowledge that he has the upper hand over society, and not the other way round" (Paver 59). Furthermore, by giving Gantenbein the role of a physically blind man, the narrator intends to draft a version of himself devoid of his mental blindness: Gantenbein's pretended blindness should prevent other people from hiding behind their roles and let him see the truth about them.

However, Gantenbein's sexual jealousy, an emotion that typically entails seeing things that do not exist and not seeing things that do exist, illustrates the failure of this attempt. By pretending not to see Lila's infidelity, Gantenbein tries to avoid being told lies by Lila as well as throwing jealous fits that would mar the couple's marital happiness. Although this method seems to work at first, it is doubtful whether Gantenbein's declarations that he is "happier than I have ever been with a woman"[394] are real when his entire existence is based on pretension and deceit (99). Moreover, the "I" senses the risk of not being able to maintain Gantenbein's role: "Let's hope I never act out of character"[395] (99). And indeed, the narrator fails to keep Gantenbein on the right track all the time: Gantenbein

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393 "Es gibt andere Leute, die ich nicht aufgeben kann [...]. Sie fesseln mich lebenslänglich durch meine Vorstellung, daß sie, einmal in meine Lage versetzt, anders empfänden und anders handelten und anders daraus hervorgingen als ich, der ich mich selbst nicht aufgeben kann. Aber Enderlin kann ich aufgeben" (145).

394 "glücklich wie noch nie mit einer Frau" (94).

395 "Hoffentlich falle ich nie aus der Rolle" (94).

eventually does act out of character when he stops pretending to be blind. To prevent the story from getting out of hand, the narrator transforms Gantenbein into Philemon. However, the narrator ends up telling stories of Philemon's overreaction to his partner Baucis's confession that she has a lover; Philemon is overpowered by paranoia and ridicules himself by making false accusations—and ruins the relationship in the process. In short, Philemon gets into the very situations the narrator wanted to avoid by adopting the role of Gantenbein. Again, the narrator's pattern of experience has found a way back into the narrative.

The narrator tries to regain control over his rampant imagination by putting parts of the plot under erasure: when the story develops in such a way that it can no longer serve as the narrator's sketch of a different life but rather evolves into a confirmation of his way of living, he deletes what he has just told out of the story. For example, when Philemon confronts Baucis and she confesses her affair, the narrator slips into the "I" who recognizes his own repetitive behaviour in Philemon's reaction: "I experience the moment like memory"[396] (175). The narrator immediately pulls the emergency brake by making the whole scene of Philemon's challenging Baucis that led to Baucis's confession unhappen: "Well then: Philemon doesn't challenge her"[397] (175). When this intervention does not help and Philemon continues to fail to provide a different pattern of experience, the narrator gets rid of him altogether: "I remain Gantenbein"[398] (189).

However, even if the narrator erases the inconvenient parts of the story, they do not disappear completely from the narrative. Brian McHale draws attention to the resemblance of such deletions in fiction to Derrida's signs *under erasure*, signs that he has literally crossed out: "Physically cancelled, yet still legible beneath the cancellation, these signs *sous rature* continue to function in the discourse even while they are excluded from it" (*Postmodernist Fiction* 100). The deleted scenes in *Gantenbein*, too, continue to have a function in the narrative: they are part of the whole set of invented stories out of which the narrator's pattern of experience emerges. And the Gantenbein thread shows that even when the narrator invents a story that is supposed to differ considerably from his past, he always ends up unwittingly talking about his own experience in disguise. No matter how much one tries, one cannot get away from one's pattern of experience.

Irrational jealousy, involving torturing oneself by imagining worst-case scenarios, also emerges as part of the narrator's pattern of behaviour in the thread

396 "Ich empfinde den Augenblick wie Erinnerung" (166).
397 "Also: Philemon stellt sie nicht zur Rede" (166).
398 "Ich bleibe Gantenbein" (181).

concentrating on Svoboda. The narrator keeps a distance from Svoboda throughout the narrative by always referring to him in the third person and by portraying him as a counterfigure to the "I": Svoboda is a man free of existential doubt,[399] a simple, bearlike man concentrating on tangible facts and not his inner reality. Svoboda's incompatibility with the "I," through which the narrator articulates his detachment from Svoboda, is summed up by his Slavic origin: "I don't know how a Bohemian behaves when the woman he loves loves another man"[400] (209). The narrator relents in his distance only once—after he has depicted Lila (who is Svoboda's wife in this thread) on the boat as seen by the jealous Svoboda: "Am I Svoboda?"[401] (274). This hesitation indicates that despite all the differences, one feature of Svoboda matters in the portrayed pattern of experience—jealousy as a distorted view of one's partner and more generally of the world, jealousy representing mental blindness that the narrator lets the "I" confess in the end: "I'm blind. I don't always know it, but sometimes I do"[402] (298). Once again, the narrator finds out that adopting an invented role will not help him escape from his pattern of experience.

I have argued that *Gantenbein* is a novel whose fictional universe is composed of a set of possible worlds without any centre in the form of a textual actual world. This situation arises from the narrative method employed, that is, subjunctive narration (the narration of possibilities). The whole fictional world then amounts to a metaphorical depiction of the narrator, who is not present in the text as such but temporarily slips into the role of some of the characters. The narrator's wish to get to know himself better and simultaneously to escape the habitual course of his life emerges from the narrated stories. This reading, however, does not purport to be the only possible way of interpreting the work. In fact, ambiguity is present not only in the identity of the narrator but also in the meaning of the whole novel: the novel itself represents the uncertainty of our experience.

Nevertheless, one thing is clear: there is a close bond between the novel's composition and its subject matter. It links an experimental form with a focus on personal identity and the existential condition of a person who is unsatisfied

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399 In Czech and other Slavic languages, *svoboda* means freedom. Even the choice of name thus implies the character's incompatibility with the narrator, who longs for existential freedom but can never attain it.

400 "Ich weiß nicht, wie ein Böhme sich verhält, wenn die Frau, die er liebt, einen andern Mann liebt" (199).

401 "Bin ich Svoboda?" (261).

402 "Ich bin blind. Ich weiß es nicht immer, aber manchmal" (283).

with the role he plays but is not able to grasp his inner reality. In this sense, *Gantenbein* further elaborates on questions posed by *Stiller* and *Faber* while departing further from conventional realism towards an innovative portrayal of the inner reality of the narrating character. This development suggests that Frisch, like Ishiguro, tries out different techniques in his later fiction while dealing with topics similar to those in his preceding works. More specifically, both writers experiment with nonmimetic ways of representing reality in order to depict the psychological truth of a person more precisely.

3.3.1 *Gantenbein* and Ishiguro's Novels

As far as types of fictional worlds are concerned, the novel that stands closest to *Gantenbein* is *Unconsoled*. In both texts the fictional world is clearly nonverisimilar and the narration is unnatural as a result of its impossibility in terms of the extratextual actual world's logical principles and, in the case of *Unconsoled*, physical laws. Moreover, the position of the narrator vis-à-vis the fictional world breaks the convention that an embodied narrator does not have the power to create the fictional world. In both cases the narrator's possible worlds function differently than in novels projecting a verisimilar fictional world. This difference is especially profound when contrasted with texts involving unreliable narration, such as *Artist* or *Faber*. Unlike in unreliable narration, in this kind of unnatural narration the possible worlds of the narrator are not contradicted by fictional reality. In *Unconsoled* the narrating character's possible worlds co-create the textual actual world in order for the text to externalize his psychological condition: his wishes, fears, and memories materialize in the text. In *Gantenbein* the narrator's private worlds are the only constituent of the fictional universe: as he, strictly speaking, narrates possibilities and no (narrative) facts, there is no textual actual world in the novel. In addition, both novels violate the principle of noncontradiction. For example, in *Gantenbein* some characters are referred to as both *he* and *I* and a single character (Lila) is at one moment in time married to two of the other characters; in *Unconsoled* a character (Gustav) is a stranger to Ryder and simultaneously his father-in-law.

However, in *Gantenbein* the narrated possibilities function as a circumlocution of fictional reality: the narrator's personality is characterized by the interaction of these possibilities. Therefore, although the narration challenges the conventionally assumed boundary between fiction and fact (implying that *every* story is fiction), it does so for the sake of portraying the (fictional) reality more precisely and not for the sake of negating it. The novel proposes that the usual way of story-telling, that is, narrating directly what one perceives as the

real course of events, cannot lead to the utterance of the essence of one's life. Illusion (what only appears to be reality) and narrative convention (the properties a narrative needs to be perceived as a narrative) obscure this essence. Like *Stiller*, *Gantenbein* communicates the view of reality as inexpressible, resistant to one's knowledge, and different from the illusion of reality in which most people believe, but not as nonexistent: as Jautrite Milija Salins contends, "The belief in an absolute reality [...] persists"[403] (94). In short, the purpose of *Gantenbein*'s experimental form is not to deny the existence of a paramount reality but to search for the truth.

Unconsoled, by contrast, questions the possibility of an objective reality as such. Ryder's slanted perspective on his life is incorporated into the fictional reality and affects the book's events and characters, including their actions and utterances. The fictional reality then operates to a great degree according to the conscious and unconscious contents of Ryder's mind. Similarly to *Gantenbein* and *Orphans*, *Unconsoled* uses an innovative narrative technique to depict the psychological situation of an individual not by telling but by showing. But unlike in Frisch's novels, the fictional world of *Unconsoled* implies that there is no neutral reality clearly demarcated from a person's subjective view. This novel therefore suggests that the blurred boundary between fact and fiction does not result merely from one's limits on knowledge and perception but also from the nature of reality itself.

Therefore, while *Gantenbein* tackles an epistemological issue (the difficulty of grasping and communicating reality), *Unconsoled* is concerned with an ontological problem (the nature of reality and the boundaries between different worlds). This difference calls to mind McHale's distinction between modernism and postmodernism, which he describes as the dominance of epistemological questions in modernist fiction as opposed to the prevalence of ontological queries in postmodernist literature (*Postmodernist* 9–10). As Alan Palmer aptly summarizes: whereas modernist novels ask "How can we *know* reality?," postmodernist fiction pays more attention to the question "What *is* reality?" ("Ontologies" 276). Based on these assumptions, we can classify *Gantenbein* as a modernist text and *Unconsoled* as a postmodernist text.

Another observation corroborates this categorization: in spite of the unnaturalness of the narrator's simultaneous existence as an embodied narrator and as the creator of the fictional world, the narration in *Gantenbein* can be assigned to a humanlike consciousness in real-world terms. In *Unconsoled* the narrator is

403 "Der Glaube an eine absolute Wirklichkeit [...] bleibt bestehen."

unmistakably the character Ryder, who is placed in the fictional world where he experiences what nobody could possibly experience in the extratextual world—and narrates about it.[404] Therefore, the narration cannot be attributed to a human mind as normally conceived of in the real (extratextual) world. This difference in the portrayal of the narrator's mind also points to an association with modernism and postmodernism: while modernist fiction retains the belief in the existence of a relatively stable, though largely unknowable self, postmodernist works regard the self "as a construct and a fiction" (Palmer, "Ontologies" 275). As a consequence, postmodernist representations of fictional minds often do not correspond to common ideas on what comprises the human mind.

Nonetheless, *Gantenbein* radically breaks the realistic illusion; the novel's incompatible story-lines, its revocation of a traditional plot, the absence of its characters' own identity, its strong emphasis on the interplay between fact and fiction, and the ontological ambiguity of some of the episodes it contains (it cannot be said with certainty whether they are fictionally real, only imagined, or to be read metaphorically) can also be regarded as postmodern features.[405] As McHale claims, "When ontological doubt, uncertainty about what is (fictively) real and what fantastic, insinuates itself into a modernist text, we might well prefer to consider this the leading edge of a new mode of fiction, an anticipation of postmodernism" (*Constructing* 65). *Gantenbein*'s anticipation of postmodernism supports the assumption that its representation of reality is not completely dissimilar from *Unconsoled*, despite considerable differences between the two novels.

Another feature *Gantenbein* and *Unconsoled* share is the manner in which they employ some characters. Most of the characters in *Gantenbein* and their actions function as different possibilities of the narrator's life, possibilities compatible with his personality. They also feature as the protagonists of individual stories, but they cannot be considered independent characters as their stories form a thread in which certain elements contradict each other: the stories and threads only gain significance when read in the broader context of the novel, that is, as part of the depiction of the narrator's personality traits.

In *Unconsoled*, Boris, Stephan, Brodsky, and some other figures play a double role as characters in the story and as embodiments of the narrator's psyche.

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404 This is also true of the unnatural parts of *Orphans*.

405 Cf. Fludernik, who draws attention to the fact that anti-illusionist techniques do not necessarily involve postmodernist practice but that "[p]ostmodernist techniques [...] acquire their specificity through concentration and combination, through radicalization of current anti-illusionist techniques, and on account of the ideological commitments which they display" (*Towards* 272–73).

Similarly to *Gantenbein*, their actions mostly acquire their meaning through the narrator—as a materialization of his past or feared future, or as a symbolic representation of some features of his life or state of mind. In *Orphans* the use of the figure of Morgan bears resemblance to the way *Unconsoled* employs characters. In *Pale* the character of Sachiko is used as a means of displaying the narrator's past and present, too. However, here it is the narrator who disguises her own story in Sachiko's tale in a fully verisimilar manner—in contrast to *Unconsoled*, where the characters and their significance are a part of the environment that surrounds Ryder.[406] Furthermore, it remains an open question to what degree Sachiko is fictionally real and to what degree she is Etsuko's invention.

Gantenbein can be further related to Ishiguro's novels in terms of how the narrator's self-image influences the narration. The narrator's self-concept plays an important role in all the novels analysed in this book, but it is especially interesting here to compare *Gantenbein* and *Orphans*. As discussed earlier in this chapter, in *Gantenbein* Frisch puts into practice his view that one's self-concept brings about one's experiences, the situations in which one ends up. The narrator attempts to escape his pattern of experience by trying out different kinds of behaviour in various stories revolving around the projected characters. At times he manipulates the plot of the stories, but in vain: illustrating the idea that one's pattern of experience cannot be changed without a (difficult) transformation of one's self-concept, the narrator always ends up doing similar things that are typical of him. His self-image forces him to develop his stories differently than he intends.

In the nonverisimilar elements of *Orphans*, Banks's view of himself as the world's saviour—a consequence of his denial of his helplessness with regard to the disappearance of his parents—influences not only what he narrates but also what he experiences. As if demonstrating Frisch's ideas in an exaggerated way, Banks's self-image materializes in the fictional world: he really does become a detective who is expected to save the world. Therefore, although *Orphans* shows the workings of a traumatized mind, the connection to *Gantenbein* indicates that the protagonist's psychological situation might be more universal.

The portrayal of an individual whose specific situation turns out to mirror a more general human condition is, after all, one of the features that all the analysed novels share.

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406 Cf. Melikoğlu: "From a technical point of view, *The Unconsoled* can be thought of as a more elaborate version of *A Pale View of Hills*, particularly with regard to the use of doubles" (n. pag.).

Conclusion

By way of conclusion, I will highlight an aspect that all the novels examined in this book share: the narrators' efforts to transform their selves. The topic of the invented nature of one's identity, which is treated explicitly in Frisch's works, appears in Ishiguro's fiction as well, albeit in a less direct manner. The process of self-invention is represented either by the narrators' telling their self-narratives or by enacting such self-narratives and subjective world-view. These narrative methods result in unreliable or unnatural narratives, which stimulate different reading strategies.

Recreating Identities by Unreliable Narration and "Unreliable Living"

The analyses of Ishiguro's novels in part 2 show that the key to each narrator's present state of mind lies in the past: although only the narrators of the first three novels are engaged in remembering the remote past in most of their narration, all of them are consciously or unconsciously concerned with their past. All the narrators deceive themselves about their self-narratives: their past contains something that they do not wish to acknowledge.

Ono in *Artist* retells his life as a painter, focusing especially on his achievements and incidents that are supposed to provide evidence of his leadership abilities, in an attempt to mask the triviality of his professional life. Nevertheless, Ono becomes the butt of the text's irony, for his narration reveals exactly what he wishes to hide. Ono only partly succeeds at bending the facts: he manages to trick himself but not the reader. However, the novel puts limits on the reader's superiority over the narrator: while in traditional unreliable narration we can rely on the narrator's reporting for fictional facts and then measure the degree of the narrator's interpretative unreliability against these facts, *Artist* leaves us with no way of judging the extent of both factual and interpretative unreliability. What remains certain is the narrator's struggle to create through his narration such a self-image that he can come to terms with. The story of this struggle proves more significant to the novel than the actual story of Ono's life.

While Ono is re*telling* his life, Ryder in *Unconsoled* seems more to be re*living* his life. Instead of recounting his memories, he encounters objects and people that stand for some events of his past, especially those of his childhood. However, nothing is clear: whereas in *Artist* the reader is able to piece together a relatively consistent picture of the narrator's life and only stays in doubt about a few specific facts, in *Unconsoled* the facts of the narrator's life are as enigmatic as

the whole fictional world of the novel. The reader scrapes together some information about Ryder through unveiling meanings adumbrated by symbols and metaphors, and reveals that Ryder has not been able to overcome something that happened in his family during his childhood. But Ryder does not acknowledge that this trauma motivates his way of life, nor does he admit to his lack of control and his irresponsible attitude. Typical of Ishiguro's narrators, Ryder sees himself in a more favourable light than he is portrayed by the text. However, not only Ryder's version but the entire fictional world has to be taken with a pinch of salt: Ryder's consciousness spills into the fictional reality. There is no stable version of the story to contradict his distorted perspective within the fictional world.

Banks relates very recent events in a large part of *Orphans*, but his central trouble originates in his childhood, too. Like Ryder, he does not admit the importance of his youthful tragedy and regards his endeavours as a public duty rather than a private matter. Like Ono, Banks manipulates his memories in order to create a self-image devoid of some of its inconvenient aspects. But Banks also resembles Ryder in the sense that his wishes start to materialize. He does not only retell the problematic events of his life; as his narration progresses, the fictional world enables him to relive these events as he would like them to be. Yet in contrast to Ryder, he is confronted with (fictional) reality in the end. Thus, *Orphans* can still be read as unreliable narration: Banks manages to bend narrative facts in some parts of the novel, but the whole structure insists on a different version of his self-narrative.

The secret of Ishiguro's narrators hence lies in the past, for the narrators' identity emerges from it—conveyed either through their memories or staged by means of metaphors. On the surface they are primarily concerned with what has happened or what is happening, but a closer look at their aims reveals that what matters most is their self-concept.

In Frisch's novels, analysed in part 3, the narrators' concern with their identity is more explicit: their narratives revolve around the question of who they are.

At the beginning of *Faber*, the narrator seems to know exactly who he is. He has designed a self-image that he uses as a protective shield against aspects of life that he wishes to keep at bay. Also, his self-image supports his conviction that the recent developments in his life have resulted from coincidence and not from his decisions guided by his unconscious desires. However, precisely the events he relates hint at an alternative version of his self-narrative: his unconscious wish to escape his inauthentic identity and to live differently stimulates some of the events he recounts. The narrator's account is hence contradicted by fictional reality with regard to two related issues: his self-concept and his role in the reported episodes. While the development of the narrator's opinions on the

former gradually closes the gap between his version and the fictional reality, he remains fully unreliable with respect to the latter. Faber's denial of his unconscious motivation shows that even though he has been partly released from his self-deception about his identity, he still ignores some aspects of his personality. His disregard of the unconscious motives of his behaviour also allows him to justify his behaviour by attributing all the developments to coincidence. When Ishiguro's novels are compared with *Faber*, one similarity stands out: Ishiguro's narrators also invent some personality traits that are supposed to justify their lives.

While Faber tries to convince himself and the reader about who he is, Stiller/White in *Stiller* strives to prove who he is not: he is not the person others see in him. His insistence on physically not being Stiller is contradicted by fictional reality: his biographical identity as Stiller is obvious. This discrepancy might appear to be a signal of narrative unreliability. Yet the narrator clearly does not try to deceive the reader or himself in this matter; rather, his claim serves as a means for conveying his inner reality to the people around him. However, it gradually transpires that Stiller/White deceives himself about his real self: his new identity is an invention that he hopes will substitute an old self he wishes to discard. By refusing to subsume his past into his new self-concept and by failing to cut himself off from people from his past, he subverts his own efforts to achieve a genuine transformation of self. He tries to bend facts by inventing a new identity—but like Banks, he does not succeed and is condemned to being what he does not want to be. In comparison with *Stiller*, the inventedness of Ishiguro's narrators' identities comes to the fore: what they in their narration promote as their identity is actually their self-ideal.

The most thorough depiction of the invented nature of identity occurs in *Gantenbein*. The narrator has a whole fictional world of characters at his disposal to stage his self. He directs the characters so that they reflect his experience, but he also tries to live a different life through them. Yet the narrative betrays that he does not have full control over the developments in the fictional world. The plot can only develop in certain ways, just as the events of the narrator's life will always be variations on his pattern of experience. As it is the narrator himself who fabricates the stories and thus the possibilities of his life, his own inventions also constitute the limits of his existence. This situation communicates the idea that once one has constructed a self-concept, it is difficult to transcend its boundaries.

This idea expressed in *Gantenbein* throws new light on *Orphans*: the story of a person fighting against the consequences of his childhood trauma can be regarded in more general terms as the story of an individual trying to cope with his predispositions but failing to do so. Similar universal concerns addressed in each

novel contribute to the way the works compel their readers to put themselves in the shoes of the narrating characters.

Eliciting Readers' Empathy with the Narrators

In parts 2 and 3, I occasionally refer to Phelan's category of bonding unreliability. Bonding unreliability is related to, among others, the reader's evaluation of the narrator as a character and the development of the narrator's unreliability towards a greater degree of reliability. As discussed in section 3.1.1, the narrator's progress towards reliability plays an important part in *Remains* and in *Faber*. In both novels this progress is accompanied by a gradual increase in the reader's knowledge about the fictional world as well as by the reader's growing approval of the narrator: the reader "moves toward [the narrator] not only ethically but also affectively" (Phelan, "Estranging" 225).[407] Put differently, the reader not only starts to trust Stevens and Faber more as narrators but also finds them more likable as characters. This development results from the characterization of the narrating characters through unreliable narration: while in the earlier stages of their narration they are portrayed as escaping emotionally engaging aspects of their lives through self-deception, at the end they have become more sincere with themselves. The diminishing ironic exposure of the narrators' weaknesses encourages the reader to appreciate the narrators' increasing courage to face some parts of their lives. But even in novels in which this bonding through partial progress towards reliability is not that pronounced, that is, in *Artist*, *Pale*, *Orphans*, and *Stiller*, the text finds ways to invite the reader to empathize with the narrator.

Ishiguro's novels with unreliable narrators mostly elicit empathy through the allegorical significance of the narrating characters' situation: in some respects these characters share the same fate as many people. I have argued that Ono's situation in *Artist* metaphorically represents the difficulties of an individual living in a "floating world," where social reality is in flux. Like Ono, we too may have problems recognizing the border between good and bad as it can rapidly shift: what counts as right today might be wrong tomorrow. Stevens in *Remains* also falls victim to his failure to foresee the future. Ishiguro comments on the broader meaning of Stevens's narrow perspective:

> Most of us are like butlers because we have these small, little tasks that we learn to do, but most of us don't attempt to run the world. We just learn a job and try to do it to the best of our ability. We get our pride from that, and then we offer up a little contribution to somebody up there, to an organization, or a cause, or a country. We would like to tell ourselves

407 Phelan even uses *Remains* as an example of this kind of bonding unreliability.

> that this larger thing that we're contributing toward is something good and not something bad, and that's how we draw a lot of our dignity. Often we just don't know enough about what's going on there, and I felt that's what we're like. We're like butlers. ("Stuck" 32)

Similarly to Stevens, whose world mostly consists of the mansion he works in, we are limited in our perspectives by the time and milieu we live in.

This metaphor can be extended to *Artist* in that Ono also resembles a butler in the sense that he wants to contribute to a good cause but does not understand the broader context of his endeavours. Etsuko in *Pale* also fails to foresee the consequences of her actions (especially of her departure from Japan, which played a significant role in her daughter's depression and consequent suicide). The butler metaphor explains why the reader can to a certain degree identify with the unreliable narrators of Ishiguro's fiction despite the fact that the narrators are the target of the text's irony: these novels remind their readers of the limits of their own perspective and thus render them more sympathetic towards the narrators. Encouraging readers to relate the story to their own lives reinforces the bonding effect of the narrators' partial progress towards reliability.

Frisch's novels employing unreliable narration elicit the reader's empathy with the narrator mainly by contrasting him either with another character or with a different version of the narrator himself. In *Faber* this comparison takes the form of the aforementioned partial progress towards reliability: the narrator in the "Second Stop" is depicted as a much more likable version of the same person in the "First Stop." Nevertheless, this effect is diminished by the narrator's persevering unreliability regarding his denial of having an unconscious motivation for the chain of events that led to his daughter's death. The novel thus leaves the reader with ambivalent feelings towards the narrator: although sympathizing with Faber's transformation, the reader is estranged by Faber's unwillingness to accept responsibility for his decisions.

In *Stiller* the narrator is portrayed as preferable to the other characters, who live in unquestioning unison with their social role and hide from authentic experiences and feelings as Faber did before his change. As in most works by Frisch, the characters conscious of their self-alienation and desperate for a more sincere existence are shown in a favourable light and win the reader's understanding. In *Stiller* the narrator's ironic depiction of the absence of any self-reflection, intensity, or excitement in the lives of conventional Swiss citizens augments the bonding effect. The unreliability of the narrators in *Faber* and *Stiller* does not merely expose each narrator's weaknesses; it emphasizes the difficulty of struggling for authenticity in general—due to both discouraging external circumstances and the protective mechanisms of one's own mind. Consequently, the reader can identify with the unreliable narrator and his efforts.

Narratives employing unnatural elements present a somewhat different scenario. The unnaturalness of *Unconsoled* and *Gantenbein* estranges readers to such an extent that they cannot identify with the narrators at the level of the plot. The novels, by highlighting their own fictionality, discourage readers from relocating into the fictional world and immersing themselves in the story. Ishiguro continues his symbolic rendering of aspects of the human condition started in his first three novels: the fictional world of *Unconsoled* can be read as a metaphor of the postmodern epistemological crisis. Like Ryder, we are not always able or ready to distinguish the apparent from the real. Despite this analogy, however, the novel's consistent breaking of the realistic illusion prevents the reader from feeling affection for Ryder as a character: not only do time and space operate differently in this novel than in the reader's actual world but Ryder also has some cognitive abilities impossible in flesh-and-blood human beings. Furthermore, as fictional reality keeps bending at least partly according to his wishes, he never learns anything from his own mistakes and his self-deception is as strong at the end as it was at the beginning.

When reading Frisch's *Gantenbein*, the reader is prevented from empathizing with the "I" of the text: the "I" is obviously not a person in the real-world sense because it appears in the role of several characters at once while not being identical to any one of them. Identifying with the main characters (Enderlin, Gantenbein, and Svoboda) might be possible on the level of the individual stories but is impossible on the level of the work as a whole because the novel does not enable the reader to reconstruct consistent story-lines. However, following the metanarrative comments in the book and piecing together the narrator's pattern of experience from the stories, the reader recognizes that the stories relate to a particular human being. In addition, several inserted stories about other characters encourage the reader to view the narrator's futile attempts to change his life as symptomatic not only of his nature but of the human condition in general. Therefore, in contrast to *Unconsoled*, *Gantenbein*'s unnatural elements can be incorporated into a more familiar frame, which allows the reader to bond with the narrator.

Orphans elicits the reader's empathy for the narrator through the metaphorical meaning of Banks's situation: Banks's status of orphan symbolizes the sometimes problematic transition from the easy life of childhood to the struggles of adulthood. Moreover, the novel reflects Ishiguro's ideas about creative writing: "It's a kind of consolation that the world isn't quite the way you wanted it but you can somehow reorder it or try and come to terms with it by actually creating your own world and own version of it" ("Stuck" 31). Banks resembles writers

who transfer themselves into their own versions of the world. This novel's unnatural elements make it less likely for the reader to identify with the narrator in some parts, especially in the *Shanghai* section: when read literally, Banks's illogical and improbable actions and convictions will estrange most readers. However, when these elements are read metaphorically—as Banks's reliving of a traumatic experience and his wish to change the outcome of this event—and are then incorporated into the frame of unreliable narration of the whole novel, they boost the reader's empathy with the narrator. By showing Banks's desperate attempt to change what he had no chance of influencing as a child, the text highlights Banks's position as a victim rather than his insincerity towards himself. In *Orphans*, therefore, the unnatural elements do not prevent the reader from empathizing with the narrator: they enhance the process. Despite the example of *Unconsoled*, the use of unnatural narration does not automatically entail the impossibility of the reader's bonding with the narrator.

As I have demonstrated, the use of unreliable narration and related techniques often has a profound significance for the interpretation of works as a whole. The last issue that I wish to discuss in this book is the question of the reading strategies that are prompted by unreliable and unnatural narratives.

Unreliable narration encourages the reader to try to find out what happened on the level of the fictional world. The manifest version of the story is complemented by an implicit version that the reader looks for. Combining explicit and implicit information, the reader attempts to reconstruct the fictional reality of the given work. Despite having access to just the narrator's account, the reader tries to piece together a more accurate and more complete picture of what happened than the narrator openly discloses. The reader thus has to unravel veiled meanings and discover unuttered implications. This kind of detective work encourages the reader to mentally relocate herself into the fictional world of the novel. Still, this relocation does not entail passive engrossment in the story, for this narrative technique requires the reader's active cooperation in reconstructing the fictional world.

In narratives that employ unnatural elements to portray the narrator's fact-bending, the main focus of the reader's interpretative activity is not on reconstructing the fictional reality but on figuring out why the fictional world defies the rules and logic of the extratextual world. The secret the reader is looking for exists not in the story but in the narrator's mind. This kind of narrative hinders the reader's mental relocation into the fictional world and brings about the estrangement of the familiar: encountering characters that bear many human features in physically and logically impossible situations challenges the reader's view of reality and of what is possible. Like unreliable narration, narration by a

world-constructing unnatural narrator stimulates the reader to do much more than lie back and enjoy a simple story.

The presented findings about the effect unreliability and unnaturalness exert on the reader could also inspire research into fictionality in factual narratives, which is currently a topical subject in narratology. Examining different types of texts—from autobiographies through advertisements and promotional narratives to social network statuses—as to whether and in what ways they employ techniques similar to unreliable and unnatural narration could potentially yield fascinating results. It would also be interesting to see how the use of such techniques in genres traditionally regarded as nonfiction influences the recipient's affective responses or the persuasive power of the discourse. I hope future research into these and other questions can draw at least a little bit of inspiration and insight from the present book.

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Since the late 1990s unreliable narration has garnered popularity in narrative theory and has sparked a lively debate among scholars. This book traces the theoretical discussions surrounding narrative unreliability and examines the relationship of unreliable narration to antimimetic techniques of portraying self-deception. Standing on the border between classical and postclassical narratology, the study analyses Kazuo Ishiguro's and Max Frisch's innovative narrative strategies, offering new perspectives on their oeuvre and on unreliable narration as a narratological concept. A comparison of the methods Ishiguro and Frisch employ to explore the psychology of their narrators reveals a fascinating parallel in their development as novelists.

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