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Unnatural Narratives, Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models

In recent years, the study of unnatural narrative has developed into one of the most exciting new paradigms in narrative theory. Both younger and more established scholars have become increasingly interested in the analysis of unnatural texts, many of which have been consistently neglected or marginalized in existing narratological frameworks.¹ By means of the collaboration of four scholars who

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have been developing unnatural narratology, this article seeks to summarize key principles, to consolidate some conclusions, to extend the work through carefully chosen examples, and, finally, to point toward the future.

More specifically, in a first step, the essay seeks to clarify what the term “unnatural” denotes and how unnatural narratology differs from both classical structuralist and standard cognitive narrative theory. Second, it presents four analyses of textual examples to demonstrate the possible consequences of working within the framework of unnatural narratology. To examine unnatural storyworlds, we explore first the nature of physically impossible worlds through the example of the reverse temporality of Alejo Carpentier’s “Journey Back to the Source,” and go on to examine a logically impossible world in Robert Coover’s “The Babysitter.” We next take up the question of unnatural minds by looking at Knut Hamsun’s novel *Hunger*, while Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” serves as an example of unnatural acts of narration. Finally, the article illustrates how the investigation of unnaturalness in narrative may shed new light on the workings of narrative in general and explicates some of the unresolved problems and open questions raised by an unnatural approach.

NARRATIVE AND THE UNNATURAL

Most definitions of the term “narrative” have a clear mimetic² bias and take ordinary realist texts or “natural” narratives as being prototypical manifestations of narrative.³ That is to say, they focus far too extensively on the idea that narratives are modeled on the actual world and consequently ignore the many interesting elements of narrative which James Phelan has termed synthetic.⁴ Similarly, all handbooks and surveys of narrative theory contain a section on narrative temporality; however, the vast majority of these emphasize mimetic and “natural” examples and practices as they restate the model of Gérard Genette and his categories of order, duration, and frequency. Very few theorize or even mention the various impossible temporalities of experimental fiction, medieval dream visions, playful Renaissance texts, science fiction, or postmodernism.

We agree with other narratologists that in many narratives, the projected storyworld (i.e., the temporal and spatial coordinates), the characters in it, and the narrative act that produces the narrative closely correlate with real-world scripts or schemata. Many narratives focus on a human or human-like being, be it a fully-fledged person or merely a voice, and they inform us about one or several minds experiencing change over time in a real-world-like setting. What we want to highlight by means of the notion of the unnatural is the fact that narratives are also full of unnatural elements. Many narratives defy, flaunt, mock, play, and experiment with some (or all) of these core assumptions about narrative. More specifically, they may radically deconstruct the anthropomorphic narrator, the traditional human character, and the minds associated with them, or they may move beyond real-world notions of time and space, thus taking us to the most remote territories of conceptual possibilities.

Brian Richardson, for example, defines unnatural narratives as anti-mimetic texts that violate the parameters of traditional realism (“Beyond Story”) or move beyond the conventions of natural narrative, i.e., forms of spontaneous oral storytelling (*Unnatural Voices*). Virginia Woolf’s novel *Orlando* is an example of the former because it deconstructs mimetic notions of time. More specifically, this narrative confronts us with what Richardson calls a “differential” temporality: “the eponymous hero ages at a different rate than the people that surround him (her), as one chronology is superimposed on another, larger one” (“Beyond Story” 50). Stanislaw Lem’s *The Cyberiad* is an example of the latter in so far as it transcends “the mimesis of actual speech situations” (*Unnatural Voices* 5). The narrator of this novel is not a human being but a machine. Richardson argues that “if a narrative is, as commonly averred, someone relating a set of events to someone else, then this entire way of looking at narrative has to be reconsidered in the light of the numerous ways innovative authors problematize each term of his formula, especially the first one” (5).

What unites our work in this article is the intention to accentuate two features of narrative: (1) the ways in which strange and innovative narratives challenge mimetic understandings of narrative and (2) the consequences that the existence of such narratives may have for the general conception of what a narrative is and what it can do.

THE AIMS OF UNNATURAL NARRATOLOGY

The study of unnatural narrative is directed against what one might call “mimetic reductionism,” that is, the argument that each and every aspect of narrative can be explained on the basis of our real-world knowledge and resulting cognitive parameters. David Herman, for instance, argues that “a core set of cognitive principles and parameters supports comprehension” of all narratives (*Story Logic* 417 n27). However, as Maria Mäkelä has shown in “Possible Minds: Constructing—and Reading—Another Consciousness as Fiction,” we lose sight of the specific features and forms of narratives when we take natural narratives as models for *all* narratives, and assume that fictional minds are identical with those of real people. Likewise, to assume that all stories are situated within a communicative context comparable to real-life narrative situations (Herman, *Basic Elements*) may lead to a neglect of the specific possibilities of unnatural narratives.

Scholars working within the tradition of unnatural narrative argue that narratives are interesting precisely because they can depict situations and events that move beyond, extend, or challenge our knowledge of the world. According to Jan Alber, narratives “do not only mimetically reproduce the world as we know it. Many narratives confront us with bizarre storyworlds which are governed by principles that have very little to do with the real world around us” (“Impossible Storyworlds” 79). While the projected worlds may resemble the actual world we live in, they obviously do not have to: they can also confront us with physically or logically impossible scenarios or events (80). For instance, the narrator may be human or

human-like but he, she, or it can also be an animal, an inanimate object, a machine, a corpse, a sperm, an omniscient first-person narrator, or otherwise impossible (Nielsen, “The Impersonal Voice”; Heinze). Similarly, characters can do many things that would simply be impossible in the real world. For example, they may metamorphize into somebody else, or they can torture their author because they consider him to be a bad writer. It is also worth noting that fictional narratives can radically deconstruct our real-world notions of time and space. Generally speaking, the study of unnatural narrative seeks to describe the ways in which projected storyworlds deviate from real-world frames, and, in a second step, it then tries to interpret these “deviations.”⁵

In the following sections we shall deal with these three distinct—but often intimately connected—aspects of unnaturalness in narratives in greater detail. More specifically, we will first look at unnatural storyworlds, then discuss unnatural minds, and, finally, move on to unnatural acts of narration.

UNNATURAL STORYWORLDS

The term “storyworld” denotes “the surrounding context or environment” which embeds “existents, their attributes, and the actions and events in which they are involved” (Herman, “Storyworld” 570). Storyworlds thus closely correlate with the evocation of time and space, i.e., temporal and spatial parameters. An unnatural storyworld contains physical or logical impossibilities that concern the represented world’s temporal or spatial organization.⁶

A physically impossible storyworld can create unnatural situations that challenge our thinking about basic narratological concepts, as can be seen in narratives that move backward in time. There are two types of antichronological narrative: the first kind, which includes works like Elizabeth Howard’s *The Long View*, Julia Alvarez’s *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents*, or Harold Pinter’s *Betrayal*, have a stable storyworld and fit readily within a mimetic framework. Other antichronological narratives that contain physically impossible sequences present more recalcitrant problems for conventional narratology. Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow* is a narrative with what Richardson has called “antinomic temporality” (“Beyond Story” 49–50). In it, eating a meal is described in the following terms: “you select a soiled dish, collect some scraps from the garbage, and settle down for a short while. Various items get gulped up into my mouth, and after skillful massage with my tongue and teeth I transfer them to the plate for additional sculpture with knife and spoon and fork” (Amis 15). Time itself moves backwards; we are clearly in the realm of the physically impossible.

The central portion of Alejo Carpentier’s “Journey Back to the Source,” like Amis’ novel and Ilse Aichinger’s “Spiegelgeschichte,” is in some sense a doubly linear story that simultaneously moves backward and forward in time (2–12). In a mimetic text, the narrator tells the story retrospectively (i.e., in the past tense), as the audience’s reception of the story is prospective; the interested reader wants to learn what has already happened and moves ever closer to the time of the narrating.

In antinomic narration, the characters and the narrated events move ever further away from the time of the narrating, while the reader is still moving prospectively, though time's arrow is reversed. Carpentier's protagonist, that is, goes from his deathbed forward in time to his infancy, leaving behind that which has already occurred, as it were. Thus, when Marcial, the protagonist, suffers a heart attack, the text reads: "Suddenly, Don Marcial found himself thrown into the middle of the room. Relieved of the pressure on his temples, he stood up with surprising agility" (223).

Antinomic narratives can be readily identified by asking, what happened the previous day? We get different answers depending on how we process the text. Though the story moves steadily into the past, the text can only be comprehended by a reader who is constantly aware of its reversal of the normal flow of time. Carpentier's story also includes narratological humor as it depicts a realistic scene that obliquely comments on the reverse narration. Just before (after?) Marcial signs the papers that will force him to relinquish his house, "he thought how mysterious were written words, weaving and unweaving . . . contracts, oaths, agreements, evidence, declarations, names, titles, dates, lands, trees, and stones" (223–24). Carpentier's narrative technique thus becomes an allegory for the construction and destruction of human endeavors and achievements as it details the way that writing can literally undo the work of time.

Later on, the narrator playfully notes a psychologically plausible analogue of the antinomic narration that contains it: "One night . . . Marcial had the strange sensation that all the clocks in the house were striking five, then half past four, then four, then half past three . . . [Carpentier's ellipses] It was as if he had become aware of other possibilities. . . . It was only a fleeting impression, and did not leave the smallest trace on his mind" (225). As the narrative concludes, the chronology speeds up; the resulting descriptions are still more unusual: as Marcial moves into childhood, "the furniture was growing taller. It was becoming more difficult for him to rest his arms on the dining table" (228). In these depictions of continuous action, causality also appears to be going in reverse. Such a teleology challenges Marie-Laure Ryan's claim in her discussion of antinomic narratives that "when chronological order is inverted, [causal] relations are destroyed" ("Temporal Paradoxes" 149). Finally, nature itself is inverted: "Birds returned to their eggs in a whirlwind of feathers. Fish congealed into roe. . . . The palm trees folded their fronds and disappeared into the earth" (Carpentier 232). Interestingly, moving backward through time does not eliminate death: annihilation awaits at either end of the temporal spectrum.

In what follows, we would like to move on to logically impossible storyworlds and discuss Robert Coover's "The Babysitter," a short story which depicts numerous irreconcilable event sequences. In this narrative, Dolly and Harry Tucker go to a Saturday evening party, and a babysitter comes to watch their three children, Jimmy, Bitsy, and a small baby (206). Nearby, the babysitter's boyfriend Jack and his friend Mark shoot pinball and discuss the question of how to take advantage of the babysitter (208). The short story then fragments into a circus of possibilities and develops multiple, mutually incompatible plotlines out of this common situation. In one of these 107 scenarios, Jack and Mark phone the babysitter but she does not

allow them to visit her (217); in a second version, they visit and seduce her (216); in a third scenario, they begin to seduce the babysitter but are interrupted by Mr. Tucker (222); in a fourth version, Mr. Tucker sneaks home from the party to have sex with the babysitter (218), whereas in a fifth scenario, the two of them are interrupted by Jack (230); in a sixth version, Jack and Mark try to rape the babysitter (225), while in a seventh scenario, the rape is interrupted by Jimmy (231). And so on, and so forth. The story closes with a number of alternative endings in which, variously, the babysitter is raped and murdered (237), she accidentally drowns the baby (237), the Tuckers return from the party to find all is well (238–39), or Mrs. Tucker learns that all of her children are murdered, her husband is gone, a corpse is in her bathtub, and the house is wrecked (239).⁷

How can we make sense of this logically impossible chaos? In this section, we would like to suggest that one way of dealing with unnatural narratives is to try to approach the unnatural on the basis of pre-existing cognitive parameters. Monika Fludernik argues that when narratives resist easy naturalization on the basis of real-world parameters, “we stop short and start to take the non-natural make-up seriously” (“Natural Narratology” 256). Indeed, one way of responding to the interpretive challenges of unnatural narratives is to create new cognitive parameters by reshuffling and/or recombining existing frames and script (Alber, “Impossible Storyworlds” 80–84; “Unnatural Narratives”).

At the beginning of “The Babysitter,” we are still in a position to discriminate between sections that are, or at least seem to be, real, and sections that appear to be dreams, wishes, fantasies, films, or television shows. However, as the narrative progresses, this distinction becomes increasingly unstable because the various fantasies and film sequences begin to intermingle with reality and with each other as well. Thomas E. Kennedy argues that “the reality here is everything, the sum total of it all—that which happens, that which is only imagined, that which is watched, wished for, dreamed, planned, enacted, felt, and thought” (64). Since the real and the imagined have the same ontological status, Tom Petitjean’s suggestion to discriminate between an actual event sequence (namely “those sections of the story that refer to a specific time given in figures rather than words”) and various non-actualized possibilities does not do justice to the text (50).

In contrast to Petitjean, we accept the text’s unnaturalness by engaging in a process of frame enrichment to conceptualize an impossible scenario in which internal processes such as dreams, wishes, and fantasies become as real as external reality. And in a second step, we can then speculate about the purpose or “point” of this unnatural scenario. We would like to suggest that “The Babysitter” uses mutually incompatible storylines to make us aware of suppressed possibilities and allows us to choose the ones that we prefer for whatever reason. Similarly, Marie-Laure Ryan explains this short story on the basis of her “do it yourself” strategy and argues that “the contradictory passages in the text are offered to readers as material for creating their own stories” (“From Parallel Universes” 671). Coover’s short story turns the real into a zone of potentiality, thus refusing reduction to any simplistic account of the way things are. The text attends to the possibility of breaking out of the routines of our daily lives and urges us to think about the ways things

could have been (even if the projected scenarios imply rape, violence, or death). In the words of Richard Andersen, “The Babysitter” highlights “the importance of variety as a means of combating man’s tendency to reduce life and fiction to simple terms that he can understand but which inevitably fail him because of their limited perspective” (100).

Similarly, Ryan sees “The Babysitter” as “a construction kit that inspires free play with its elements” (“From Parallel Universes” 671). This reading strategy might also help us to make sense of other narratives that project logically impossible scenarios. Robert Coover’s short story “The Elevator,” for example, confronts us with fourteen (at least partially) mutually exclusive scenarios that describe different elevator trips of Martin, the central protagonist. Kennedy comments on “The Elevator” as follows: “Martin’s story, the story of the elevator, is a conglomerate of the comprehensive range of ideas, emotions, and possibilities embodied in everyone, the flow of contradictions that in traditional fiction is unacceptably confusing and anti-illusionary but here serves to make the fiction more complete and complex” (49).

In 1699, the German philosopher Leibniz imposed a restriction on possible worlds by arguing that “possible things are those which do not imply a contradiction” (513). This statement has clearly influenced the ways in which people think about alternative possible worlds today. According to Marie-Laure Ryan, the most common view in possible-worlds theory associates possibility with logical laws: “every world that respects the principles of non-contradiction and the excluded middle is a PW” (“Possible-Worlds Theory” 446). From this perspective, worlds that include or imply contradictions are unthinkable or empty. Umberto Eco, for example, argues that we can draw nothing but “the pleasure of our logical and perceptual defeat” from logically impossible worlds (76–77). But there is another perspective. Ruth Ronen points out that “impossibilities, in the logical sense, have become a central poetic device, which shows that contradictions in themselves do not collapse the coherence of a fictional world” (55). Like Ruth Ronen, we do not see logical impossibilities as violations of possible-worlds semantics. Rather, we view them as “a new domain for exercising . . . creative powers” that we as readers are invited to make sense of (Ronen 57). Interestingly, in 1998, the philosopher Graham Priest published an article in which he posed the following question: what is so bad about logical contradictions? The rather surprising answer of this philosopher is, “maybe nothing.” For him, “there is nothing wrong with believing some contradictions” (426, 410).⁸ Not surprisingly, we would wholeheartedly agree with this statement. Narratives frequently confront us with logically (or physically) impossible storyworlds, and we would like to suggest addressing their potential meanings, instead of shying away from them.

UNNATURAL MINDS

It is only fairly recently that the idea of the experiencing mind as a necessary or even sufficient condition for narrative has emerged. During the past decade we have seen an influx of new approaches to speaking about what David Herman calls

“the nexus of narrative and mind” (*Basic Elements* 137), mainly but not exclusively tied to the rise of the cognitive sciences and especially to what is known as Theory of Mind (ToM).⁹ The basic premise of these approaches is the idea that mind-reading is an everyday activity. According to ToM, we are able to understand other people because we construct their minds on the basis of our own.

While combinations of this idea with narratology have produced numerous important insights, we would argue that by imposing theories drawn from our knowledge of real-world minds on represented minds, we risk losing sight of some of the fundamental characteristics of narratives: that they may operate according to different logics—in the case of fiction, for instance, by exploiting their non-referentiality—in such a way as to generate instances of what Stefan Iversen calls “unnatural minds” (“In Flaming Flames”). Unnatural minds appear in many different narratives. The reader is typically cued to evoke a mind, but this process is obstructed, disfigured or in other ways challenged by identifiable and describable features of the narrative.¹⁰ Unnatural minds may appear on the level of the story (in the shape of a character), on the level of the narrative discourse (in the case of a heterodiegetic narrator), or both (in the case of a homodiegetic narrator).

The differences between the rather diverse forms of unnatural minds may be sketched out as a continuum ranging from well-known and thus conventionalized cases of unnatural minds to the most bizarre and opaque cases found in experimental fiction. In between these extremes, we find a wide range of narratives that clearly facilitates the reader’s inference of a mind while at the same time either imbuing this mind with abilities that transgress those of human minds or deconstructing one or more of the key elements of a working human mind.¹¹

Examples are abundant. Near the pole of the conventionalized we find phenomena such as “omniscient” narrators (what Genette calls heterodiegetic narration with zero focalization) or the reflector-mode narratives of literary modernism (what Genette calls heterodiegetic narration with internal focalization). Interestingly, with regard to such cases, Dorrit Cohn speaks of the “unnatural power” of third-person narrators “to see into their characters’ inner lives” (106; our emphasis). Moving towards the other end of the continuum, one finds the unnatural minds of “omniscient” (or telepathic) first-person narrators (what Genette calls homodiegetic narration with zero focalization). Examples are Herman Melville’s *Moby-Dick*, Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*, and Rick Moody’s “The Grid.” Also, one could mention the impossibly eloquent child in John Hawkes’s *Virginie: Her Two Lives* or object narrators (as in Thomas Bridges’s *The Adventures of a Bank-note*). Another much discussed example is Martin Amis’s *Time’s Arrow* where the mind of the protagonist and teller Odilo Unverdorben generates unnatural narration. As far as unnatural minds of characters are concerned, one could mention Caryl Churchill’s play *Blue Kettle*, where the minds of the characters get “infected” by the words “blue” and “kettle,” and these two lexemes then gradually destroy the dialogue, and, finally, the play as a whole.

Even though such radical experiments provide obvious case studies we have chosen to focus on an unnatural mind in a less extreme, but still unnatural, narrative. Knut Hamsun’s *Hunger* is hailed as one of the most important forerunners of

modernism in Europe and typically read as an autodiegetic narrative, presenting the reader with an older (telling) and a younger (experiencing) version of the same protagonist. We would argue, however, that such a reading ignores some of the essential features of this specific narrative, features that are intimately linked to the ways in which the narrative simultaneously cues and disfigures the reader's reconstruction of a coherent human mind.

We will analyze two different versions of this text on the basis of a ToM-approach in order to illustrate the explanatory power of a mimetic approach and at the same time to illustrate some of its limitations when confronted with an unnatural narrative. Palmer describes the ToM approach as follows: "The work that we put into constructing other real minds prepares us as readers for the work of constructing fictional minds. Because fictional beings are necessarily incomplete, frames, scripts, and preference rules are required to supply the defaults that fill the gaps in the storyworld and provide presuppositions that enable the reader to construct *continually conscious* minds from the text. . . . The reader strategy is to join up the dots" (*Fictional Minds* 176; our emphasis). The central term in this passage is "continually conscious"—it refers to the "continuing-consciousness frame." This frame is what the reader uses in order to read a character's mind as what Palmer calls an "embedded narrative."¹²

The actual process of "joining up the dots"—of applying the continuing-consciousness frame and thereby reconstructing a mind on the basis of the cues provided by the narrative—utilizes three different but related dynamic cognitive tools. One tool has to do with the fact that the reader alternates between forming hypotheses of the doings and nature of the narrated mind and correcting these hypotheses as the narrative provides further details. Another tool lets the reader alternate between ascribing a past, a present, and a future to the narrated mind.¹³ The final tool closely correlates with the assumption that both narrated and real minds must be comprehended on the basis of alternations between steady states and dynamic changes.¹⁴

The following passage is the beginning of the so-called *Hunger* fragment, published anonymously in the Danish journal *Ny Jord* in 1888: "It was in those days when I wandered about hungry in Kristiania, that strange city which no one leaves before it has set its mark upon him. It was an evening two years ago during the spring. I had been sitting in one of the cemeteries working on an article for one of the papers. While I was struggling with this it got to be ten o'clock, darkness came on, and the gate was going to be closed. I was hungry, very hungry" (Hamsun, "Sult" 413). Read in isolation, the five sentences provide the reader with a vast amount of dots, waiting to be connected. The first sentence sets all three alternating processes in motion: from the past tense we infer a difference between the hungry experiencing self in Kristiania and the no-longer hungry narrating self as the teller of the story. From the cue "mark" we infer that the past has imprinted itself on the "narrating I," which presupposes a change between steady states and change. We might visualize the situation as the typical retrospective situation of a "narrating I" framing a "narrated I". The third, fourth, and fifth sentences present cues that enable the reader to reconstruct the "narrated I" as an isolated and desperate being ("cemeteries"), who wants to write but finds it hard to do so ("struggling"). Also,

the “I” appears to be hungry and without money, and on the basis of this information, we infer that he might be writing to be able to buy food. When combining these inferences with the ones from the first sentence, the reader stipulates that the poor, struggling writer among the dead in the dusk somehow makes it through his crises, since he is an earlier version of the mind telling the story and hence must have survived. The second sentence strongly emphasizes that the two “I”s are to be perceived as two instances of the same mind, separated by time and holding different epistemological privileges.

We will now turn our attention to the final version of this narrative, entitled *Hunger* and published in 1890. The beginning reads as follows:

It was in those days when I wandered about hungry in Kristiania, that strange city which no one leaves before it has set its mark upon him..... Lying awake in my attic room, I hear a clock strike six downstairs. It was fairly light already and people were beginning to walk up and down the stairs. Over by the door, where my room was papered with old issues of *Morgenbladet*, I could see, very clearly, a notice from the Director of Lighthouses, and just left of it a fat, swelling ad for freshly baked bread. (Hamsun, *Hunger* 3, translation revised)

What has changed? The first sentence sets up the same division between the narrated and the narrating self, and it calls for the reader to activate a double set of pasts, presents, and futures: a “narrating I” and a “narrated I,” both existing as parts of the same mind, a mind that in those days used to be hungry in Kristiania but is now somewhere else writing about his former hunger.

Leaving out the twenty-seven dots and moving on to the second sentence we notice the present tense: the “I” is “lying awake.” One way of explaining or naturalizing this shift from past to present tense would be to claim that the present tense of the second sentence is a historical present, aimed at actualizing the events at the time of the action, as in: the now of “lying” is not the now of narrating but rather the now of the narrated. Such an explanation, however, would find it difficult to account for the shift in the very next sentence back to past tense. Nothing in the action or reflection depicted seems to suggest or motivate this change, since the setting (or situation) remains the same. And, more importantly, such an explanation would not do justice to the many other temporal shifts of this kind taking place during the narrative. Another example reads: “On reaching the jail, I can see it’s past eleven, and I decide to drop in at the editor’s then and there. I stopped outside the door to the office to check if my pages were in the right order” (83). More elaborate variations can be found in the long scene where the protagonist invents the word “Kubooa” and discusses the possible meanings of this newly invented word: “I had made up my mind what the word shouldn’t mean, but had taken no decision on what it should mean. That is a minor question! I said aloud to myself, clutching my arm and repeating that is was a minor question. The word had been found, thank God, and that was the main thing. But my thoughts worry me ceaselessly and keep me from falling asleep; nothing seemed to me good enough for this rare word” (76).

The last sentence shows us why these shifts in temporal form in *Hunger* are not just part of a conventional construction in which a “narrating I” stays close to an “experiencing I,” different from his earlier self and armed with the possibility of differentiating his retrospective evaluations from his past doings and feelings. These shifts disrupt the reader’s attempts to combine the two instances of the “I” as parts of the same (continued) consciousness, and they do so because the actions, thoughts, and feelings from the time of the action intermingle with the actions, thoughts, and feelings from the time of writing. The effects of the shifting of tenses are striking and confusing, precisely because they coexist so that the differences between the experiences (normally attributed to the “narrated I”) and the afterthoughts (normally attributed to the “narrating I”) disappear in a way that makes it highly difficult for the reader to keep the two instances of the “I” apart.

Dorrit Cohn commented on *Hunger* as an example of what she calls “consonant narration”: “Consonant presentation of past consciousness is dependent on the self-effacement of the narrative voice, and few authors of autobiographical fiction have been willing or able to silence this voice completely. Hamsun is the great exception” (171–72). Still, this narrative does not lack what is normally referred to as the privileges of a “narrating I,” namely the judging and evaluating of the doings of the “narrated I”; rather, we are faced with a scenario in which both of these acts take place simultaneously.

In contrast to Cohn, who reads the novel as if it were based on a retrospective or autobiographical pattern (though one where the “narrating I” is silent), Martin Humpál turns the screw one notch further: “*Hunger* can be called an ‘autobiographical retrospective narrative’ only in a very limited sense, regarding only its most superficial, basic genre orientation as a first-person discourse. Such a label can, however, be quite misleading, because the novel lacks explicit retrospection” (58).

We may now comment on the twenty-seven dots in the passage from the beginning of the final version of *Hunger*. They have taken the place of the sentence establishing the continuity between the two instances of the mind, both separating them in time and connecting them as parts of the same mind. The sentence in the *Hunger* fragment decodes as: “Now I am narrating about this specific evening in my past.” How does the replacement decode? It does not; rather, it emphasizes the departure from one of the basic principles in our understanding of someone narrating: that the narrative is retrospective. In *Hunger*, the narrating and the narrative parts of the consciousness are conflated, and we are presented with a mind which is not possible in reality. We attempt to recover continuity but are forced to cope with discontinuity, and we miss out on a great deal of what this novel is (about) if we insist on reading the novel’s presentation of consciousness as we would in the case of natural or real-world minds.

As should be apparent, there is much more to the unnatural minds in narratives than this reading of the beginning of the two versions of *Hunger* has brought forth. With its focus on the fairly subtle but nonetheless groundbreaking and shattering effects provoked by the narrative’s tinkering with what Palmer calls the frame of continued consciousness, this reading is primarily concerned with one aspect of the construction of an unnatural mind, namely temporality and identity over time. Turn-

ing to more extreme cases of unnatural minds, this approach would also have to find ways of dealing with unnaturalness stemming from what and how narrated minds think when they defy being reconstructed as operating according to the logics that guide our everyday mind-reading activity.

One way of moving this type of research forward has been suggested here: it consists in bringing the several highly useful analytical tools developed in the cognitive realm into close contact with unnatural narratives with the purpose of highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of applying such tools to narratives that challenge the reader's traditional patterns of reception, while simultaneously trying to further develop and refine these tools.

UNNATURAL ACTS OF NARRATION

In this section, we turn to narratives that violate the conventions of natural narrative and, in particular, the model of narrative communication. As we have seen, unnatural storyworlds contain physically or logically impossible scenarios and events, and unnatural minds force the reader to construct consciousnesses that defy the continued-consciousness-frame. Unnatural acts of narration include physically, logically, mnemonically, or psychologically impossible enunciations. Several theoreticians (e.g., Banfield, Patron, and Fludernik) have already argued that some literary narratives cannot be seen as a form communication from a narrator. For instance, Fludernik argues that it is not necessary to presuppose a narrator in all narrative texts: "In texts that do not display linguistic markers signalling the presence of a speaker (*I*, deictic elements, expressive markers, stylistic foregrounding), the presence of a narrator is merely implicit, 'covert.' Here, according to my own proposals, the insistence on the presence of a speaker constitutes an interpretative move, in which the reader concludes from the presence of a narrative discourse that someone must be narrating the story and that therefore there must be a hidden narrator (or narrative voice) in the text" ("New Wine" 622). What about texts that explicitly use "*I*, deictic elements, expressive markers, stylistic foregrounding"? Are such narratives always narrated by a narrator while the others are not? And is this question a matter of two ontologically entirely different kinds of texts (443)?

Many readers and theoreticians have grown used to unnatural acts of narration in fictional third-person narratives, including reflector-mode narratives or narrative "omniscience." The use of the first-person pronoun "*I*," on the other hand, seems to firmly attach the represented speech to a human-like person. However, we argue that this real-world description neglects many interesting cases like the case of the "omniscient" first-person narrator. In some first-person narratives, the narrator knows significantly more than he could if he or she were a real person.

In "The Impersonal Voice in First-Person Narrative Fiction," Henrik Skov Nielsen has shown that the person referred to by the pronoun "*I*" in first-person narrative fiction does not necessarily have to be the narrator. Strange as it may seem, Nielsen's argument is a solution to the specific question whether there are two ontologically different kinds of narratives with and without a narrator—a question

which has haunted narrative theory since the work of Käte Hamburger. While it may seem odd to devote considerable attention to a position that is not very widely accepted, the aim is actually to demonstrate that large parts of Hamburger's theory hold true even for fictional first-person narratives. Hamburger takes her point of departure in a distinction between epic and non-epic statements, claiming that in epic fiction, there is no statement subject. According to Hamburger, the sentences of the epic are not sentences that can be true or false in respect to reality but are sentences about something that only exists by virtue of the sentences. Hamburger also maintains that the situation is radically different in first-person fiction because such narratives are similar to autobiography rather than epic fiction: here, the statement subject narrates something that exists independently of the enunciation.

Hamburger argues that if there *is* a statement subject, then it will narrate something that exists prior to its narration. On the other hand, if there is no statement subject, then the sentences of fiction will produce the world they describe. Consequently, as Hamburger herself recognizes, there is an insurmountable difference between the ontology of the narrated world in the two cases, and, for her, only the narrated world of the first case belongs to the domain of true fiction. In this way, Hamburger concludes that fictional first-person narrative does not belong to the domain of true fiction. Hamburger's conclusion seems very counter-intuitive and, historically, fictional first-person narrative has always been an obvious problem for any no-narrator theory, since it seems unquestionable that first-person narratives are narrated by a personalized first-person narrator. It has seemed impossible to make room for fictional first-person narrative in a theory that does not have room for the narrator.

According to Nielsen, it is the case that when sentences that would clearly mark the narrator as unreliable or even insane in a nonfictional narrative come to the reader as authoritative, it is because the sentences should not unambiguously be ascribed to (an older and wiser version of) the character. This conclusion has a further consequence: as opposed to the sentences of autobiography—but akin to those of third-person narrative—the sentences of first-person narrative fiction do not form statements about reality. Instead they produce a fictional world that does not exist independently of these sentences.¹⁵

From this perspective, first-person narratives approximate the condition of third-person narratives. In fact, we find that we can eliminate Hamburger's distinction between narratives with and those without a statement subject. Both third-person and first-person narratives are thus characterized by not having a narrator who speaks *about* something, but rather a narrative world created by the reference.

Again we believe that Hamburger's theory is applicable even in the domain of first-person fiction that she seemed unable to include herself. The "I," like all the other elements of fiction, is created by the reference. This goes for trees, houses, space ships, and all persons including the person referred to by the pronoun "I."

In the following close reading of "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe, we deal with the analytical consequences of an unnatural approach to narrative. We try to demonstrate that an unnatural reading arrives at radically different conclusions and interpretations from those produced by a mimetic reading based on real-world parameters.

In “The Tell-Tale Heart” the presence of what is being narrated in the narrative itself challenges not only its purity but also the fundamental distinction between narration and narrated altogether. Let us first consider the title. It obviously informs us that it is the heart that reveals or gossips. But what is the heart supposed to say or divulge? It is the heart that reveals the first-person narrator as the murderer, but only if we take the narrator at his word and believe that the dead man’s heart suddenly begins to beat with a high, tell-tale sound under the floorboards, which is highly unlikely since the policemen do not hear it. There is little evidence to suggest that the heart is literally speaking in the narrated world.

However, there may be a deeper truth to the implicit claim of the title that the heart is a revealing one. It is thus worth noting that the phrase “tell-tale” can be read as consisting of one or two words: it can be used as an adjective in the sense of “tale bearing, revealing,” as indicated above, but also as a noun meaning “One who tells tales.”¹⁶ Poe uses a hyphen and thereby accentuates the latter sense of the word, the word itself, and the genre of the “tale”—the narrative. Hence, the heart is not only a tell-tale heart, but also a tale-telling one. It is—just like the title tells us—in a certain sense the heart that narrates but at the level of narration rather than narrated. The narrative ends as follows:

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 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!*—“Villains!” I shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks!—here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!” (“Tell-Tale Heart” 31; emphasis original)

The last page of the text alternates between the past and the present tense, and the deictic present is used as well: “No doubt I now grew *very* pale . . . and now—again!—hark!” (31; emphasis original). The two levels that should be made up of the time of narration and the time of the narrated tend to merge. There is thus no situatedness outside the narrative, no “narrating I” now safely outside the narrated then. Exposure and repetition converge and become indistinguishable, so that it becomes impossible to decide whether the last words—“now—again” and “here, here!”—belong to the now of the telling or the then of the told. In addition to this temporal convergence, an extremely insistent rhythm emerges toward the end of the narrative. The narrative is characterized by two moves, in that, first, the affect of time of the narrated comes to completely negate the studied calm of the time of narration (“observe . . . how calmly I can tell you the whole story” [29]) and second, the rhythm comes to dominate the meaning, so that the end is characterized by outbursts and repetitions rather than narrative succession. Both of these moves can be regarded as a result of the fact that the narrative comes “straight from the heart.”

On the last page, an almost claustrophobic rhythm encourages the reader to gasp for air like the first-person narrator, and this rhythm is supported and punctu-

ated by “but the noise steadily increased” three times, culminating in pure trochaic systole: “louder! louder! louder! *louder!*” Finally, the heart completely takes over the narrative, and we hear more than anything else the heart’s beating, which, upon re-considering the text, we are clearly told in the very last words: “Here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!” (31). Here, at the end, the narrative and the heartbeat converge. At the boundary lines of language and logic, rhythm and the unspeakable take over: it is *the heart* that is narrating here. The sound of the heartbeat that tells the heart’s story is in a way invisible but still present throughout the text as a sound. At this point, we hear it like the “I,” but we cannot find it by looking for it, as the policemen do. The very last words of the text create and hide this sound: “Here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!” Looking “here” we see no heart beating, but when we *listen* to it, it seems to shout at us: “Hear, hear!”¹⁷ Symptomatically, rather than returning to the frame, “The Tell-Tale Heart” ends with a moment of horror and revelation, and more importantly, what is told—in the form of reappraisals, doubts, fear, and nervousness—is directly reflected in the narrative. Poe’s story begins with the following words: “and observe . . . how calmly I can tell you the whole story,” but when the narrative arrives at the upsetting events, it is itself upset, faltering and breathless, and even the deictic present tense is used. If the narrative and the narration thus seem to converge, and what is told seems to be playing out here and now, it becomes difficult for us to conceive of a narrative as narrating something that has occurred. The story seems to explicitly thematize the insight described above that there is no narrator who speaks *about* something, but rather a narrative world including the “I” and his actions created by the reference. What happens, one might ask, if the structure of the narrative is not that it tells us what happened, but that what is told is actually happening?

The text frequently suggests that it is not the old man whom the first-person pronoun wishes to erase, but rather “his eye.” Take, for example, the following passages: “I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye!—yes it was this! He had the eye of a vulture. . . . I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. . . . The old man was stone dead. His eye would trouble *me* no more” (29–30; emphasis original). In most of the current versions that follow Griswold, the final sentence of the first quotation reads as follows: “One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture” (Poe, *The Complete Tales* 199), which changes the structure of the sentence so that it becomes comparative and changes the singular “eye” to the plural “eyes.” The meaning of the sentence in the original version diverges semantically as well as phonetically from Griswold’s version. Semantically, in the original version, the reader is cued to thinking of the narrator as being observed by the eye of a vulture, which, as any reader of pulp fiction knows, is on the lookout for dying or dead creatures. Phonetically, it is significant that Poe sticks to the singular form throughout the tale. It is thus quite obvious that it is not the old man whom the “I” wishes to kill, but rather his eye, “his Evil Eye.” For it is not only the eye, “the Evil eye,” but also “the evil I” that is destroyed by the murder.¹⁸ “The Tell-Tale Heart” seems, in a much more concealed way than “William Wilson,” to establish precisely the effect that William Wilson explicates in the final words of the short story of the same

name: “*You have conquered, and I yield. Yet henceforward art thou also dead – dead to the World, to Heaven, and to Hope! In me didst thou exist—and, in my death, see by this image, which is thine own, how utterly thou hast murdered thyself*” (Poe, *The Complete Poems* 292; emphasis original). It is thus precisely from the point when the first-person believes that he is finally free from his *doppelgänger*, when he has liberated himself from “the eye,” that the heart takes over, and that the first-person is no longer the master of his own speech. Furthermore, this point is doubly exposed as the point in the apartment where the first-person hears the heart tell tales about him and, against his will, must hear himself be exposed *and* as a point in the tale, which—just as the heart’s speech is to be rendered—seems even more clearly to be overtaken by the heart—not in the sense that it is literally speaking in the narrated world, but in the sense that it manifests its own tale-telling revelation of the protagonist as a murderer against his will at the level of narration.

It is not that a natural reading of the text is impossible, although it has to account for the conflating of the time of the telling and the time of the action, etc. James Phelan suggested to us, in his very helpful comments on the essay, a subtle reading in which “the story seems to give us a character so overcome by guilt that he imagines the heart beating so loudly as to be heard, that when he becomes narrator his guilt remains so strong that he loses the calm and retrospection . . . and his narration is influenced by his once again hearing the heart as he heard it before.”

A reading like this is not only possible but persuasive and can probably not be disproved. One could say that the natural and the unnatural explanations even dovetail to some degree, since the alien will and the impersonal speech are inextricably linked in Poe’s literature, whether the unwilling speech is caused by unmanageable guilt or not, and whether it is manifested in a tell-tale heart or through a black cat in a crypt. The encounter with a counterwill that overrides the subject’s own will and with an impersonal speech takes place in the very process of narration in both frames of explanation.

It could be argued, though, that the narrator actually shows few signs of remorse and does not necessarily seem overcome by guilt but rather seems satisfied by and proud of his act. Secondly, one could argue that the natural explanation does not quite do justice to the many elements that contradict the natural storytelling situation in which the act of narration at the time of telling comprises a unity of “I, here, now.” In fact, the text seems strategically to undermine all these three concepts, since now is “now—again” and thus both then and now, and since, similarly, “here” is elusive in its homophone appeal to both sight and hearing and in its ambiguous reference to the situation of the told as well as the telling, and since, finally, the play on “I/eye” makes it ambiguous if the reference is to the speaker or his antagonist. In this text, which is so obsessively interested in sight and hearing, it seems unlikely to be a coincidence that the use of homophones (words that sound the same but look different) is connected, respectively, to exactly sight and hearing.

When the narrative about impersonal speech itself also moves toward depersonalization, natural, i.e., real-world-based, descriptions tend to become problematic. The resonance of impersonal speech in the speech of both the enunciating and the enunciated subject establishes a paradoxical, reciprocally annihilating process in which the “narrated I” and the “narrating I,” time of the narrated and time of nar-

ration, become indistinguishable and cease to function as operative concepts in the prose emerging from this. As we have shown, in Poe's story the existence of the subject is brought into doubt—at least that of the literary subject that we traditionally aim to understand and grasp in ways that are similar to how we try to comprehend real-world subjects. Here, we find instead a speech that refers to the subject as “I” without belonging to it.¹⁹ To construct the “mind” of the protagonist seems to be a task very unlike constructing minds in everyday interaction.

CONCLUSIONS, OPEN QUESTIONS, AND NEW PERSPECTIVES

This article outlines the basic theoretical framework of what we would like to call “unnatural narratology.” More specifically, it provides a definition of the term “unnatural,” and it sketches out our aims and goals. Furthermore, the article addresses the analytical consequences of approaching narratives from a non-mimetic perspective. As we have shown, our unnatural readings of storyworlds, minds, and acts of narration lead to different conclusions and interpretations than traditional models based solely on our real-world knowledge.

From our perspective, there are two basic ways in which one might respond to the interpretative challenges posed by unnatural narratives. First, as we have shown in the section entitled “Unnatural Storyworlds,” one may try to approach the unnatural by reshuffling and recombining existing scripts and frames. For example, one might try to make sense of the logical impossibilities in Robert Coover's “The Babysitter” by engaging in a process of frame enrichment that allows us to project an impossible scenario in which internal processes have the same ontological status as external reality. In a second step, one can then argue that the text plays around with a plethora of different options and allows us to choose what we like best.

Second, as an alternative to such more or less intrepid moves of sense-making, which follow the “human urge to create significance” (Fludernik, *Fictions* 457), one can simply accept the fact that many narratives go well beyond imaginable real-world situations. In a sense, it is fairly uncontroversial to say that if conversational, naturally occurring forms of storytelling are prototypical manifestations of narrative, many literary narratives will diverge from the prototype. From this perspective, literary narratives are more or less atypical. It may, however, not be entirely unproblematic to assume that many novels and short stories and other literary narratives are to the category of “narrative” what emus are to the category of “bird” (see Herman, *Basic Elements*). By treating unnatural narratives as marginal specimens, we may miss something crucial about them. For example, first-person narration in the present tense (“simultaneous narration”) can of course be aligned with real-world phenomena such as, say, reports of soccer matches. However, we feel that such a mimetic approach amounts to trivializing literature (also, it is worth noting that reports of soccer matches are not autodiegetic and the reports are just after the action rather than simultaneous with it). Such manifestations of narrative are better understood as foregrounding a given text's resistance to real-world descriptions and the inventive power of fictional techniques. Instead of trying to make all narratives

fit into the same scheme, the alternative option is to accept that some narratives are situated, others are not, some narratives are told by someone, others are not—and to analyze the potential consequences, as we have tried to do above.²⁰

Even though we have focused on fiction in our analyses, we would like to suggest that unnatural features are a constituent, important, and challenging feature of most narratives, and that the synthetic and the mimetic, or the unnatural and the natural, often dovetail. As unnatural narratologists, we want to remain alert for unnaturalness and thus sometimes find it where others with their mimetic orientations do not. We would like to end our article by pointing out some of the new perspectives and open questions of our unnatural approach.

First, the existence of unnatural elements in narratives raises the fundamental and fundamentally elusive question of the relationship between narrative and fiction. In this article, we have solely dealt with unnatural phenomena in more or less experimental fictional texts. That, however, does not mean that such phenomena only occur in experimental fiction. Standard realist texts, for example, are full of unnatural elements such as narratorial omniscience, instances of *paralepsis*, streamlined plots, definitive closure, or what James Phelan calls “redundant telling” (1–30). Furthermore, the reflector-mode narratives of modernism are unnatural in so far as we cannot read other people’s minds in the real world; however, we can do so in the world of fiction, and this is, at least partly what makes modernist texts so compelling and interesting. It is also worth noting that much recent fiction—such as Bret Easton Ellis’s novel *Glamorama* and Coetzee’s *Waiting for the Barbarians*—uses first-person narration in the present tense. Interestingly, Dorrit Cohn describes the “fictional present” as a “narrator’s ‘impossible’ verbal stance” (105) and argues that such narratives have “the advantage of dislocating the narrative text from a temporally fixed point of origin” (106).

Moreover, unnatural elements are not restricted to fiction. As Iversen argues elsewhere, unnatural storyworlds, unnatural minds, and unnatural acts of narration do not only occur in nonfictional texts but in some cases (as in the case of trauma narratives) constitute the narratives’ very essence (“In Flaming Flames”). One point of departure for further research might be the observation that horrific and/or sublime events, which can occur in the natural world, call for unnatural techniques across the fiction/nonfiction divide. An example would be the testimony *Days and Memory* by Charlotte Delbo, a former Auschwitz inmate. This autobiography confronts us with two mutually exclusive versions of the “narrating I,” resulting in a scenario which Lawrence L. Langer aptly describes as “two voices [that] vie for primacy . . . each honest, each incomplete” (3).²¹

Our unnatural approach opens up many questions such as the following: what would be a positive definition of narratives, a definition that includes all narratives, natural and unnatural, and simultaneously excludes non-narratives? What is the difference between unnatural narratives and something that is not a narrative at all? Can we clearly discriminate between non-narrative texts on the one hand and unnatural narratives on the other? In other words, what positive features do unnatural narratives share with other narratives? What would be a definition of all narratives, i.e., a definition that allows for features that natural definitions do not? What are

we to make of the fact that nonfictional texts can use a series of unnatural techniques and features (Nielsen, “Natural Authors”) that, paradoxically, tend to be overlooked by those theories that take their point of departure in natural storytelling? Perhaps it may not even be possible to arrive at a definition that applies to all and only narratives after a very minimal set of identifiers.

Second, one would want to look at the relation between unnatural narratives and temporality as it is reflected in questions regarding changing conventions in literary history. One might argue that unnatural narratives and the invention of new techniques and hitherto “impossible” ways of telling are major forces in literary history: new ways of telling are not just new ways of telling the same stories but expand the repertoire of the tellable. And this idea connects to questions of conventionalization and naturalization. There is no doubt that new forms and techniques (such as narrative “omniscience,” the reflector mode, simultaneous narration, or you- and we-narratives) become conventionalized over time. This, however, does not necessarily mean that they become *naturalized*. We would therefore also like to accentuate the inherent unnaturalness of conventional forms, like, say, the use of “omniscience” in traditional works of realism or the use of first-person present-tense narration in much recent fiction. The difference between naturalization and conventionalization is crucial: as stressed above, many conventional narrative forms still contain unnaturalness, and it is important to highlight this fact (Nielsen, “Unnatural Narratology”). More specifically, we would like to discriminate between unnatural scenarios and events that have already been conventionalized and turned into a cognitive category (such as “the speaking animal,” the “omniscient” narrator, or techniques like free indirect discourse and psychonarration), and unnatural scenarios and events that still strike us as odd, strange, or unusual.

Third, in dealing with the unnatural in narratives one has to consider questions of context, of readers and authors, and of intentions. To what extent do we have to account for cultural differences between different authors and readers in order to say what counts as unnatural? Is it possible to say what is natural and unnatural without taking cultural or historical differences into account? What if the sender’s notion of naturalness differs greatly from the receiver’s?

Richard Carstone, one of the central characters in Dickens’s novel *Bleak House*, nicely summarizes our conclusion: “all this business puts us on unnatural terms, with which natural relations are incompatible” (599). From our perspective, the unnatural is everywhere, and it is about time for narrative theory to embrace it.

ENDNOTES

1. See all cited sources by the following authors: Richardson, Alber, Mäkelä, Nielsen, Tammi, Iversen, Heinze, and Alber/Heinze. In November 2008, Jan Alber and Rüdiger Heinze organized a conference called “Unnatural Narrative” at the new Freiburg Institute for Advanced Study in Freiburg, Germany, and, at this year’s Narrative conference in Birmingham, UK (organized by the ISSN), two panels dealt with unnatural narrative theory. Also, the 2009 MLA in Philadelphia featured an ISSN panel on “Postmodern and Unnatural Narratives” (organized by Jan Alber).

2. According to James Phelan, “responses to the mimetic component [of narrative] involve an audience’s interest in the characters as possible people and in the narrative world as like our own” (20).
3. Our use of the term “realism” is not restricted to the nineteenth-century movement of Realism but rather refers to a narrative “which appears to provide an accurate, objective, and confident description or authentic impression of reality. This semiotic effect, which rests on the assumption that language is an undistorted mirror of, or transparent window on, the ‘real,’ is based on a set of literary conventions for producing a lifelike illusion” (Palmer, “Realist Novel” 491). The term “‘natural’ narrative” denotes forms of spontaneous oral storytelling, i.e., “naturally” occurring or everyday storytelling in the sense of Labov.
4. According to Phelan, “responses to the synthetic component [of narrative] involve an audience’s interest in and attention to the characters and to the larger narrative as artificial constructs” (20).
5. It goes without saying that the term “deviation” has a positive connotation for us: our use of the term “unnatural” is similar to the use of the term “queer” in queer studies (see also Alber, “Unnatural Narratives”). It is perhaps also worth noting that all instances of the unnatural have a defamiliarizing effect in the sense of Victor Shklovsky, though not all instances of defamiliarization involve what we call the unnatural. Also, the unnatural is a subcategory of Werner Wolf’s types of anti-illusionism.
6. See also Alber, “Impossible Storyworlds—And What To Do with Them” and “Unnatural Narratives.”
7. These scenarios violate the principle of non-contradiction because they are mutually exclusive: either Mr. Tucker came home to have sex with the babysitter, or he did not. In the case of “The Babysitter,” all of the projected scenarios are true at the same time.
8. For example, he believes that “it is rational (rationally possible—indeed, rationally obligatory) to believe that the liar sentence is both true and false” (Priest 410). Examples would be sentences such as “This sentence is false” or “A Cretan says: ‘the Cretans are always liars.’” Such sentences are true when they are false and false when they are true.
9. Prominent examples are Fludernik’s *Towards a ‘Natural’ Narratology*, Margolin’s “Cognitive Science, the Thinking Mind, and Literary Narrative,” Palmer’s *Fictional Minds*, Zunshine’s *Why We Read Fiction*, and Herman’s *Basic Elements of Narrative*.
10. Unnatural minds bear structural resemblances to H. Porter Abbott’s concept of the unreadable mind. Investigating “characters that disallow the default reading of opaque stereotypes through lack of sufficient narrative action to release them from their unreadability,” Abbott argues “that there is value in not allowing default responses to override the immediate experience of an unreadable fictional mind” (“Unreadable Minds” 449, 463).
11. The fact that minds in literary narratives are written, i.e., not real, and that literature often excels in portraying the strange or transgressive do not go unnoticed by ToM-approaches (cf. Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 186; Margolin 273, 288), but when it comes to the development of new methods and definitions on the basis of a ToM-inspired approach the following premise remains intact: “fictional minds, even on Pluto, have to operate very much like actual minds” (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 202). Commenting upon the possibility of narratives that challenge our real-life parameters for the construction of minds, Palmer mentions “certain fantasy, science fiction, and postmodern narratives” (179, see also 201). We would like to add that several other genres and types of narratives force the reader to construct minds that in one way or another transgress what we take to be the working of the everyday mind.
12. The two concepts are related as follows: “The former [the continuing-consciousness frame] is the means by which we are able to construct fictional minds; the latter [embedded narrative] is the result of that construction” (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 183).
13. “The past is brought to bear on the present in order to produce the future” (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 179).
14. “Characters have to remain stable entities . . . but they also have to change in order to stay interesting” (Palmer, *Fictional Minds* 179).

15. Most people would probably agree with this description, but actually it is (as argued by Hamburger) inconsistent with thinking of character-narrators as statement subjects talking about things in the narrated world.
16. See <www.oed.com>.
17. "Hear" and "here" are homophones because they are pronounced the same but differ in meaning.
18. See also Pillai, "Death and its Moments: The End of the Reader in History" and Robinson, "Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart.'"
19. Nielsen, in "The Impersonal Voice in First-Person Narrative Fiction," has shown how similar circumstances are evident in works such as *Moby-Dick*, in which the first-person narrator occasionally seems to have access to other people's thoughts, *The Golden Ass* (second century), where the first-person narrator seems to explicitly acknowledge that he has no way to remember a story he has just rendered through many pages, and *The Lady in the Car with Glasses and a Gun*, in which the first-person narrator tells us that she has never told the story we have just heard to anyone.
20. H. Porter Abbott has recently drawn a useful distinction between different kinds of "narrative difficulty," leading to what he calls "reader resistance" ("Immersion" 131): the "defamiliarized" (with reference to Shklovsky), the "veiled" (with reference to Derrida, de Man, and Miller), and the "cognitive sublime." In contrast to the first two suggestions, Abbott's own contribution does not aim at arriving at a negative or positive interpretation; rather, it entails an "immersion in a state of bafflement" (132). Abbott's first type of effect and response correlates with our first type of response, while the other two correlate with different aspects of our second type of response.
21. On the literary side, a classic specimen is Vladimir Nabokov's *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited*, the unnatural features of which have been noted by Christian Moraru (40–53).

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