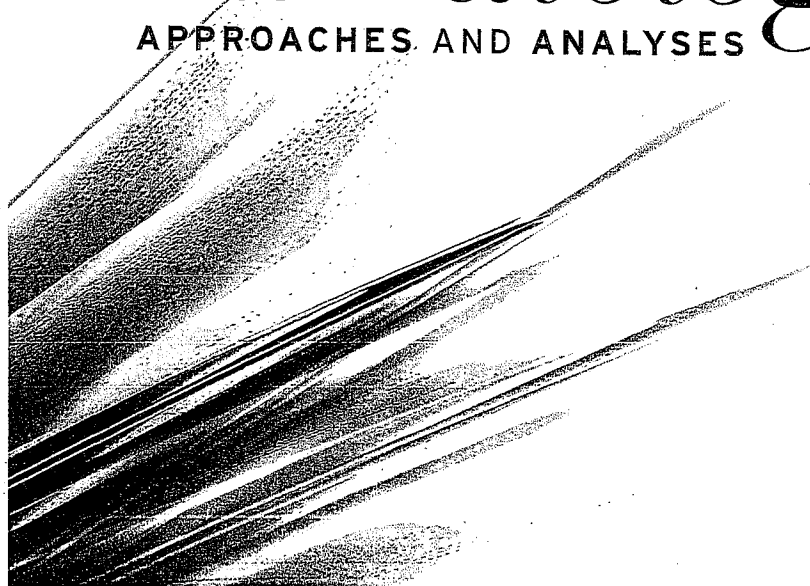


EDITED BY *jan alber*  
AND *monika fludernik*

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APPROACHES AND ANALYSES



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## Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction

JAN ALBER AND MONIKA FLUDERNIK

### PART I.

#### Extensions and Reconfigurations of Classical Narratology

1 Person, Level, Voice: A Rhetorical Reconsideration

RICHARD WALSH

2 *Mise en Cadre*—A Neglected Counterpart to *Mise en Abyme*:

A Frame-Theoretical and Intermedial Complement to

Classical Narratology

WERNER WOLFF

3 Large Intermental Units in *Middelmarch*

ALAN PALMER

4 Mediacy, Mediation, and Focalization: The Squaring of

Terminological Circles

MONIKA FLUDERNIK

### PART II.

#### Transdisciplinarity

5 Directions in Cognitive Narratology: Triangulating Stories,

Media, and the Mind

DAVID HERMAN

vii

1

35

58

83

105

137

6	Hypothetical Intentionalism: Cinematic Narration Reconsidered JAN ALBER	163
7	Sapphic Dialogics: Historical Narratology and the Sexuality of Form SUSAN S. LANSER	186
8	Narrators, Narratees, and Mimetic Desire AMIT MARCUS	206
9	Narratology and the Social Sciences JARMILA MILDORF	234
10	Postclassical Narratology and the Theory of Autobiography MARTIN LÖSCHNIG	255
11	Natural Authors, Unnatural Narration HENRIK SKOV NIELSEN	275
	Contributors	303
	Author Index	307
	Subject Index	315

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HENRIK SKOV NIELSEN

## Natural Authors, Unnatural Narration<sup>1</sup>

### INTRODUCTION

Hardly anything is more familiar to literary scholars than fictional narrative. Yet this simple term contains a slight tension between the *invention* associated with fiction, from its root in the Latin *factio*, and the *knowing* associated with narration and its root in the Latin *gnarus*. How can you invent what you know or know what you invent? In all standard models of narratology, the answer to this question has been to split the tasks and distinguish between the narrator who *knows* and the author who *invents*, and this is the case particularly in the framework of Gérard Genette.<sup>2</sup>

The present essay discusses whether this narratological model of the relationship between narrator and author has served to naturalize the understanding of fictional narratives and of fictionality in the sense that they are understood along the lines of everyday reports.<sup>3</sup> In its attempt to understand

1. I wish to thank Stefan Iversen and Rolf Reitan for their considerable contributions to this essay. Stefan Iversen's theses on the concept of experientiality and other topics, and Rolf Reitan's work on Genette's and Hamburg's concepts of narrators and narratives have both served as rich sources of inspiration.

2. See Walsh (2007: 72–74) and Genette (1980: 214).

3. An important context for the present article is the work of a research group formed by Brian Richardson, Jan Albe, Stefan Iversen, Rolf Reitan, Maria Mäkelä, myself, and several others on what we call "unnatural narratology" (see [www.unnaturalnarratology.com](http://www.unnaturalnarratology.com)). The work of the group includes Brian Richardson's *Unnatural Voices* as well as five panels on unnatural narratology at the ISSN conferences in 2008, 2009, and 2010. A joint article by Albe,

devoted much attention to the author. Although paratextually grounded approaches make important and necessary contributions to our understanding of fiction, they face problems when encountering works that are framed by ambiguous paratexts. This essay raises the question of the relationship between author and text by addressing some of these difficulties. It asks what such paratexts imply for the narrator-author distinction which supposedly exists in fiction and is absent in nonfiction. The texts used in this essay range from fictional to nonfictional writing, though I will focus particularly on James Frey's *A Million Little Pieces* (2003). The essay will discuss in detail what may be gained by giving more attention to the rhetorical resources of the actual author. As signaled by the title, the aim is to demonstrate that the real author has the ability to transcend communicational models and to employ techniques of fictionalization, regardless of whether the narrative is presented as fiction or not. It is argued that such techniques can more helpfully be explained by distinguishing between fiction and fictionality as well as between narration and communication than by assuming the existence of a narrator distinct from the author.

In classical structuralist narratology, the relationship between author and narrator was central for the distinction between fictional and nonfictional narratives. In fictional narratives there is a narrator who is not the same person as the author. In nonfictional narratives like autobiographies, on the other hand, there is no narrator other than the author.<sup>5</sup> This distinction is conventional and indispensable. It explains, for instance, why we must not arrest Bret Easton Ellis, assuming he is identical with the first-person narrator of *American Psycho* (1991), who is a serial killer.

However, the distinction between author and narrator is also problem-

Iversen, Nielsen, and Richardson, "Unnatural Narratives—Unnatural Narratology: Beyond Mimetic Models?" has just been published, and two anthologies on unnatural narratology are in progress. In the group we are concerned with radically anti-mimetic texts but also with unnatural features in conventionalized genres and forms like the realist novel. These features comprise narrative "omniscience," paralepsis, and what James Phelan refers to as redundant telling. We also deal with storyworlds that contain physical or logical impossibilities (Albert 2009). For my own part, I take a special interest in unnatural acts of narration by which I understand physically, logically, mnemonically, or psychologically impossible enunciations.

4. Ann Banfield also argues that "there have been numerous attempts to submit narrative to the communication paradigm by positing a narrator addressing a reader for every text" (1982: 10, 8–18).

5. See Genette (1993: 68–84), Lejeune (1975: 16ff), and Cohn (1999: 30 and 59). Hernadi probably puts it most concisely: "Fictional narratives demand, historical narratives preclude a distinction between the narrator and the implied author" (Hernadi, in Cohn 1999: 124).

atic. First, it tends, at least implicitly, to place an absolute barrier between fictional and nonfictional narratives, that is, between narratives with, and narratives without, a narrator other than the author. Second, it encounters difficulties when facing a range of limit cases where the question of fiction remains difficult to decide. These problems notwithstanding, the distinction is fundamental to most classical as well as postclassical narratologies: in nonfictional written narratives the communication is taken to proceed from author to reader, in fictional ones (also) from a narrator to a narratee.

These ideas have led narratologists to consider literary fictions as acts of communication and "reports" by narrators, and have resulted in a prevailing lack of interest in the author (Walsh 2007: 69). It almost seems as if Barthes's 1967 statement about the birth of the reader (at the cost of the death of the author) also holds true for the birth of narratology, baptized two years later by Todorov. Near the beginning of his essay, Barthes writes:

As soon as a fact is *narrated* no longer with a view to acting directly on reality but intrinsically, that is to say, finally outside of any function other than that of the very practice of the symbol itself, this disconnection appears, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins. (Barthes 2004: 125)

Accordingly, and perhaps even necessarily, when analyzing narrated facts in a novel, narratological analysis seems to have confirmed this disconnection between fictional text and real-world author.<sup>6</sup> Postclassical narratology has considered narratives in the light of a wide range of different contexts. It has invoked the reader, the importance of historical periods, gender issues, questions of ethics, ideology, and, perhaps more than anything, the workings of the human mind. But only rarely has it considered the author to be a relevant topic for narratology. It is a telling fact that *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative* (Herman 2007) has no chapter on the author. Additionally, the word "author" does not even appear in its glossary. Even in the comprehensive index, the entry "author" points the reader to "rhetorical approaches." I will follow this advice and approach the problem of the author by considering the tradition of rhetoric in narratology. I will first turn to James Phelan and then to Richard Walsh.

6. For a few concise and precise remarks about the role of the author in narratology, see Fludernik (2006: 23–25).

James Phelan has written a number of books on rhetoric and narration. In *Living to Tell about It* (2005), Phelan defines narrative as follows: "First, narrative itself can be fruitfully understood as a rhetorical act: somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose(s) that something happened" (Phelan 2005: 18).<sup>7</sup> By implication: if nothing happened, or no one told it, there would be no narrative. A great strength of Phelan's book is the way in which he simultaneously approaches the standard cases, the exceptions to the rule, and the potential problems they create for his theory. Large parts of his book are devoted to problematic cases, and to cases that seem to contradict his definition. In his introduction, Phelan mentions a series of text examples in which the narrator narrates either what the narratee already knows ("My Last Duchess" by Robert Browning and "Barbie-Q" by Sandra Cisneros), or what the narrator himself could not know (*Angela's Ashes* by Frank McCourt and *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, where something is narrated in great detail from an episode where the narrator himself was absent).<sup>8</sup> Phelan also mentions texts in which the narrator seems not to know a fact although the reader must infer that he actually knows it since at the time of narration he has come to the end of his story ("My Old Man" by Ernest Hemingway, e.g., is not permeated by the disillusionment experienced by the narrator at the end).<sup>9</sup> Phelan quotes several other examples, all of which seem to contradict his definition of narrative as a report from narrator to narratee.<sup>10</sup> He provides a brilliant analysis of these narratives and explains many of the peculiarities mentioned by "the author's need" (12) and the use of "disclosure functions":

The motivation for redundant telling resides in the *author's need* to communicate information to the audience, and so we might use the longer phrase *redundant telling, necessary disclosure* to describe it. [...] communication in character narration occurs along at least two tracks—the narrator-narratee track, and the narrator-authorial audience track. Along the narrator-narratee track, the narrator acts as a reporter, interpreter and evaluator of the narrated for the narratee, and those actions are constrained by the narrative situation (a character narrator, for example, cannot enter the consciousness of another character); let us call these actions "narrator functions." Along

7. For variations of the same definition, see Phelan (1996: 8) and Phelan (2007: 3).

8. See also Phelan (1996: 106).

9. See also Phelan (1996: 103).

10. See also the excellent examples in Phelan (1996: chapter 5).

the narrator-authorial audience track, the narrator unwittingly reports information of all kinds to the authorial audience (the narrator does not know that an authorial audience exists); let us call this reporting "disclosure functions." (Phelan 2005: 12; my emphasis)

Phelan's explanations show why the above-mentioned example texts should not be considered as "mistakes" by their authors (as in fact they seldom are by readers), and why—although probably unreliable in other respects—the texts appear in the mentioned passages to present the story in an authoritative way even when it clashes with the knowledge of the narrator. A potential problem, however, to be discussed in the following, is that—while serving the author's need—the words are still described as "reports" from "the narrator." If all narration is report and communication (I use the two words synonymously, as Phelan seems to do)—then there must be a reporter. This explains why the author has come to stand outside the focus of narratology. In fictional narratives, the author does not tell the reader that something happened; the author invents the events. So in order to be able to view fictional narratives as reports, we must take an interest in the narrator instead. However, as soon as it becomes evident that the narrator is not reporting (when, for instance, he cannot know what is being recounted), the need for the author returns. Phelan responds to this problem by saying that the (implied) author has the narrator narrate to audiences and for purposes the narrator is unaware of. The general logic—one which is not specific to Phelan but common to all narratological models that equate communication and narration—is that if it is not the author who is reporting, then the narrator is doing it. And, conversely, if it is not the narrator who is reporting, then it must be the author.

In what follows, I will suggest that there is a simpler and less circular way of approaching the problem. My suggestion is that one does not have to consider all forms of narration as report and communication. Many narratologists have described narration—fictional and nonfictional, conversational and literary—under the umbrella of a unified theory, most often one based on oral storytelling. I am skeptical of this attempt and my skepticism boils down to the assumption that there is a crucial difference between narration and communication. Much, but not all, narration is communication. I will call that part of narration that is not communication "unnatural narration" because it deviates from the paradigm of natural, i.e., oral narratives.

After these remarks on narration vs. communication, I will briefly place the question of fiction vs. fictionality in the context of the ongoing discussion about fiction vs. nonfiction. At opposite corners of the debate, we find

a separatist position associated with Dorrit Cohn and (especially the early) Philippe Lejeune, and a panfictionalist position often associated with Hayden White and more broadly with postmodernism and deconstruction.<sup>11</sup> The first position deals in tell-tale signposts of fictionality that will reveal to a reader whether a text is fiction or nonfiction. By contrast, I follow Walsh and Phelan (see below) and think of such signposts rather as techniques of *fictionalization* that can also be used in nonfictional texts. As opposed to the dominant belief of the second position that everything can be read as fiction and according to the same rules of interpretation, I believe that the reader is often guided in his or her interpretation by a number of features that invite different readings. Furthermore, I claim that readers do, in fact, react very differently depending on whether they think they are reading fiction or not. Phelan puts this idea as follows:

The one theoretical generalization I would offer is that there is no one-to-one correspondence between any specific formal feature of a narrative and any effect, including the placement of a narrative along the fiction/nonfiction spectrum. [...] I do not believe [...] that we can make the distinction on the basis of techniques that are either sure markers of fiction or nonfiction or that appear exclusively in one. As soon as such techniques get identified, some narrative artists will use them for unanticipated effects. (Phelan 2005: 68)

Similarly, in the fortieth anniversary edition of Scholes and Kellogg's *The Nature of Narrative*, Phelan points out four "unresolved instabilities" in narrative theory. The first one concerns the study of unnatural narrative and refers to Brian Richardson.<sup>12</sup> The second concerns digital narratives and the fourth a paradigm shift to questions of space and time. Interestingly, the third unresolved instability is about the question of fiction vs. nonfiction:

In my rhetorical view, preserving the borders [between fiction and nonfiction] has the major advantage of helping us account for the differences in the ways we respond to particular narratives, even as the debate calls attention to various kinds of border-crossing—of technique, of character, of place, and so on. (Phelan, Scholes and Kellogg 2006: 335)

11. For a good, short survey of the position from its roots in Saussurian linguistics to theorists like Eagleton, Hillis Miller and Norris, see Ryan (1997: 173ff).

12. In *Unnatural Voices*, Brian Richardson demonstrates through careful readings of an impressive range of narratives how postmodern (as well as many earlier) narratives prove resistant to mimetic approaches. This paper was partly inspired by Richardson's arguments about misguided mimetic generalizations.

To put it bluntly, the advantage is that the borderline works, the disadvantage is that it does not exist—a slightly paradoxical description, but one I would actually subscribe to myself.

In *The Rhetoric of Fictionality*, Richard Walsh also addresses this problem and offers the following solution:

By speaking of the quality of fictionality, I am framing the argument at one remove from the generic distinction between fiction and nonfiction per se, but fictionality is certainly an attribute of all fictions in that sense since it is applicable to all narratives deemed fictional (as distinct from false). [...] Of course it is the case that most fictions do in fact exhibit characteristics indicative of their fictional status [...] but these are neither necessary nor sufficient conditions of fictionality. [...] Even within the terms of the familiar, modern fictional contract, though, fictionality has no determinate relation to features of the text itself. [...] Fictionality is the product of a narrative's frame of presentation, of the various possible elements of what Gérard Genette has described as the paratext (1997). [...] And the distinction is categorical [...] because the interpretive operations applicable to a narrative text are globally transformed, one way or the other, by the extrinsic matter of the contextual frame within which it is received. (Walsh 2007: 44–45)

Taking his point of departure from a position close to Phelan's, Walsh argues that fictionality cannot be determined by text-internal evidence, and I agree with this argument.<sup>13</sup> However, while Walsh stresses the *globally* transforming power of the frame, I would like to add that fictionality may also be *local*. In fact, in other places, especially in his introduction, Walsh seems to acknowledge this fact, since it must be the reason why fictionality as a rhetorical strategy is sometimes also apparent in nonfictional narratives:

Not that fictionality should be equated simply with "fiction," as a category or genre of narrative: it is a communicative strategy, and as such it is apparent on some scale within many nonfictional narratives, in forms ranging from something like an ironic aside, through various forms of conjecture or imaginative supplementation, to full-blown counterfactual narrative examples. (Walsh 2007: 7)

In the useful distinction between fiction and fictionality, the global and the local seem to me equally important. Frame and paratext may produce a form

13. See also Löschnigg (1999) and Fludernik (2001).

of fictionality that invites certain interpretative operations towards the narrative as a whole. Using any of a range of techniques of fictionality (including omniscience, free indirect discourse, simultaneous narration, imaginative supplementation, and counterfactual narrative) will locally produce fictionality that similarly invites certain interpretative operations at least towards parts of the narrative—without necessarily turning the *whole* narrative into a fictional text. I will argue this in detail below in the context of the case of James Frey.

So far I have argued that there can be fictionality without fiction and narration without communication. Ann Banfield's book *Unspeaking Sentences* (1982) has greatly influenced my thinking about fictional narratives. I will just briefly indicate a few differences between us regarding some points on which she and I seem to agree. We both reject the assumption of much communication theory that every sentence has a speaker and every text a narrator (Banfield 1982: 11). However, Banfield holds "represented speech and thought" (free indirect discourse) to be an "exclusively literary style" (68), a view few would agree with today. For Banfield, narration (in a narrow sense as a translation of Benveniste's *histoire* and Hamburger's *fiktionalen Erzählen* [142]) has no addressee (171), and is globally made up of sentences of non-communication (242). In contrast to her, I stress that non-communication does not only appear in narrative fiction and, conversely, that not all narrative fiction is non-communicative.

The following sections pursue some of the questions raised when paratextual information makes it difficult to determine which interpretative operations a narrative invites.

## DETERMINING FICTION

In "Postmodernism and the Doctrine of Panfictionality," Marie-Laure Ryan mentions a crisis regarding the distinction between fiction and nonfiction (1997: 165). She argues against the theory of panfictionality, understood in the sense of the fictionality of all discourse (177). Opposing views that regard fiction and nonfiction as indistinguishable, Ryan proposes that "[t]he possibility of hybridization does not necessarily mean that the two categories are inherently indeterminate: the many shades of gray on the spectrum from black to white do not turn black and white into the same color (165)." In describing features of fictional text, Ryan takes her point of departure in a view that is very similar to Phelan's:

According to a widely accepted model, which I endorse in its broad lines, fictional communication presupposes a layered situation, in which an author addresses a real or "authorial" audience through a narrator addressing an imaginary or narratorial audience. [...] If [fictional communication] makes no claim to external truth, but rather, guarantees its own truth. (167)<sup>14</sup>

Ryan then presents some dominant panfictionalist positions (175–79), and convincingly counters them with arguments like the following: "But even if one concedes the unavoidable artificiality of representation, the thesis of universal fictionality rests on a faulty syllogism: all fictions are artifices. All representations are artifices. Hence, all representations are fictions (180)."

In place of panfictionality, Ryan offers a model and a taxonomy that draw different conclusions from the acknowledged lack of clear borderlines:

If we maintain the distinction, what, then, is the literary-theoretical significance of the current destabilization of the borderline between fiction and nonfiction? I would suggest that the contribution of postmodern writing practice to the system of genres is not to have merged fiction and nonfiction into one category, but on the contrary to have introduced a third species in the taxonomy. The system now comprises: (1) Those texts that overtly say "I am true," asking the reader to accept this claim as a criterion of validity. (Biographies, historiography, traditional journalism, scientific discourse.) (2) Those texts that send a mixed message: I am not true but I pretend that I am. (Prototypes: *Madame Bovary*, *War and Peace*, *Jane Eyre*, *Buddenbrooks*.) (3) Texts that say "I am not true" through overt markers, and inhibit participation in a textual world. [...] *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *The Unnamable* etc.). (181)

While I am completely sympathetic to Ryan in her case against panfictionality, I think that this triad tends to overemphasize the importance of our challenge posed by metafiction, or what Ryan here refers to as postmodern writing practice. To me, there is a clear distinction in the taxonomy between nonfiction (category 1) and fiction (whether metafiction or not [categories 2 and 3]). Although I see Ryan's point, I am skeptical about the description of the second category. In my opinion, the books mentioned can all be placed on either side of the border because they do not really send a mixed message. It is simply not possible for a text to send the message "I am not true but I

14. For an even more elaborate account of the truth value of fiction and possible worlds, see Ryan (1991: 13–47).



pretend that I am," insofar as true texts do not normally send the message that they are not true.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, any text that sends the message that it is not true does not pretend to be true. For the same reason, no one would mistakenly take any of the examples mentioned in category 2 to belong to any of the genres mentioned in category 1.

Based on Ryan's refutation of panfictionalism and her article in general, I want to argue in the following that a more profound challenge to the distinction between fiction and nonfiction comes from texts that present themselves as *neither* fiction *nor* nonfiction (I will call these texts "underdetermined") and from texts that present themselves—in some cases at different times, in others at the same time—as *both* fiction *and* nonfiction (and hence can be called "overdetermined"). This leads me to modify Ryan's taxonomy into one of my own invention:

- (1) Fictional texts (prototypes: *Madame Bovary*, *War and Peace*, *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, *The Unnamable*, etc.).
- (2) Underdetermined texts (prototypes: *Les Mots* by Sartre, *A Million Little Pieces* by Frey, etc.). For other examples like Knut Hamsun's *Hunger*, see Cohn (1999: 34).
- (3) Overdetermined texts (prototypes: *Fils*, *Lunar Park*, etc.).
- (4) Nonfictional texts (biographies, historiography, traditional journalism, scientific discourse)

In my view, the majority of written narratives can easily be characterized as either fictional or nonfictional because paratexts, styles, techniques, and so forth, all point in the same direction. A minority of sometimes highly interesting and controversial texts, however, display ambiguous, deceptive, missing, or self-contradictory paratexts. This can happen in a multitude of ways, and it is not my intention here to make an inventory of these. Instead, I will simplify the matter and differentiate between only two categories of problematic cases. The first category ("underdetermined") contains texts with paratexts that send no clear message (*A Million Little Pieces* by James Frey will be the main example in this category). The second category ("overdetermined") contains texts with paratexts that send mixed or mutually exclusive messages.

It is tempting to insert a fifth category in the middle, to include fiction disguised as nonfiction and vice versa. This category would then include texts that are wholly or partly true, but present themselves as fiction, and texts that are wholly or partly fiction, but attest to the opposite, and possibly also

15. Ryan seems to acknowledge this herself when she writes a little earlier: "But novels rarely read like the nonfictional genres they are supposed to imitate" (169).

pseudo-autobiography and pseudo-history. However, it would not be easy to come up with examples because all fiction makes some reference to the real world, and since non-accurate parts in nonfiction normally compromise their veracity instead of turning it into fiction (Walsh 2007: 45). In the following discussion of the famous controversy about James Frey, questions like these will also be raised. I do not think of the four categories as separate boxes, but rather as forming a continuum with many shades of gray, to reuse Ryan's expression. Far from turning fiction into nonfiction or vice versa, texts in categories 2 and 3 are placed in a middle region, drawing on resources from both categories 1 and 4. Likewise, I think that any attempt to place absolute boundaries between the categories is doomed to failure. Even underdetermined and overdetermined narratives are not always as different as could be expected. In fact, an underdetermined text may occasionally change its status to an overdetermined text if new paratextual information is added.<sup>16</sup>

In the following, I will inquire into the question of what problematic paratexts do to the narrator-author distinction supposedly present in fiction and absent in nonfiction.

### JAMES FREY'S A MILLION LITTLE PIECES AS AN UNDERDETERMINED TEXT<sup>17</sup>

To represent the possible cases of underdetermined and overdetermined texts, I have chosen *A Million Little Pieces* (2003) by James Frey and *Lunar Park*

16. Underdetermined texts can become overdetermined when text-external contradictory contracts are signed—for example, in interviews at different times or by the publisher. Scandals are more likely to occur in cases of underdetermination than overdetermination, especially when an underdetermined text is first read as nonfiction and then as fiction, like Frey's, but also when a text about, say, incest, is first read as fiction, then as nonfiction. Some underdetermined texts will easily lend themselves to being read according to more than one contract established outside the text.

17. I do not devote attention to Frey's book and the discussions that followed it because the book is especially complex or transgressive or because it is a perfect example of an underdetermined work. My interest has to do with the fact that the case is very instructive; also, the book can be read as fiction, nonfiction, or both at the same time. The settlement in the case even puts an exact date on the change, January 26, 2006, when Frey admitted inaccuracies and Oprah Winfrey withdrew her support for the book. Only readers who had bought the book before that date were eligible for refunds. There is no denying that the book tried to pass as nonfiction—I will say more about that later—and that it could be called a hoax. At a purely paratextual level, however, the first editions of the book were designed and published in ways that allowed it to be read, first as nonfiction, then as fiction. And although it is very clear that the book cannot unambiguously be described as nonfiction, it is equally clear that it is not "pure" fiction. On a paratextual level, the book was underdetermined, and on a descriptive level it remains difficult to clearly determine it as belonging to one or the other category.

(2005) by Bret Easton Ellis. The two works mirror each other: the former was published as nonfiction, but turned out to be a rather inaccurate representation of the experiences of its author; the latter was published as fiction, but is in many (though definitely not all) respects accurate in its facts and information about the author. In *Lunar Park*, then, the real author seems to be *too much* a part of the story for it to be clearly fictional, and in *A Million Little Pieces* the real author seems *not sufficiently* to be a part of the story for it to be clearly nonfictional. Whereas *Lunar Park* did not provoke any controversy, discussions of *A Million Little Pieces* were heated, to put it mildly. Since Frey's book, as well as the discussions surrounding it, are illuminating for arguments about narrators and authors, I will first concentrate on Frey's case. *Lunar Park* will be discussed by way of comparison.

*A Million Little Pieces* is about a very heavy substance abuser and how he overcomes his addiction. In September 2005, it was promoted by Oprah Winfrey on her talk show and was her book of the month. It was also at the top of the *New York Times* nonfiction paperback bestseller list for many weeks. Then, in the beginning of 2006, it was "exposed" as fraud by the website *The Smoking Gun*, which renamed it "A Million Little Lies." Frey appeared on several talk shows, including Larry King's; at the end of this show Oprah Winfrey called in to reconfirm her support for him. Later on, he was a guest on Oprah's show again, on which occasion she withdrew her support and accused him of betrayal. Many other readers also reacted to the exposure with outrage.<sup>18</sup> A poll at abebooks.com revealed that a significant "67.3% [said they] felt *betrayed* by Frey, and that a memoir should not contain fictional information"<sup>19</sup> (emphasis in the original). Here are a few telling quotes:

I was under the impression this was a real life experience. I've read more than half of this book and don't know if I want to even finish it now. I want to know what is real in this book.

A memoir should be accurate. What's the point of reading a non-fiction book if it's fiction? (ibid.)

These statements clearly suggest that the difference between fiction and non-fiction matters to real readers. Most readers seem to have different rules and expectations for fictional narratives than they do for nonfictional narratives.

18. See Lanser (2005: 209) for similar famous incidents causing outrage.

19. See <http://www.abebooks.com/docs/Community/Featured/james-frey-poll.shtml>.

Hence, lawsuits were filed, and Frey's publisher finally made the following offer:

NEW YORK (Reuters)—Random House is offering refunds to readers who bought James Frey's drug and alcohol memoir "A Million Little Pieces" directly from the publisher, following accusations the author exaggerated his story.<sup>20</sup>

Navigating between fiction and truth, Reuters uses the word "exaggerated." On the one hand, this lexeme only makes sense with reference to what really happened in Frey's life. On the other hand, the word highlights the fact that this is not *exactly* the truth but an exaggerated version of it. As incidental as the usage of this word may seem, it is significant that *The Smoking Gun* investigates the case from the same basic assumption of reference with a difference. In every instance in which *The Smoking Gun* wants to prove that Frey deviates from reality in his representation of different incidents, it starts by showing how many details are *true*, in order to show that they are investigating the right incident:

However, based on Frey's own statements in a TSG interview, there can be little, if any, doubt that the incident described in the Granville police report is the same one fictionalized in Frey's book.<sup>21</sup>

The controversy and the lawsuit surrounding *A Million Little Pieces* raises problems of central importance to our issue here, i.e., the question of the importance of deceptive or problematic paratextual information concerning the fiction/nonfiction distinction and the narrator/author distinction. At least two very basic questions can be asked: is *A Million Little Pieces* paratextually determined as either fiction or nonfiction? And if so, what does this determination entail, and by what rules is it governed? Turning to the first, seemingly easy, question, let me quote from the final settlement:

#### A. Factual and Procedural Background

This action arises out of the publication and marketing of the book *A Million Little Pieces* by James Frey (the "Book"). The Book, which was published by defendant Random House, Inc. in 2003, is based on Frey's experiences during a stay at a drug rehabilitation center and his subsequent

20. See <http://www.harrisonfordweb.com/forums/showthread.php?t=5388>.

21. See <http://www.thesmokinggun.com/jamesfrey/0104061jamesfrey4.html>.

recovery from drug addiction. After its publication, the Book gained critical success, and in the Fall of 2005, it was chosen as a featured selection of the Oprah Winfrey Book Club. The back cover classified the Book as "memoir/literature."<sup>22</sup>

Whereas the later Anchor Books edition is tagged as claimed here, neither the first nor the following paperback edition used that label. It is doubtful that the book was "classified" at all when first published. The first edition bears no generic markers on the front cover. On the back cover it has no statements by the publisher or author, but instead two blurbs by Bret Easton Ellis and Pat Conroy. Ellis calls it "a heartbreaking memoir" but also mentions, curiously, its "poetic honesty." Conroy makes no generic reference, but instead compares it to a major work of fiction: "James Frey has written the *War and Peace* of addiction." Although the design and front and back cover have all been changed for the paperback edition, this still carries no generic markers. The settlement goes on to refer to the lawsuits:

All of these lawsuits focus on (1) the author's alleged embellishments in the Book; (2) the labeling of the Book as a "memoir"; and (3) various other ways in which the Book was advertised, publicized, and marketed.<sup>23</sup>

Point (3) seems to touch on something essential: although not exactly labeled as such, the book was distributed, advertised and sold in the guise of a memoir. The paratext is not restricted to the book cover. James Frey sticks to a double defense strategy not completely unlike Freud's kettle argument. He claims, first, that a memoir is not unambiguously nonfiction, and, second, that, even if regarded as nonfiction, it does not necessarily have to be entirely accurate. This is apparent from his comments on Larry King's talk show. Frey comments on the ambiguous fictional status of memoirs as follows:

[...] the genre of memoir is one that's very new and the boundaries of it had not been established yet. [...]

Yes. Again, I don't think it's fair to classify this "Million Little Pieces" as fiction at all. It's a memoir. A very small portion is in dispute. [...]

I couldn't have written it if I hadn't been through a lot of the things I talk about. You know, it's a memoir [...]. I don't think it should be held up and scrutinized the way a perfect non-fiction document would be or a newspaper article.<sup>24</sup>

22. See [http://www.ampsettlement.com/pdfs/Final\\_Approval\\_of\\_Settlement.pdf](http://www.ampsettlement.com/pdfs/Final_Approval_of_Settlement.pdf).

23. See [http://www.ampsettlement.com/pdfs/Final\\_Approval\\_of\\_Settlement.pdf](http://www.ampsettlement.com/pdfs/Final_Approval_of_Settlement.pdf).

24. See <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/060111/Kl.01.html>.

Frey argues that his book is neither completely fictional nor completely non-fictional. His publisher, Nan Talese, backs him up on this point on Oprah Winfrey's show:

A novel is something different than a memoir. And a memoir is different from an autobiography. A memoir is an author's remembrance of a certain period in his life. Now, the responsibility, as far as I am concerned, is does it strike me as valid? Does it strike me as authentic? I mean, I'm sent things all the time and I think they're not real. I don't think they're authentic. I don't think they're good. I don't believe them. In this instance, I absolutely believed what I read.<sup>25</sup>

Nan Talese thus places memoirs in the overlap between fictional novels and nonfictional autobiographies. In his interview with King, Frey comments on the accuracy of a memoir if regarded as nonfiction as follows:

KING: But it is supposed to be factual events. The memoir is a form of biography.

FREY: Yes. Memoir is within the genre of non-fiction. I don't think it's necessarily appropriate to say I've conned anyone. The book is 432 pages long. The total page count of disputed events is 18, which is less than five percent of the total book. You know, that falls comfortably within the realm of what's appropriate for a memoir. [...]

KING: But you will agree, if you went into a bookstore and it said memoirs, you would think non-fiction?

FREY: Yes. I mean, it's a classification of non-fiction. Some people think it's creative non-fiction. It's generally recognized that the writer of a memoir is retelling a subjective story. That it's one person's event. I mean, I still stand by the essential truths of the book.<sup>26</sup>

I am not the one to decide whether memoirs must be nonfictional or whether it is appropriate for certain forms of nonfiction to be slightly, somewhat, considerably, or even necessarily incorrect. What is clear is that *A Million Little Pieces* was read as nonfiction, and that many readers found its inaccuracies (regarding a train accident, a prison sentence, and several other central issues) highly disturbing. More interesting still is the fact that in the many discussions surrounding the controversy surprisingly little attention was given

25. See [http://www.oprah.com/shows/slide/200601/20060126/slide\\_20060126\\_350\\_115.jhtml](http://www.oprah.com/shows/slide/200601/20060126/slide_20060126_350_115.jhtml).

26. See <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/060111/Kl.01.html>.

to the actual wordings in the book. It can be argued—and was argued—that the paratext of Frey's book did not determine the fictional status of the narrative. Irrespective of whether we think of the paratext as underdetermined or deceptive, the narrative *techniques* used by Frey are frequently fictionalization techniques. Frey himself gives one obvious example:

[...] One of the things I think is interesting is there are 200 pages of recreated conversations in the book, but people haven't been questioning those because, in that area, it's understood that it's a memoir, it's a recreation, it's my subjective recreation of my own life.<sup>27</sup>

It is very easy to realize that the represented events differ from what actually happened: the book does nothing to disguise this. Despite the narrator's supposedly imperfect memory, the book is made up of page- and chapter-long dialogues and exact renderings of speech. Even more significantly, the whole book is narrated in the present tense. The present tense here is clearly not the historical present or simply an interior monologue, but rather corresponds to what Cohn calls the "fictional present" (1999: 106), a form Cohn limits to fictional narratives.

In chapter 6 of *The Distinction of Fiction*, Cohn describes a "mounting trend in modernist first-person fiction to cast a distinctively narrative (not monologic) discourse in the present tense from first to last" (1999: 97). Cohn rejects both the historical present and the interior monologue as satisfactory explanations for the phenomenon, and takes as her main example a passage from Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), containing the words that form the title of her chapter 6, "I doze and wake." Cohn comments on this as follows:

But the introspective instance that most strongly resists the interior monologue reading is no doubt the one that reads: "I doze and wake, drifting from one formless dream to another." Here semantic incongruence combines with the formal feature that most forcefully counteracts the impression of an unrolling mental quotation in this passage as a whole: the pace of its discourse is not consistently synchronized with the pace of the events it conveys [...]. (103)

A *Million Little Pieces* contains numerous passages that could not be said, written, or even thought while the depicted events happened. There are

27. See <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/060111/K1.01.html>.

descriptions in the present tense of being alone, sometimes overwhelmingly consumed by "the fury" (Frey 2003: 203 et passim). There are also passages that report how the narrator is falling asleep:

[...] I climb into bed [...] I haven't slept in forty hours. I'm still smiling [...]. My hand drops. Still. Eyes close. Smiling. (169) [...]  
The two men on the couches next to me are both sound asleep. [...] I fade in and out. The TV is narcotic. In and out. In. Out. In. Out. (286)

It is obvious that everything Cohn said about "I doze and wake" and the use of the present tense in first-person fiction also applies here. Insofar as "out" describes a state of mind, of not being conscious, it cannot possibly be reported at the same time. The techniques used in the extract dissociate the words from the narrator's account. The words of the narrative in *A Million Little Pieces* are unnatural, in the sense that they are not modeled on natural narrative, i.e., everyday conversational storytelling. The book uses many techniques of fictionalization, but, as Frey mentioned, readers did not realize them. This was probably due to the fact that the text only uses techniques that have already been conventionalized in first-person narration.

Let us now contrast the case of Frey's (underdetermined) *A Million Little Pieces* with that of Bret Easton Ellis's (overdetermined) *Lunar Park*. After this comparison, I will consider the possible consequences of non-communicative narration.

#### BRET EASTON ELLIS'S LUNAR PARK AS AN OVERDETERMINED TEXT

*Lunar Park* is an example of autofiction in the sense of Serge Doubrovsky: it is a novel labeled as fiction whose protagonist has the same name as the author.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, there is no doubt that much of what is said about the first-person narrator, who is called Bret Easton Ellis, holds true for the author as well. The book begins with a description of Ellis's career as a writer, blended with short analyses of his prose and the opening lines of his earlier

28. Coined by Doubrovsky (1977: back cover et passim), "autofiction" designates books specifically defined as novels, with the protagonist, author, and narrator sharing the same name. Later on, Genette (without even mentioning Doubrovsky) expands the term to denote any long or short fictional narrative in which the author and one of the characters have the same name (Genette 1993: 68–84). For more on metalepsis and fictionality see McHale (1987) and several articles in Pier and Schaeffer (2005).

works, such as *Less than Zero* (1985) and *The Rules of Attraction* (1987). In the first chapter, Ellis also talks about his promotion tours, his relationship to his publisher, the scandal following *American Psycho*, his friendship with Jay McInerney, and so forth (2005: 3–40). All of this is well known to readers who have followed Ellis's career and read his books.

However, there are also numerous elements that are not in accordance with the biography of the real author. In the book, Ellis has spent years at Camden College (a college many fictional characters from earlier Ellis books went to), and he is married to one Jayne Dennis (a fictional character who nonetheless has her own website<sup>29</sup>). Moreover, the events gradually turn into a Hamlet-gone-Stephen King-plot. Among other things, we are confronted with a haunted house that changes its appearance, ghosts, a living bird doll, and unexplained disappearances. At one point, Ellis and his son Robby are almost swallowed by a monster (316). Also, the fictional character Patrick Bateman from *American Psycho*, who reappears in Ellis's novel *Glamorama*, turns up in *Lunar Park*, too, and begins (maybe as a copycat-killer incarnation) to copy the murders from *American Psycho*. And Terby, the bird doll, a rather uncanny and disturbing element, gradually turns into a murderous creature (376). Interestingly, spelled backward, the name of the doll contains a question that might be addressed to the book's narrator and/or its author: "TERBY"—"YBRET"—"Wby, Bret?" (344).

*Lunar Park* blends reality and fiction in a rather fascinating way. Since the fictional parts are so obviously fictional, the novel is clearly not an example of embellished nonfiction. However, it is worth noting that it also contains true information about the author's life. It therefore seems reductive to see the book as pure fiction. Overdetermined autofictions urge readers to read them as fictional and nonfictional at the same time.<sup>30</sup>

29. See <http://www.jaynedennis.com/home.html>. Interestingly, the book has a website, too: <http://www.randomhouse.com/kvpa/eastonellis/>.

30. See the remarks on Lanser below and my forthcoming article "What's in a Name? Double Exposures in *Lunar Park*." In the article, I argue that autofictions bear numerous structural resemblances to double exposures in the visual medium. The photographic technique of "double exposure" merges temporally or spatially distinct figures. Similarly, autofictions superimpose an image of the real author over an image of characters in a fictional world. In the textual form of double exposure, the reader's knowledge about the author (from interviews, biographies, the media, and so on) contributes to his or her view of the author in the literary work and vice versa: exaggerations, fictional inventions, and narrative fantasies in the work contribute to rumors and imaginations about the author. In any autofiction, then, the reader sees the sum of two pictures or two narratives superimposed over each other and haunting each other. Because *Lunar Park* demands to be read as both fiction and nonfiction, the novel can be viewed as a form of double exposure: the (nonfictional) story about the author is superimposed on the (fictional) story about the character. The effect is formally quite different

## NATURAL AUTHORS

In the contractual language of Lejeune's *Le pacte autobiographique*, *Lunar Park* signs two mutually exclusive contracts. The two contracts give the reader two contradictory messages: (1) "you must read this with *Intéresso* (*selosigkeit* in the Kantian sense)" (or, alternatively, "you won't be able to find out what actually happened") and (2) "you cannot read this with *Intéresso* (*siegeit*" (or, alternatively, "you must try to find out what really happened"). Frey claimed to have signed neither of the two contracts, the contract for fictional narratives or the one for nonfictional narratives. To my mind, contractual thinking urges readers to make a choice between regarding *A Million Little Pieces* as narrated by a lying author, or, alternatively, regarding it as narrated by a reliable narrator. In an illuminating article on the ways in which we link texts and authors, Susan Lanser argues that readers do not always react as instructed by theory. Lanser begins by stating that "[a]s the history of literary reception has made dramatically evident, there is simply no way to resolve these questions [of fictionality and truthfulness] from the text itself" (Lanser 2005: 206). Her opening example is a piece by Ann Beattie in *The New Yorker*, which remains equivocally attached to its author. The reader will hesitate between attaching the "I" of the prose text to the author and attaching it to a narrator distinct from the author. Beattie's text is exemplary of the way literary discourse works rather than an exception to it: "The 'I' that characterizes literary discourse, in other words, is always potentially severed from *and* potentially tethered to the author's 'I'" (210–211). Lanser argues that readers make connections between the author and the "I" of a narrative—even if the "I" is a fictional character—and that these connections are much stronger than narrative theory has hitherto claimed. Lanser is interested in both ambiguously and clearly fictional narratives. She argues that "[...] readers routinely 'vacillate' and 'oscillate' and even double the speaking voice against the logic of both structure and stricture" (207; emphasis in the original). Later on, she says the following about fiction: "yet readers may ignore the technical boundaries of fictional voice, in effect *doubling* the 'I' so that the narrator's words sometimes belong to the author *as well as* to the narrating character and sometimes do not" (216). In both cases, Lanser uses the word "double/doubling" for the activity of the reader. In narratives designated as fiction this is something the reader tends to do—"against theory," as it were.

From the reference to real historical events or places in fictional works where the principle of minimal departure applies.

When Walsh addresses the relationship between fictive and nonfictive discourse in *The Rhetoric of Fictionality*, he also connects it to questions about narrators and authors. Rather than drawing ontological boundary lines, Walsh draws on the relevance theory of Dan Sperber and Deirdre Wilson. He points out that this paradigm has a very useful feature:

[...] a pragmatic theory of fictionality does not require detachment of fictive discourse from real-world context. [...] Fictionality is neither a boundary between worlds, nor a frame dissociating the author from the discourse, but a contextual assumption by the reader [...]. (36)

Discussing the consequences of a pragmatic approach for the concept of the narrator, Walsh writes that "[...] the narrator [...] functions primarily to establish a representational frame within which the narrative discourse may be read as report rather than invention" (69). Following this insight, I would like to dissociate report and invention to highlight that invention is also a resource of fictionality available to the actual author. This strategy will typically (but not always) result in a work of fiction. This insight sheds new light on some of the questions that texts like *A Million Little Pieces* pose to narrative theory. Due to its ambiguous generic affiliation, *A Million Little Pieces* can serve as a triple test case:

(1) If it is read as fiction, it will come across as authoritative, because it looks like many other fictional first-person narratives, using simultaneous narration and other techniques of fictionalization. It does not break any contemporary norms, and it does not mark the "narrator" as unreliable according to current conventions for fictional first-person narratives. It is also worth noting that readers are used to fictional first-person narratives that reliably recount information which exceeds what a real person can remember. However, in Frey's case, the author does nothing to pretend that a narrator is speaking to someone. As a person in the narrative, "the narrator" makes referential statements in his interactions with other characters, but the text never suggests that the narrator is—during or after the events—narrating the narrative to an addressee. The narrative is obviously the creation of the author, rather than something the character says, thinks, or even knows. If we read this text as fiction, we assume that the author has created a world that we should trust. In this case, the act of communication takes place between the author and the reader.

(2) On the other hand, if the narrative is read as nonfiction, we may question the accuracy of the narrative, and perhaps even investigate the facts, as did *The Smoking Gun*. There is, then, no narrator other than the author him-

self. We might argue that James Frey is the narrator in the sense of Lejeune's formula: "narrator = author." The author then clearly uses techniques of fictionalization to get his story across, but this need not change the readers' view that what they are reading is essentially a true, an exaggerated or possibly even untrue story about the life of the author. In this case, the act of communication takes place between the author and the reader as well.

(3) Whereas overdetermined narratives arguably urge readers to read them as both fictional and nonfictional, underdetermined narratives seem to invite different readings at different times. Notwithstanding, in Frey as well as in Ellis, a third reading with a double vision—as proposed by Lanser—is possible. In fact, any reading that sees the book as being purely referential or purely non-referential will miss something. A reading of *Lunar Park* as pure fiction will have to play down some of its most essential messages about addiction and how to overcome it, not to mention the many striking similarities between character and author, including the name. Similarly, a reading of *A Million Little Pieces* that does not take into account its techniques of fictionalization and its (re)invention of dialogues and events will miss some of the premises that are actually visible in the narrative itself. If the reader assumes that there is an equivocal attachment between the textual "I" and the real author, then the narrative is read as true communication from author to reader about the author's life (maybe telling important things about this life even as it occasionally deviates from biographical truth) as well as a form of fictional communication from author to reader about the life of a heavy substance abuser. The author shares the name and the first-person pronoun with this abuser, but not all of his experiences.

It is important to note that the differences between the three reading strategies one could adopt towards *A Million Little Pieces* do not include differences as to whether a concept of a narrator is needed to describe the narrative. In each case, the communication is from author to reader. One could decide to read the narrative as fiction and *a posteriori* assume the existence of a narrator, but it is not possible to verify the existence of a narrator by means of intratextual features and to then determine the status of the narrative as fiction. Whether we read the book as fiction or not, and whether we assume the existence of a narrator or not, we cannot find realistic explanations for the passages describing things of which the character is unaware. Nor will we be able to explain the conversations and renderings of dialogues that no narrator, character, or author could possibly remember. In short: deciding pro or contra fiction or pro or contra narrator will not really prove helpful in explaining the techniques and style used in the bulk of the book.



## UNNATURAL NARRATION

I have argued that underdetermined and overdetermined narratives pose a problem to any theory that acknowledges distinctions between fiction and nonfiction but grounds the decision in paratextual information. I also pointed to the potential problems in explaining the narration of something a narrator could not know or need not tell. Third, I tried to demonstrate that the concepts of author and narrator have been used to mutually explain an absence of communication in the other and therefore to avoid the problem of narration without communication. The lesson from *A Million Little Pieces* is threefold: first, the narrative is openly fictionalized; second, this fact does not automatically turn the book into pure fiction; and, third, the fictionalization cannot helpfully be explained by assuming the existence of a narrator other than the author. In fact, any rhetorical approach that takes narration to be report will—among other problems—encounter a major difficulty in *A Million Little Pieces*. The narrative cannot be communication from the author, since he is not now experiencing what is narrated; nor can it be communication from a narrator, since he is not now narrating what is experienced. I will conclude by suggesting that there is a way of approaching these problems that is more helpful than trying to decide the text's fictional status, or assuming a narrator between the author and the narrative. This suggestion is simply that not all narration is report and communication.

As a beginning, let us note that relevance theory, as put forward by Walsh, is compatible with Lanser's idea of double vision and equivocal attachment. Some narratives will prompt assumptions of fictionality and nonfiction alike. Such a narrative was designed—whether intentionally or not—by the author. Let us then reconsider Phelan's suggestion that narrative “can be fruitfully understood as a rhetorical act: somebody telling somebody else on some occasion and for some purpose(s) that something happened” (2005: 18). It is reasonable to argue that a negation of any segment on the right side of the equation may not lead to a negation of *narrative*, but more precisely to a negation of *communication*. In my opinion, Phelan's formula is accurate—necessary as well as sufficient—as a definition of (conscious human) communication, but it is not a definition of narrative. What he really defines is not narrative, but conscious human communication. I want to argue instead that non-communication is a resource of fictionality available to the real author. Frey, like any other author, can opt for or against any technique of fictionality—one of these being non-communicational narration.

If we maintain the difference between fiction and fictionality, we find that invention and non-communication can be described as resources of fictional-

ity, even though they do not belong exclusively to fiction. As argued above, fictionality is also a local quality of a narrative. Not all nonfiction refrains from techniques of fictionality, and not all fiction employs such techniques. This being said, it seems to me that to describe non-communication (in the very inclusive form of all sorts of narration that transcend Phelan's formula of somebody telling somebody else that something happened) as a resource of fictionality available to the author is an economical way of describing a very distinctive feature in much fiction.

Let me return briefly to the example of falling asleep: “I fade in and out. The TV is narcotic. In and out. In. Out. In. Out” (Frey 2003: 286). Irrespective of the global status of the narrative as fiction, this is not communication.<sup>31</sup> The reasons include the fact that there is no one to tell, and no one with a conscious mind able to do the telling. In fictionalized narrative neither of the two parties necessary for communication (sender and receiver) needs to be present. It can be argued that some form of communication may also exist between, say, neurons or bacteria, and obviously between animals, without it necessarily entailing a “purpose” or a report “that something happened.” However, I have never encountered a definition of communication that did not include two parties in the form of a sender and a receiver. To what extent they need a shared cognitive environment, a channel, a message, a purpose, and so forth is beside the point I am making here: if nothing happened or no one recounted it, or if it is not told to anyone, there could still be narration but not communication.<sup>32</sup>

While the narrative in texts of this nature can *globally* be considered a form of communication from author to reader, this global narrative may include local non-communication rather than a report from an unwitting narrator. It may, for example, include narration that is unnatural, in the simple sense that it transcends the norms of everyday conversation and communication, and in the sense that it is without sender or receiver, without narrator or narratee. While much attention has been given to oral language as a prototype for literary and written narrative (Fludernik 1996), it should be noted that written narrative lends itself more easily to non-communication, for the simple reason that it is more detachable from the enunciator of an utterance in time and space than is spoken language. Communicational models face

31. The comical qualities of this passage when read aloud reveal that this is a curious form of narration. The words form, quite literally “unspeakable sentences.”

32. In this respect my proposal is very similar to Monika Fludernik's suggestions in *Towards a 'Natural' Narratology*, where she defines narrativity as centering on experientiality (1996: 26) and as always implying the consciousness of a protagonist (30). For Fludernik “no teller is necessary” (26) for narrativity.

difficulties with regard to some narratives. By understanding all narratives (fictional and nonfictional, fictionalized and nonfictionalized alike) along the lines of a communication model, we run the risk of modeling the subject after the model, instead of vice versa (Richardson 2006: 139ff.).

The concept of the narrator can be a helpful tool for the interpretation of a text. Many narratives firmly attach words, thoughts, and opinions to narrators which are quite different from their authors. It therefore makes sense to talk about narrators. It is perfectly possible to refer to James Frey as the narrator of *A Million Little Pieces*, and to Bret Easton Ellis as the narrator of *Less Than Zero*. However, this does not solve questions raised by the non-report of the author in fictionalized narratives. Since narrators as "agents" do not invent, they cannot help to explain passages that are—inside fiction itself—obviously invented and not reported. Putting all parts of a fiction "in the mouth" of a narrator brings with it a double problem in fictionalized narratives since it tends to deprive them of their distinctive fictionality without really explaining what the positing of a narrator was meant to explain: the absence of report in the author's narrative.

Having said that the author uses unnatural narration as part of the global communication of the narrative to the reader, the question is with what terms to best describe that type of narration. What is the relation between authorial communication and unnatural narration? Turning back to Phelan's account of disclosure functions and narrator functions one could say that in unnatural narration, the disclosure functions proceed not along the narrator-authorial audience track but the author-authorial audience track as the author, in the interest of disclosure, violates the limits of narratorial communication. Compared to the description quoted above with the two tracks consisting of the narrator-narratee track and the narrator-authorial audience track, this seems to me a welcome addition. I much prefer the description that the author violates the limits of narratorial communication over the description that the narrator unwittingly reports information since I believe that there is no report at the local level and at the level of the character-narrator. In this respect, then, Phelan's model and my own model converge. And this convergence reinforces the idea that the author and not the narrator is necessary to explain the specific phenomena discussed.

The global communication from author to reader exists in *any* written narrative whether natural or unnatural, mimetic or non-mimetic, fictional or nonfictional. This description hardly captures the specificity of the mentioned passage in the "fictional present" and the consequences of using techniques of fictionality and unnatural narration. To do this, I believe, we have to disentangle the words from a narrator. The author violates the limits of

narratorial communication, but also of real-world discourse. It is a moment of fictional invention (whether the narrative is globally a fiction or not), not a moment of report by the character-narrator. Attributing the words to the author is correct but only in the sense that he is producing a fictionalized passage in a way that is not reducible to naturally recurring oral discourse.

The real author may or may not choose to construct the narrative in such a way that a narrator addresses a narratee. And having chosen to construct a narrator, the author may or may not limit the narration to telling what this narrator would be likely to know. The unnatural features of non-communication (no one telling anyone on any occasion and for any reason about any events) are neither necessary nor sufficient features ontologically or generically in fiction, but they *are* features of fictionality.

My proposal has the advantage of acknowledging the ability of authors to employ such features of their choosing, as well as their ability to transcend normal communication and the rules governing conversation or storytelling from narrator to narratee. This ability to go beyond communicational models is paradoxically, yet completely logically, possessed by no narrator understood within the framework of the very same communicational model.<sup>33</sup>

It seems important to acknowledge that the explanatory power of communicational models is great, but limited in relation to the sum of all narratives. Some narratives are natural, others are not. If we analyze all narratives according to the same model, we oversimplify matters. It would seem that an important task for narrative theory is to develop models that account for the specific properties of storyworlds, of experientiality, and of representations and narratives that resist description and understanding based on linguistic understandings of natural, oral communication.

As I have shown, narration cannot always be understood according to the rules of communicational discourse. Furthermore, this fact ties narration more closely to its flesh-and-blood author. Far from being deprived of responsibility, this author is responsible for all his/her choices, including the possible choice of techniques of fictionalization and of non-communicative passages or whole narratives. To realize the full potential of authors, we should "employ" rather than "imply" them.

33. In this article I have limited myself to claiming that there are features of fictionality that the concept of the narrator will obscure rather than explain. In a broader context there is no denying that I also agree with Walsh on his more general point that "[...] the narrator is always either a character who narrates, or the author" (Walsh 2007: 78).



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